

Volume 1: Sermons 1-200

800
Sermons

C. H. Spurgeon

THE SERMONS OF
CHARLES
SPURGEON

IN FOUR Volumes



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The Sermons of Charles Spurgeon

Volume 1, 1-200

by Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

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Adoption—The Spirit and the Cry

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."—Galatians 4:6.

We do not find the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity set forth in Scripture in formal terms, such as those which are employed in the Athanasian creed; but the truth is continually taken for granted, as if it were a fact well known in the church of God. If not laid down very often, in so many words, it is everywhere held in solution, and it is mentioned incidentally, in connection with other truths in a way which renders it quite as distinct as if it were expressed in a set formula. In many passages it is brought before us so prominently that we must be wilfully blind if we do not note it. In the present chapter, for instance, we have distinct mention of each of the three divine Persons. "God," that is the Father, "sent forth the Spirit," that is the Holy Spirit; and he is here called "the Spirit of his Son."

Nor have we the names alone, for each sacred person is mentioned as acting in the work of our salvation: see the fourth verse, "God sent forth his Son."; then note the fifth verse, which speaks of the Son as redeeming them that were under the law; and then the text itself reveals the Spirit as coming into the hearts of believers, and crying Abba, Father. Now, inasmuch, as you have not only the mention of the separate names, but also certain special operations ascribed to each, it is plain that you have here the distinct personality of each. Neither the Father, the Son, nor the Spirit can be an influence, or a mere form of existence, for each one acts in a divine manner, but with a special sphere and a distinct mode of operation. The error of regarding a certain divine person as a mere influence, or emanation, mainly assails the Holy Ghost; but its falseness is seen in the words—"crying, Abba, Father": an influence could not cry; the act requires a person to perform it. Though we may not understand the wonderful truth of the undivided Unity, and the distinct personality of the Triune Godhead, yet, nevertheless, we see the truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures: and, therefore, we accept it as a matter of faith.

The divinity of each of these sacred persons is also to be gathered from the text and its connection. We do not doubt the loving union of all in the work of deliverance. We reverence the Father, without whom we had not been chosen or adopted: the Father who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We love and reverence the Son by whose most precious blood we have been redeemed, and with whom we are one in a mystic and everlasting union: and we adore and love the divine Spirit, for it is by him that we have been regenerated, illuminated, quickened, preserved, and sanctified; and it is through him that we receive the seal and witness within our hearts by which we are assured that we are indeed the sons of God. As God said of old, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, even so do the divine Persons take counsel together, and all unite in the new creation of the believer. We must not fail to bless, adore, and love each one of the exalted Persons, but we must diligently bow in lowliest reverence before the one God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and

ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

Having noted this most important fact, let us come to the text itself, hoping to enjoy the doctrine of the Trinity while we are discoursing upon our adoption, in which wonder of grace they each have a share. Under the teaching of the divine Spirit may we be drawn into sweet communion with the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, to his glory and to our benefit.

Three things are very clearly set forth in my text: the first is the dignity of believers—"ye are sons;" the second is the consequent indwelling of the Holy Ghost—"because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts;" and the third is the filial cry—crying, "Abba, Father."

I. First, then, THE DIGNITY OF BELIEVERS. Adoption gives us the rights of children, regeneration gives us the nature of children: we are partakers of both of these, for we are sons.

And let us here observe that this sonship is a gift of grace received by faith. We are not the sons of God by nature in the sense here meant. We are in a sense "the offspring God" by nature, but this is very different from the sonship here described, which is the peculiar privilege of those who are born again. The Jews claimed to be of the family of God, but as their privileges came to them by the way of their fleshly birth, they are likened to Ishmael, who was born after the flesh, but who was cast out as the son of the bondwoman, and compelled to give way to the son of the promise. We have a sonship which does not come to us by nature, for we are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Our sonship comes by promise, by the operation of God as a special gift to a peculiar seed, set apart unto the Lord by his own sovereign grace, as Isaac was. This honour and privilege come to us, according to the connection of our text, by faith. Note well the twenty-sixth verse of the preceding chapter (Gal. 3:26): "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." As unbelievers we know nothing of adoption. While we are under the law as self-righteous we know something of servitude, but we know nothing of sonship. It is only after that faith has come that we cease to be under the schoolmaster, and rise

out of our minority to take the privileges of the sons of God.

Faith worketh in us the spirit of adoption, and our consciousness of sonship, in this wise: first, it brings us justification. Verse twenty-four of the previous chapter says, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." An unjustified man stands in the condition of a criminal, not of a child: his sin is laid to his charge, he is reckoned as unjust and unrighteous, as indeed he really is, and he is therefore a rebel against his king, and not a child enjoying his father's love. But when faith realizes the cleansing power of the blood of atonement, and lays hold upon the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, then the justified man becomes a son and a child. Justification and adoption always go together. "Whom he called them he also justified," and the calling is a call to the Father's house, and to a recognition of sonship. Believing brings forgiveness and justification through our Lord Jesus; it also brings adoption, for it is written, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

Faith brings us into the realization of our adoption in the next place by setting us free from the bondage of the law. "After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." When we groaned under a sense of sin, and were shut up by it as in a prison, we feared that the law would punish us for our iniquity, and our life was made bitter with fear. Moreover, we strove in our own blind self-sufficient manner to keep that law, and this brought us into yet another bondage, which became harder and harder as failure succeeded to failure: we sinned and stumbled more and more to our soul's confusion. But now that faith has come we see the law fulfilled in Christ, and ourselves justified and accepted in him: this changes the slave into a child, and duty into choice. Now we delight in the law, and by the power of the Spirit we walk in holiness to the glory of God. Thus it is that by believing in Christ Jesus we escape from Moses, the taskmaster, and come to Jesus, the Saviour; we cease to regard God as an angry Judge and view him as our loving Father. The system of merit and command, and punishment and fear, has given way to the rule of grace, gratitude, and love, and this new principle of government is one of the grand privileges of the children of God.

Now, faith is the mark of sonship in all who have it, whoever they may be, for "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus Gal. 3:26). If you are believing in Jesus, whether you are Jew or Gentile, bond or free, you are a son of God. If you have only believed in Christ of late, and have but for the past few weeks been able to rest in his great salvation, yet, beloved, now are you a child of God. It is not an after privilege, granted to assurance or growth in grace; it is an early blessing, and belongs to him who has the smallest degree of faith, and is no more than a babe in grace. If a man be a believer in Jesus Christ his name is in the register-book of the great family above, "for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." But if you have no faith, no matter what zeal, no matter what works, no matter what knowledge, no matter what pretensions to holiness you may possess, you are nothing, and your religion is vain. Without faith in Christ you are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, for without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith then, wherever it is found, is the infallible token of a child of God, and its absence is fatal to the claim.

This according to the apostle is further illustrated by our baptism, for in baptism, if there be faith in the soul, there is an open putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ. Read the twenty-seventh verse: "For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ." In baptism you professed to be dead to the world and you were therefore buried into the name of Jesus: and the meaning of that burial, if it had any right meaning to you, was that you professed yourself henceforth to be dead to everything but Christ, and henceforth your life was to be in him, and you were to be as one raised from the dead to newness of life. Of course the outward form avails nothing to the unbeliever, but to the man who is in Christ it is a most instructive ordinance. The spirit and essence of the ordinance lie in the soul's entering into the symbol, in the man's knowing not alone the baptism into water, but the baptism into the Holy Ghost and into fire: and as many of you as know that inward mystic baptism into Christ know also that henceforth you have put on Christ and are covered by him as a man is by his garment. Henceforth you are one in Christ, you wear his name, you live in him, you are saved by him, you are altogether his. Now, if you are one with Christ, since he is a son, you are sons also. If you have put on Christ God seeth you not in yourself but in

Christ, and that which belongeth unto Christ belongeth also unto you, for if you be Christ's then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. As the Roman youth when he came of age put on the toga, and was admitted to the rights of citizenship, so the putting on of Christ is the token of our admission into the position of sons of God. Thus are we actually admitted to the enjoyment of our glorious heritage. Every blessing of the covenant of grace belongs to those who are Christ's, and every believer is in that list. Thus, then, according to the teaching of the passage, we receive adoption by faith as the gift of grace.

Again, adoption comes to us by redemption. Read the passage which precedes the text: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Beloved, prize redemption, and never listen to teaching which would destroy its meaning or lower its importance. Remember that ye were not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish. You were under the law, and subject to its curse, for you had broken it most grievously, and you were subject to its penalty, for it is written, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die"; and yet again, "cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." You were also under the terror of the law, for you feared its wrath; and you were under its irritating power, for often when the commandment came, sin within you revived and you died. But now you are redeemed from all; as the Holy Ghost saith, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now ye are not under the law, but under grace, and this because Christ came under the law and kept it both by his active and his passive obedience, fulfilling all its commands and bearing all its penalty on your behalf and in your room and stead. Henceforth you are the redeemed of the Lord, and enjoy a liberty which comes by no other way but that of the eternal ransom. Remember this; and whenever you feel most assured that you are a child of God, praise the redeeming blood; whenever your heart beats highest with love to your great Father, bless the "firstborn among many brethren," who for your sakes came under the law, was circumcised, kept the law in his life, and bowed his head to it in his death, honouring, and

magnifying the law, and making the justice and righteousness of God to be more conspicuous by his life than it would have been by the holiness of all mankind, and his justice to be more fully vindicated by his death than it would have been if all the world of sinners had been cast into hell. Glory be to our redeeming Lord, by whom we have received the adoption!

Again, we further learn from the passage that we now enjoy the privilege of sonship. According to the run of the passage the apostle means not only that we are children, but that we are full-grown sons. "Because ye are sons," means,—because the time appointed of the Father is come, and you are of age, and no longer under tutors and governors. In our minority we are under the schoolmaster, under the regimen of ceremonies, under types, figures, shadows, learning our A B C by being convinced of sin; but when faith is come we are no longer under the schoolmaster, but come to a more free condition. Till faith comes we are under tutors and governors, like mere boys, but after faith we take our rights as sons of God. The Jewish church of old was under the yoke of the law; its sacrifices were continual and its ceremonies endless; new moons and feasts must be kept; jubilees must be observed and pilgrimages made: in fact, the yoke was too heavy for feeble flesh to bear. The law followed the Israelite into every corner, and dealt with him upon every point: it had to do with his garments, his meat, his drink, his bed, his board, and everything about him: it treated him like a boy at school who has a rule for everything. Now that faith has come we are full grown sons, and therefore we are free from the rules which govern the school of the child. We are under law to Christ, even as the full-grown son is still under the discipline of his father's house; but this is a law of love and not of fear, of grace and not of bondage. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Return not to the beggarly elements of a merely outward religion, but keep close to the worship of God in spirit and in truth, for this is the liberty of the children of God.

Now, by faith we are no more like to bond-servants. The apostle says that "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutor and governors till the time appointed of the father." But beloved, now are ye the sons of God, and ye have come

to your majority: now are ye free to enjoy the honours and blessings of the Father's house. Rejoice that the free spirit dwells within you, and prompts you to holiness; this is a far superior power to the merely external command and the whip of threatening. Now no more are you in bondage to outward forms, and rites, and ceremonies; but the Spirit of God teacheth you all things, and leads you into the inner meaning and substance of the truth.

Now, also, saith the apostle, we are heirs—"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." No man living has ever realised to the full what this means. Believers are at this moment heirs, but what is the estate? It is God himself! We are heirs of God! Not only of the promises, of the covenant engagements, and of all the blessings which belong to the chosen seed, but heirs of God himself. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." "This God is our God for ever and ever." We are not only, heirs to God, to all that he gives to his firstborn, but heirs of God himself. David said, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." As he said to Abraham, "Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward," so saith he to every man that is born of the Spirit. These are his own words—"I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Why, then, O believer, are you poor? All riches are yours. Why then are you sorrowful? The ever-blessed God is yours. Why do you tremble? Omnipotence waits to help you. Why do you distrust? His immutability will abide with you even to the end, and make his promise steadfast. All things are yours, for Christ is yours, and Christ is God's; and though there be some things which at present you cannot actually grasp in your hand, nor even see with your eye, to wit, the things which are laid up for you in heaven, yet still by faith you can enjoy even these, for "he hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ," "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance," so that "our citizenship is in heaven." We enjoy even now the pledge and earnest of heaven in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Oh what privileges belong to those who are the sons of God!

Once more upon this point of the believer's dignity, we are already tasting one of the inevitable consequences of being the sons of God. What are they? One of them is the opposition of the children of the bondwoman.

No sooner had the apostle Paul preached the liberty of the saints, than straightway there arose certain teachers who said, "This will never do; you must be circumcised, you must come under the law." Their opposition was to Paul a token that he was of the free woman, for behold the children of the bondwoman singled him out for their virulent opposition. You shall find, dear brother, that if you enjoy fellowship with God, if you live in the spirit of adoption, if you are brought near to the Most High, so as to be a member of the divine family, straightway all those who are under bondage to the law will quarrel with you. Thus saith the apostle, "As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." The child of Hagar was found by Sarah mocking Isaac, the child of promise. Ishmael would have been glad to have shown his enmity to the hated heir by blows and personal assault, but there was a superior power to check him, so that he could get no further than "mocking." So it is just now. There have been periods in which the enemies of the gospel have gone a great deal further than mocking, for they have been able to imprison and burn alive the lovers of the gospel; but now, thank God, we are under his special protection as to life and limb and liberty, and are as safe as Isaac was in Abraham's house. They can mock us, but they cannot go any further, or else some of us would be publicly gibbeted. But trials of cruel mockings are still to be endured, our words are twisted, our sentiments are misrepresented, and all sorts of horrible things are imputed to us, things which we know not, to all which we would reply with Paul, "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" This is the old way of the Hagarenes, the child after the flesh is still doing his best to mock him that is born after the Spirit. Do not be astonished, neither be grieved in the least degree when this happens to any of you, but let this also turn to the establishment of your confidence and to the confirmation of your faith in Christ Jesus, for he told you of old, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

II. Our second head is THE CONSEQUENT INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST IN BELIEVERS;—"God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Here is a divine act of the Father. The Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son: and God hath sent him forth

into your hearts. If he had only come knocking at your hearts and asked your leave to enter, he had never entered, but when Jehovah sent him he made his way, without violating your will, but yet with irresistible power. Where Jehovah sent him there he will abide, and go no more out for ever. Beloved, I have no time to dwell upon the words, but I want you to turn them over in your thoughts, for they contain a great depth. As surely as God sent his Son into the world to dwell among men, so that his saints beheld his glory, the "glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," so surely hath God sent forth the Spirit to enter into men's hearts, there to take up his residence that in him also the glory of God may be revealed. Bless and adore the Lord who hath sent you such a visitor as this.

Now, note the style and title under which the Holy Spirit comes to us: he comes as the Spirit of Jesus. The words are "the Spirit of his Son," by which is not meant the character and disposition of Christ, though that were quite true, for God sends this unto his people, but it means the Holy Ghost. Why, then, is he called the Spirit of his Son, or the Spirit of Jesus? May we not give these reasons? It was by the Holy Ghost that the human nature of Christ was born of the Virgin. By the Spirit our Lord was attested at his baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and abode upon him. In him the Holy Spirit dwelt without measure, anointing him for his great work, and by the Spirit he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. The Spirit was also with him, attesting his ministry by signs and wonders. The Holy Ghost is our Lord's great gift to the church; it was after his ascension that he bestowed the gifts of Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the church to abide with the people of God for ever. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Christ, because, also, he is Christ's witness here below; for "there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood." For these and many other reasons he is called "the Spirit of his Son," and it is he who comes to dwell in believers. I would urge you very solemnly and gratefully to consider the wondrous condescension which is here displayed. God himself the Holy Ghost, takes up his residence in believers. I never know which is the more wonderful, the incarnation of Christ or the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Jesus dwelt here for awhile in human flesh untainted by sin, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate

from sinners; but the Holy Ghost dwells continually in the hearts of all believers, though as yet they are imperfect and prone to evil. Year after year, century after century, he still abideth in the saints, and will do so till the elect are all in glory. While we adore the incarnate Son, let us adore also the indwelling Spirit whom the Father hath sent.

Now notice the place wherein he takes up his residence.—"God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Note, that it does not say into your heads or your brains. The Spirit of God doubtless illuminates the intellect and guides the judgement, but this is not the commencement nor the main part of his work. He comes chiefly to the affections, he dwells with the heart, for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Now, the heart is the centre of our being, and therefore doth the Holy Ghost occupy this place of vantage. He comes into the central fortress and universal citadel of our nature, and thus takes possession of the whole. The heart is the vital part; we speak of it as the chief residence of life, and therefore the Holy Ghost enters it, and as the living God dwells in the living heart, taking possession of the very core and marrow of our being. It is from the heart and through the heart that life is diffused. The blood is sent even to the extremities of the body by the pulsings of the heart, and when the Spirit of God takes possession of the affections, he operates upon every power, and faculty, and member of our entire manhood. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and from the affections sanctified by the Holy Ghost all other faculties and powers receive renewal, illumination, sanctification, strengthening, and ultimate perfection.

This wonderful blessing is ours "because we are sons;" and it is fraught with marvellous results. Sonship sealed by the indwelling Spirit brings us peace and joy; it leads to nearness to God and fellowship with him; it excites trust, love, and vehement desire, and creates in us reverence, obedience, and actual likeness to God. All this, and much more, because the Holy Ghost has come to dwell in us. Oh, matchless mystery! Had it not been revealed it had never been imagined, and now that it is revealed it would never have been believed if it had not become matter of actual experience to those who are in Christ Jesus. There are many professors who know nothing of this; they listen to us with bewilderment as if we

told them an idle tale, for the carnal mind knoweth not the things that be of God; they are spiritual, and can only be spiritually discerned. Those who are not sons, or who only come in as sons under the law of nature, like Ishmael, know nothing of this indwelling Spirit, and are up in arms at us for daring to claim so great a blessing: yet it is ours, and none can deprive us of it.

III. Now I come to the third portion of our text—THE FILIAL CRY. This is deeply interesting. I think it will be profitable if your minds enter into it. Where the Holy Ghost enters there is a cry. "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son, crying, 'Abba, Father.'" Now, notice, it is the Spirit of God that cries—a most remarkable fact. Some are inclined to view the expression as a Hebraism, and read it, he "makes us to cry;" but, beloved, the text saith not so, and we are not at liberty to alter it upon such a pretence. We are always right in keeping to what God says, and here we plainly read of the Spirit in our hearts that he is crying "Abba, Father." The apostle in Romans 8:15 says, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," but here he describes the Spirit himself as crying "Abba, Father." We are certain that when he ascribed the cry of "Abba, Father" to us, he did not wish to exclude the Spirit's cry, because in the twenty-sixth verse of the famous eighth of Romans he says, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Thus he represents the Spirit himself as groaning with unutterable groanings within the child of God, so that when he wrote to the Romans he had on his mind the same thought which he here expressed to the Galatians,—that it is the Spirit itself which cries and groans in us "Abba, Father." How is this? Is it not ourselves that cry? Yes, assuredly; and yet the Spirit cries also. The expressions are both correct. The Holy Spirit prompts and inspires the cry. He puts the cry into the heart and mouth of the believer. It is his cry because he suggests it, approves of it, and educates us to it. We should never have cried thus if he had not first taught us the way. As a mother teaches her child to speak, so he puts this cry of "Abba, Father" into our mouths; yea, it is he who forms in our hearts the desire after our Father, God, and keeps it there. He is the Spirit of adoption, and the author of adoption's special and significant cry.

Not only does he prompt us to cry but he works in us a sense of need which compels us to cry, and also that spirit of confidence which emboldens us to claim such relationship to the great God. Nor is this all, for he assists us in some mysterious manner so that we are able to pray aright; he puts his divine energy into us so that we cry "Abba, Father" in an acceptable manner. There are times when we cannot cry at all, and then he cries in us. There are seasons when doubts and fears abound, and so suffocate us with their fumes that we cannot even raise a cry, and then the indwelling Spirit represents us, and speaks for us, and makes intercession for us, crying in our name, and making intercession for us according to the will of God. Thus does the cry "Abba, Father" rise up in our hearts even when we feel as if we could not pray and dare not think ourselves children. Then we may each say, "I live, yet not I, but the Spirit that dwelleth in me." On the other hand, at times our soul gives such a sweet assent to the Spirit's cry that it becometh ours also, but then we more than ever own the work of the Spirit, and still ascribe to him the blessed cry, "Abba, Father."

I want you now to notice a very sweet fact about this cry; namely, that it is literally the cry of the Son. God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, and that Spirit cries in us exactly according to the cry of the Son. If you turn to the gospel of Mark, at the fourteenth chapter, thirty-sixth verse, you will find there what you will not discover in any other evangelist (for Mark is always the man for the striking points, and the memorable words), he records that our Lord prayed in the garden, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." So that this cry in us copies the cry of our Lord to the letter—"Abba, Father." Now, I dare say you have heard these words "Abba, Father" explained at considerable lengths at other times, and if so, you know that the first word is Syrian or Aramaic; or, roughly speaking, Abba is the Hebrew word for "father." The second word is in Greek, and is the Gentile word, "pates," or pater, which also signifies father. It is said that these two words are used to remind us that Jews and Gentiles are one before God. They do remind us of this, but this cannot have been the principal reason for their use. Do you think that when our Lord was in his agony in the garden that he said, "Abba, Father" because Jews and Gentiles are one? Why should he have thought of that

doctrine, and why need he mention it in prayer to his Father? Some other reason must have suggested it to him. It seems to me that our Lord said "Abba" because it was his native tongue. When a Frenchman prays, if he has learned English he may ordinarily pray in English, but if ever he falls into an agony he will pray in French, as surely as he prays at all. Our Welsh brethren tell us that there is no language like Welsh—I suppose it is so to them: now they will talk English when about their ordinary business, and they can pray in English when everything goes comfortably with them, but I am sure that if a Welshman is in a great fervency of prayer, he flies to his Welsh tongue to find full expression. Our Lord in his agony used his native language, and as born of the seed of Abraham he cries in his own tongue, Abba. Even thus, my brethren, we are prompted by the spirit of adoption to use our own language, the language of the heart, and to speak to the Lord freely in our own tongue. Besides, to my mind, the word "Abba" is of all words in all languages the most natural word for father. I must try and pronounce it so that you see the natural childishness of it, "Ab—ba," "Ab—ba." Is it not just what your children say, ab, ab, ba, ba, as soon as they try to talk? It is the sort of word which any child would say, whether Hebrew, or Greek, or French, or English. Therefore, Abba is a word worthy of introduction into all languages. It is truly a child's word, and our Master felt, I have no doubt, in his agony, a love for child's words. Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, said, "Sing a hymn," but he added, "Sing me one of the bairns' hymns." When a man comes to die he wants to be a child again, and longs for bairns' hymns and bairns' words. Our blessed Master in his agony used the bairns' word, "Abba," and it is equally becoming in the mouth of each one of us. I think this sweet word "Abba" was chosen to show us that we are to be very natural with God, and not stilted and formal. We are to be very affectionate, and come close to him, and not merely say "Pater," which is a cold Greek word, but say "Abba," which is a warm, natural, loving word, fit for one who is a little child with God, and makes bold to lie in his bosom, and look up into his face and talk with holy boldness. "Abba" is not a word, somehow, but a babe's lispings. Oh, how near we are to God when we can use such a speech! How dear he is to us and dear we are to him when we may thus address him, saying, like the great Son himself, "Abba, Father."

This leads me to observe that this cry in our hearts is exceedingly near and familiar. In the sound of it I have shown you that it is childlike, but the tone and manner of the utterance are equally so. Note that it is a cry. If we obtain audience with a king we do not cry, we speak then in measured tones and set phrases; but the Spirit of God breaks down our measured tones, and takes away the formality which some hold in great admiration, and he leads us to cry, which is the very reverse of formality and stiffness. When we cry, we cry, "Abba": even our very cries are full of the spirit of adoption. A cry is a sound which we are not anxious that every passer-by should hear; yet what child minds his father hearing him cry? So when our heart is broken and subdued we do not feel as if we could talk fine language at all, but the Spirit in us sends forth cries and groans, and of these we are not ashamed, nor are we afraid to cry before God. I know some of you think that God will not hear your prayers, because you cannot pray grandly like such-and-such a minister. Oh, but the Spirit of his Son cries, and you cannot do better than cry too. Be satisfied to offer to God broken language, words salted with your griefs, wetted with your tears. Go to him with holy familiarity, and be not afraid to cry in his presence, "Abba, Father."

But then how earnest it is: for a cry is an intense thing. The word implies fervency. A cry is not a flippant utterance, nor a mere thing of the lips, it comes up from the soul. Hath not the Lord taught us to cry to him in prayer with fervent importunity that will not take a denial? Hath he not brought us so near to him that sometimes we say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me"? Hath he not taught us so to pray that his disciples might almost say of us as they did of one of old, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." We do cry after him, our heart and our flesh crieth out for God, for the living God, and this is the cry, "Abba, Father, I must know thee, I must taste thy love, I must dwell under thy wing, I must behold thy face, I must feel thy great fatherly heart overflowing and filling my heart with peace." We cry, "Abba, Father."

I shall close when I notice this, that the most of this crying is kept within the heart, and does not come out at the lips. Like Moses, we cry when we say not a word. God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." You know what I mean: it is not alone in

your little room, by the old arm-chair, that you cry to God, but you call him "Abba, Father," as you go about the streets or work in the shop. The Spirit of his Son is crying "Abba, Father," when you are in the crowd or at your table among the family. I see it is alleged as a very grave charge against me that I speak as if I were familiar with God. If it be so, I make bold to say that I speak only as I feel. Blessed be my heavenly Father's name, I know I am his child, and with whom should a child be familiar but with his father? O ye strangers to the living God, be it known unto you that if this be vile, I purpose to be viler still, as he shall help me to walk more closely with him. We feel a deep reverence for our Father in heaven, which bows us to the very dust, but for all that we can say, "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." No stranger can understand the nearness of the believer's soul to God in Christ Jesus, and because the world cannot understand it, it finds it convenient to sneer, but what of that? Abraham's tenderness to Isaac made Ishmael jealous, and caused him to laugh, but Isaac had no cause to be ashamed of being ridiculed, since the mocker could not rob him of the covenant blessing. Yes, beloved, the Spirit of God makes you cry "Abba, Father," but the cry is mainly within your heart, and there it is so commonly uttered that it becomes the habit of your soul to be crying to your Heavenly Father. The text does not say that he had cried, but the expression is "crying"—it is a present participle, indicating that he cries every day "Abba, Father." Go home, my brethren, and live in the spirit of sonship. Wake up in the morning, and let your first thought be "My Father, my Father, be with me this day. Go out into business, and when things perplex you let that be your resort—"My Father, help me in this hour of need." When you go to your home, and there meet with domestic anxieties, let your cry still be, "Help me, my Father." When alone you are not alone, because the Father is with you: and in the midst of the crowd you are not in danger, because the Father himself loveth you. What a blessed word is that,—"The Father himself loveth you"! Go, and live as his children. Take heed that ye reverence him, for if he be a father where is his fear? Go and obey him, for this is right. Be ye imitators of God as dear children. Honour him wherever you are, by adorning his doctrine in all things. Go and live upon him, for you shall soon live with him. Go and rejoice in him. Go and cast all your cares upon him. Go henceforth, and whatever men may see in you may they be compelled to own that you are

the children of the Highest. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." May you be such henceforth and evermore. Amen and amen.

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The Sweet Uses of Adversity

"Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me."—Job 10:2.

And will God contend with man? If God be angry, can he not take away the breath of his nostrils, and lay him low in the dust of earth? If the heart of the Almighty be moved unto hot displeasure, can he not speak in his anger, and will not the soul of man sink into the lowest hell? Will God contend—will he set himself in battle array against his creature? and such a creature?—the creature of an hour—a thing that is not, that is here to-day and gone to-morrow? Will the Almighty contend with the nothingness of man? Will the everlasting God take up the weapons of war, and go out to fight against the insect of a day? Well might we cry out to him, "after whom is my Lord the King gone forth? After a dead dog: after a flea?" Wilt thou hunt the partridge on the mountains with an army, and wilt thou go forth against a gnat with shield and spear? Shall the everlasting God who fainteth not, neither is weary, at whose reproof the pillars of heaven's starry roof tremble and start—will he become combatant with a creature? Yet our text saith so. It speaks of God's contending with man. Ah, surely, my brethren, it needs but little logic to understand that this not a contention of anger, but a contention of love. It needs, methinks, but a short sight for us to discover that, if God contendeth with man, it must be a contention of mercy. There must be a design of love in this. If he were angry he would not condescend to reason with his creature, and to have a strife of words with him; much less would he put on his buckler, and lay hold on his sword, to stand up in battle and contend with such a creature as man. You will all perceive at once that there must be love even in this apparently angry word; that this contention must, after all, have something to do with contentment, and that this battle must be, after all, but a disguised mercy, but another shape of an embrace from the God of love. Carry this consoling reflection in your thoughts while I am preaching to you; and if any of you are saying to-day, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me," the very fact of God contending with you at all, the fact that he has not consumed you, that he has not smitten you to the lowest hell, may thus, at the very

outset, afford consolation and hope.

Now, I propose to address myself to the two classes of persons who are making use of this question. First, I shall speak to the tried saint; and then I shall speak to the seeking sinner, who has been seeking peace and pardon through Christ, but who has not as yet found it, but, on the contrary, has been buffeted by the law, and driven away from the mercy-seat in despair.

I. First, then, to THE CHILD OF GOD. I have—I know I have—in this great assembly, some who have come to Job's position. They are saying, "My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." Sometimes to question God is wicked. As the men of Bethshemesh were smitten with death when they dared to lift up the lid of the ark and look into its sacred mysteries, so is it often death to our faith to question God. It often happens that the sorest plagues come upon us on account of an impudent curiosity which longs to pry between the folded leaves of God's great council-book, and find out the reason for his mysterious providences. But, methinks this is a question that may be asked. Inquiring here will not be merely curious: for there will be a practical affect following therefrom. Tried saint t follow me while I seek to look into this mystery and answer your question, and I pray you, select that one of several answers which I shall propound, which shall, to your judgment, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, seem to be the right one. You have been tried by trouble after trouble: business runs cross against you; sickness is never out of your house; while in your own person you are the continual subject of a sad depression of spirit. It seems as if God were contending with you, and you are asking, "Why is this" 'Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.?'

1. My first answer on God's part, my brother, is this—it may be that God is contending with thee that he may show his own power in upholding thee. God delighteth in his saints; and when a man delights in his child, if it be a child noted for its brightness of intellect, he delights to see it put through hard questions, because he knows that it will be able to answer them all. So God glories in his children. He loves to hear them

tried, that the whole world may see that there is none like them on the face of the earth, and even Satan may be compelled before he can find an accusation against them, to resort to his inexhaustible fund of lies. Sometimes God on purpose puts his children in the midst of this world's trials. On the right, left, before, behind, they are surrounded. Within and without the battle rages. But there stands the child of God, calm amidst the bewildering cry, confident of victory. And then the Lord pointeth joyously to his saint, and he saith, "See, Satan, he is more than a match for thee. Weak though he is, yet through my power, he all things can perform." And sometimes God permits Satan himself to come against one of his children; and the black fiend of hell in dragon's wings, meets a poor Christian just when he is faint and weary from stumblings in the valley of humiliation. The fight is long and terrible, and, well it may be, for it is a worm combating with the dragon. But see what that worm can do. It is trodden under foot, and yet it destroys the heel that treads upon it. When the Christian is cast down he utters a cry, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall yet shall I rise again." And so God pointeth to his child and with, "See there! see what I can do: I can make flesh and blood more mighty than the most cunning spirit; I can make poor feeble foolish man, more than a match for all the craft and might of Satan." And what will you say to this third proof that God puts us through? Sometimes God doth as it were, himself enter into the lists; oh, let us wonder to tell it. God to prove the strength of faith, sometimes himself makes war on faith. Think not that this is a stretch of the imagination. It is plain simple fact. Have ye never heard of the brook Jabbok, and of that angel-clothed God who fought with Jacob there, and permitted Jacob to prevail? What was this for? It was this: thus had God determined, "I will strengthen the creature so much, that I will permit it to overcome its Creator." Oh, what noble work is this, that while God is casting down his child with one hand, he should be holding him up with the other: letting a measure of omnipotence fall on him to crush him, while the like omnipotence supports him under the tremendous load. The Lord shows the world—"See what faith can do! "Well does Hart sing of faith—

"It treads on the world and on hell;
It vanquishes death and despair;
And, O! let us wonder to tell,

It overcomes heaven by prayer."

This is why God contends with thee: to glorify himself, by showing to angels, to men, to devils, how he can put such strength into poor puny man, that he can contend with his Maker, and become a prevailing prince like Israel, who as a prince had power of God, and prevailed. This, then, may be the first reason.

2. Let me give you a second answer. Perhaps, O tried soul! the Lord is doing this to develope thy graces. There are some of thy graces that would never be discovered if it were not for thy trials. Dost thou not know that thy faith never looks so grand in summer weather, as it does in winter? Hast thou not heard that love is too often like a glow-worm, that showeth but little light except it be in the midst of surrounding darkness? And dost thou not know that hope itself is like a star—not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity? Dost thou not understand that afflictions are often the black foils in which God doth set the jewels of his children's graces, to make them shine the better. It was but a little while ago that on thy knees thou west saying, "Lord, I fear I have no faith: let me know that I have faith." But dost thou know thou wast praying for trials, for thou canst not know that thou hast faith, until thy faith be exercised. Our trials, so to speak, are like wayfarers in a wood. When there is no intruder in the silent glades of the forest, the hare and the partridge lie; and there they rest, and no eye sees them. But when the intruding footstep is heard, then you see them start and run along the green lane, and you hear the whirr of the pheasant as it seeks to hide itself. Now, our trials are intruders upon our heart's rest; our graces start up and we discover them. They had lain in their lair, they had slept in their forms, they had rested in their nests, unless these intruding trials had startled them from their places. I remember a simple rural metaphor used by a departed divine. He says he was never very skillful at birds' nesting in the summer time, but he could always find birds' nests in the winter. Now, it often happens that when a man has but little grace, you can scarcely see it when the leaves of his prosperity are on him; but let the winter's blast come and sweep away his withered leaves, and then you discover his graces. Depend upon it, God often sends us trials that our graces may be discovered, and that we may

be certified of their existence. Besides, it is not merely discovery, it is real growth that is the result of these trials. There is a little plant, small and stunted, growing under the shade of a brood spreading oak; and this little plant values the shade which covers it, and greatly does it esteem the quiet rest which its noble friend affords. But a blessing is designed for this little plant. Once upon a time there comes along the woodman, and with his sharp axe he fells the oak. The plant weeps, and cries, "My shelter is departed: every rough wind will blow upon me, and every storm will seek to uproot me." "No, no," saith the angel of that flower, "now will the sun get at thee; now will the shower fall on thee in more copious abundance than before; now thy stunted form shall spring up into loveliness, and thy flower, which could never have expanded itself to perfection, shall now laugh in the sunshine, and men shall say, 'How greatly hath that plant increased! how glorious hath become its beauty through the removal of that which was its shade and its delight!'" See you not, then, that God may take away your comforts and your privileges to make you the better Christians? Why, the Lord always trains his soldiers, not by letting them lie on feather beds, but by turning them out and using them to forced marches and hard service He makes them ford through streams, and swim through rivers, and climb mountains, and walk many a long march with heavy knapsacks of sorrow on their backs. This is the way in which he makes soldiers—not by dressing them up in fine uniforms, to swagger at the barrack gates, and to be fine gentlemen in the eyes of the loungers in the park. God knows that soldiers are only to be made in battle; they are not to be grown in peaceful times. We may grow the stuff of which soldiers are made, but warriors are really educated by the smell of powder, in the midst of whizzing bullets, and roaring cannonades—not in soft and peaceful times. Well, Christian, may not this account for it all? Is not thy Lord bringing out thy graces and making them grow? This is the reason why he is contending with you.

3. Another reason may be found in this. It may be the Lord contends with thee because thou hast some secret sin which is doing thee sore damage. Dost thou remember the story of Moses? Never a man better beloved than he of the Lord his God, for he was faithful in all his house as a servant. But dost thou remember how the Lord met him on the way as he was going to Egypt, and strove with him? find why? Because he had in

his house an uncircumcised child. This child was, so long as it had not God's seal upon it, a sin in Moses; therefore God strove with him till the thing was done. Now, too often we have some uncircumcised thing in our house, some joy that is evil, some amusement that is sinful, some pursuit that is not agreeable to his will. And the Lord meets us often as he did Moses, of whom it is written—"The Lord met him by the way in the inn, and sought to kill him."—Exodus 4:24. Now search and look, for if the consolations of God be small with thee, there is some secret sin within. Put it away, lest God smite thee still more sorely, and vex thee in his hot displeasure. Trials often discover sins—sins we should never have found out if it had not been for them. We know that the houses in Russia are very greatly infested with rats and mice. Perhaps a stranger would scarcely notice them at first, but the time when you discover them is when the house is on fire; then they pour out in multitudes. And so doth God sometimes burn up our comforts to make our hidden sins run out; and then he enables us to knock them on the head and get rid of them. That may be the reason of your trial, to put an end to some long-fostered sin. It may be, too, that in this way God would prevent some future sin, some sin hidden from thine own eyes into which thou wouldst soon fall if it were not for his troubling thee by his providence. There was a fair ship which belonged to the great Master of the seas; it was about to sail from the port of grace to the haven of glory. Ere it left the shore the great Master said, "Mariners, be brave! Captain, be thou bold! for not a hair of your head shall perish; I will bring you safely to your desired haven. The angel of the winds is commissioned to take care of you on your way." The ship sailed right merrily with its streamers flying in the air. It floated along at a swift rate with a fair wind for many and many a day. But once upon a time there came a hurricane which drove them from the course, strained their mast until it bent as if it must snap in twain. The sail was gone to ribbons; the sailors were alarmed and the captain himself trembled. They had lost their course. "They were out of the right track," they said; and they mourned exceedingly. When the day dawned the waves were quiet, and the angel of the winds appeared; and they spoke unto him, and said, "Oh angel, wast thou not bidden to take charge of us, and preserve us on our journeys?" He answered, "It was even so, and I have done it. You were steering on right confidently, and you knew not that a little ahead of your vessel lay a quicksand upon which she would be

wrecked and swallowed up quick. I saw that there was no way for your escape but to drive you from your course. See, I have done as it was commanded me: go on your way." Ah, this is a parable of our Lord's dealings with us. He often drives us from our smooth course which we thought was the right track to heaven. But there is a secret reason for it; there is a quicksand ahead that is not marked in the chart. We know nothing about it; but God seeth it, and he will not permit this fair vessel, which he has himself insured, to be stranded anywhere; he will bring it safely to its desired haven.

4. I have now another reason to give, but it is one which some of you will not understand; some however will. Beloved, ye remember that it is written, that we "must bear the image of the heavenly," namely, the image of Christ. As he was in this world even so must we be. We must have fellowship with him in his sufferings, that we may be conformable unto his death. Hast thou never thought that none can be like the Man of Sorrow unless they have sorrows too? How can you be like unto him, who sweat as it were great drops of blood, if you do not sometimes say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Think not, O well-beloved, that thou canst be like the thorn-crowned head, and yet never feel the thorn. Canst thou be like thy dying Lord, and yet be uncrucified? Must thy hand be without a nail, and thy foot without a wound? Canst thou be like him, unless like him thou art compelled to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God is chiselling you—you are but a rough block—he is making you into the image of Christ; and that sharp chisel is taking away much which prevents your being like him. Must he who is our head be marred in his visage by reason of grief, and must we for ever rejoice and sing? It cannot be.

"The heirs of salvation, I know from his word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

Sweet is the affliction which gives us fellowship with Christ. Blessed is the plough that ploughs deep furrows, if the furrows be like his. Blessed is the mouth that spits upon us, if the spittle be from the same cause as that which defiled his face. Blessed are the nails and thorns, and vinegar and spear, if they but make us somewhat like to him, in whose glory we shall be partakers when we shall see him as he is. This is a matter which

all cannot understand, for it is a path which no unhallowed foot hath trodden, and no careless eye hath so much as seen it. But the true believer can rejoice therein, for he has had fellowship with Christ in his sufferings.

5. To the child Of God I shall give only one more reason. The Lord, it may be, contendeth with thee, my brother, to humble thee. We are all too proud; the humblest of us do but approach to the door of true humility. We are too proud, for pride, I suppose, runs in our very veins, and is not to be gotten out of us any more than the marrow from our bones. We shall have many blows before we are brought down to the right mark; and it is because we are so continually getting up that God is so continually putting us down again. Besides, don't you feel, in looking back on your past troubles, that you have after all been best when you have had troubles? I can truly say, there is a mournfulness in joy, and there is a sweet joy in sorrow. I do not know how it is, but that bitter wine of sorrow, when you once get it down gives such a warmth to the inner man as even the wine of Lebanon can scarce afford. It acts with such a tonic influence upon the whole system, that the very veins begin to thrill as the blood leaps therein. Strange influence! I am no physician, but yet I know that my sweet cup often leaves bitterness on the palate, and my bitter cup always leaves a sweet flavour in the mouth. There is a sweet joy in sorrow I cannot understand. There is music in this harp with its strings all unstrung and broken. There are a few notes I hear from this mournful lute that I never get from the loud-sounding trumpet. Softness and melody we get from the wail of sorrow, which we never get from the song of joy. Must we not account for this by the fact that in our troubles we live nearer to God? Our joy is like the wave as it dashes upon the shore—it throws us on the earth. But our sorrows are like that receding wave which sucks us back again into the great depth of Godhead. We should have been stranded and left high and dry upon the shore if it had not been for that receding wave, that ebbing of our prosperity, which carried us back to our Father and to our God again. Blessed affliction! it has brought us to the mercy seat; given life to prayer; enkindled love; strengthened faith; brought Christ into the furnace with us, and then brought us out of the furnace to live with Christ more joyously than before.

Surely, I cannot answer this question better. If I have not hit upon

the right reason, search and look my dearly beloved; for the reason is not far off if ye but look for it—the reason why he contendeth with you.

II. I have thus done with the saints; I shall now turn myself to address THE SEEKING SINNER, who is wondering that he has found no peace and comfort. By the way—running a little apart from the subject—I heard a brother saying the other evening in describing his experience, that before he was converted he Was never sick, never had an affliction at all, but from the very hour when he became converted, he found that trials and troubles came upon him very thick. I have been thinking of that ever since, and I think I have found a reason for it. When we are converted, it is the time of the singing of birds; but do you know the time of the singing of birds is the time of the pruning of vines, and as sure as the time of the singing of birds is come the time of the pruning of vines is come also. God begins to try us as soon as he begins to make our soul sing. This is not running away from the subject. I thought it was. It has just brought me to address the sinner. You have come here this morning saying to yourself, "Sir, not long ago I was awakened to a sense of my lost estate. As I was directed I went home and sought mercy in prayer. From that day till now I have never ceased to pray. But, alas! I get no comfort, sir; I grow worse than ever I was before—I mean I grow more desponding, more sad. If you had asked me before conviction, sir, whether the path to heaven was easy, I should have said 'yes.' But now it seems to me to be strewn with flints. That I would not mind but, alas! methinks the gate is shut which lies at the end of the road; for I have knocked, and it has never opened; I have asked, and I have not received; I have sought, and I have not found. In fact, instead of getting peace I receive terror. God is contending with me. Can you tell me, sir, why it is?" I will try to answer the question, God helping me.

1. My first answer shall be this. Perhaps, my dear hearer, God is contending with you for awhile, because as yet you are not thoroughly awakened. Remember, Christ will not heal your wound till he has probed it to its very core. Christ is no unqualified physician, no foolish surgeon, who would close up a wound with proud flesh in it; but he will take the lances, and cut, and cut, and cut again crossways, and he will lay the sore open, expose it, look into it, make it smart; and then after that, he will

close up its mouth and make it whole. Perhaps thou hast not as yet known thine own vileness, thine own lost state. Now, Christ will have thee know thy poverty before he will make thee rich. His Holy Spirit will convince thee of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. He will strip thee, and though the pulling off of thy own righteousness be like flaying thee and tearing off the skin from thy breast, yet he will do it; for he will not clothe thee with the robe of his own righteousness till every rag of thy own self-sufficiency is pulled away. This is why God is contending with thee. Thou hast been on thy knees. Go lower, man—go lower; fall flat on thy face. Thou hast said, "Lord, I am nothing." Go lower, man; say, "Lord, I am less than nothing and the very chief of sinners." Thou hast felt somewhat; go ask that thou mayest feel more; may be yet more fully convinced of sin—may learn to hate it with a more perfect hatred, and to bewail thy lost estate with a wailing like that of Ramah, when Rachel wept for her children and would not be comforted because they were not. Seek to know the bottom of your case. Make it a matter of conscience to look thy sins in the face, and let hell also blaze before thee: realize the fact that thou deservest to be lost for ever. Sit down often and take counsel with the Lord thy God, whom thou hast grievously offended. Think of thy privileges, and how thou hast despised them; recollect the invitations thou hast heard, and how often thou hast rejected them; get a proper sense of sin, and it may be that God will cease to contend with thee, because the good is all obtained which he sought to give thee by this long and painful contention.

2. Another answer I will give you is this: perhaps God contends with thee in order to try thy earnestness. There are many Mr. Pliables, who set out on the road to heaven for a little time, and the first boggy piece of road they come to, they creep out on that side which is nearest to their own house, and go back again. Now, God meets every pilgrim on the road to heaven and contends with him. If you can hold your own, and say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him;" if you can dare to do it, and be importunate with God, and say, "Though he never hear me, if I perish I will pray, and perish only there;" then you have got the mastery and you shall succeed. God's Spirit is teaching you how to wrestle and agonize in prayer. I have seen a man, when he has become solemnly in earnest about his soul, pray as though he was a very Samson, with the two gates of

mercy in his hand, rocking them to and fro as though he would sooner pull them up—gates, and bar, and all—than he would go away without obtaining a blessing. God loves to see a man mighty in prayer, intent upon getting the blessing, resolved that he will have Christ, or he will perish seeking him. Now, be in earnest. Cry aloud! spare not! Rise in the night-watches! pour out your heart like water before the Lord, for he will answer thee when he hath heard the voice of thy crying; he will hearken to thy supplication and give thee the desire of thy heart.

3. Yet, again, another matter. "May it not be, my dear hearers, that the reason why God contends with you and does not give you peace is, because you are harbouring some one sin" Now, I will not say what it is; I have known a man solemnly under conviction of sin, but the company which he kept on market-day was of such a caste, that until he was separated entirely from his companions, it was not possible he should have peace. I do not know what your peculiar besetting sin may be. It may be a love for frivolity; it may be the desire to associate with those who amuse you; it may be worse. But remember, Christ and thy soul will never be one till thou and thy sins are two. Thy desires and longings must make a clean sweep of the devil and all his crew, or else Christ will not come and dwell with thee. "Well," says one, "but I cannot be perfect." No, but you cannot find peace till you desire to be. Wherever you harbour a sin, there you harbour misery. One sin wilfully indulged in, and not forsaken by true repentance, will destroy the soul. Sins given up are like goods cast out at sea by the mariners in days of storm; they lighten the ship, and the ship will never float till you have thrown all your sins overboard. There is no hope whatever for you till you can truly say,

"Whate'er consists not with thy love,
O help me to resign."

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee."

4. Then drawing near to a conclusion let me have your most solemn attention while I give one more hint as to the reason why you have not yet found peace. My dear hearers, perhaps it is because you do not thoroughly understand the plan of salvation. I do feel that all ministers,—and here perhaps, I am as great a sinner as any other, and I condemn myself while I chastise others—we all of us do in some way or other, I fear, help to dim the lustre of God's grace, as manifested in the cross of Christ. Often am I afraid lest I should prefer Calvinism to Calvary, lest I should put the sinner's sense of need like a quickset hedge round the cross, and keep the poor sinner from getting as near as he would to the bleeding Lamb of God. Ah, my dear hearers, remember if you would be saved, your salvation comes wholly and entirely from Jesus Christ, the dying Son of God. View him yonder, sinner, sweating in the garden! See the red drops of blood as they fall from that dear face! Oh, see him sinner, see him in Pilate's hall. View the streams of gore as they gush from those lacerated shoulders. See him, sinner, see him on his cross! View that head still marked with the wounds with which the thorns pierced his temples! Oh, view that face emaciated and marred! See the spittle still hanging there—the spittle of cruel mockers! See the eyes floating in tears with languid pity! Look, too, at those hands, and view them as they stream like fountains of blood! Oh, stand and listen while he cries, "Lama Sabachthani!" Sinner, thy life is in him that died; thy healing is in yonder wounds; thy salvation is in his destruction. "Oh," says one, "but I cannot believe." Ah, brother, that was once my mournful cry. But I will tell you how I came to believe. Once upon a time, I was trying to make myself believe, and a voice whispered, "Vain man, vain man, if thou wouldst believe, come and see!" Then the Holy Spirit led me by the hand to a solitary place. And while I stood there, suddenly there appeared before me One upon his cross. I looked up, I had then no faith. I saw his eyes suffused with tears, and the blood still flowing: I saw his enemies about him hunting him to his grave; I marked his miseries unutterable; I heard the groaning which cannot be described; and as I looked up, he opened his eyes and said to me, "The Son of Man is come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost." I clapped my hands, and I said, "Jesus, I do believe, I must believe what thou hast said, I could not believe before, but the sight of thee has breathed faith into my soul. I dare not doubt—it were treason, it were high treason to doubt thy power to save." Dissolved by his

agonies, I fell on the ground, and embraced his feet, and when I fell, my sin fell also! And I rejoiced in love divine that blots out sin and saves from death.

Oh my friend, you will never get faith by trying to make yourself have it. Faith is the gift of Christ! go and find it in his veins. There is a secret spot where faith is treasured up; it is in the heart of Christ; go and catch it sinner as it flows therefrom. Go to your chamber, and sit down and picture Christ in holy vision, dying on the tree, and as your eye sees, your heart shall melt, your soul shall believe, and you shall rise from your knees and cry, "I know whom I may believe, and I am persuaded he is able to save that which I have committed to him until that day."

And now, may the love of Christ Jesus, and the grace of his Father, and the fellowship of his Spirit, be with you for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

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Fallen Angels a Lesson To Fallen Men

"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."—
2 Peter 2:4.

These are ancient things. Most men hunger after the latest news; let us on this occasion go back upon the earliest records, and think of the hoar past, before man was made. It does us good to look back upon the past of God's dealings with his creatures; herein lies the value of history. We should not confine our attention to God's dealings with men, but we should observe how he acts towards another order of beings—how he dealt with angels before man had become the second sinner. If angels transgress, what is his conduct towards them? This study will enlarge our

minds, and show us great principles in their wider sweep. We shall inevitably make mistakes in our judgment as to God's conduct towards men if we do not remember sufficiently how he has dealt with beings who are in certain respects much superior to the human race. By seeing how God treated the rebellions angels, light may be cast upon his dealings with us, and thereby misapprehensions may be removed.

We shall go to our subject at once, asking aid from the Spirit of all grace. We will first view the mysterious fact of the fall of the angels, and their casting away, for our warning. Then, secondly, we shall regard the fact of the hopeless doom of the angels that sinned as it stands in contrast to the amazing mercy of the Lord towards men. Thus our second head will lead us to view the text for our admiration: I hope for the increase of our grateful love and reverent wonder.

I. First, then, let us consider our text FOR OUR WARNING.

"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell." Behold here a wonder of wickedness, angels sin; a wonder of justice, God spared them not; a wonder of punishment, he cast them down to hell; a wonder of future vengeance, for they are reserved unto judgment! Here are deep themes, and terrible. Black as tempest are the facts, and flashes of terrible lightning flame forth therefrom.

Let us receive a warning, first, against the deceivableness of sin, for whoever we may be, we may never reckon that, on account of our position or condition, we shall be free from the assaults of sin, or even certain of not being overcome by it. Notice that these who sinned were angels in heaven, so that there is no necessary security in the most holy position. We know that they were in heavenly places, for it was from that high abode that they were cast down to hell, by the terrible right hand of the Eternal King. These angels, that kept not their first estate, but sinned against God, dwelt with their brethren in the courts of the Most High; they seemed to be, as it were, walled round with fire to keep out all evil from them. Their communications were only with perfect spirits like themselves; but yet, as they were undergoing a probation, they were made capable of choosing evil if they willed so to do, or of cleaving to good if their hearts were steadfast with their God. There were none about

them to tempt them to evil; they were, on the contrary, surrounded with every good and holy influence: they saw God, and abode in his courts, they conversed with seraphim and cherubim. Their daily engagements were all of a holy order; worship and service were their duty and delight. Their company was select; there were no lapsed classes among them to render the moral atmosphere impure. They were not only in a paradise, but in the central abode of God himself. Yet evil entered into the breasts of angels—even envy, ambition, pride, rebellion; and they fell, fell never to rise again,

"High in the bright and happy throng,
Satan, a tall archangel sat;
Amongst the morning stars he sung,
Till sin destroy'd his heavenly state.

"'Twas sin that hurled him from his throne.
Groveling in fire the rebel lies:
'How art thou sunk in darkness down,
Son of the morning, from the skies!'"

Beloved hearer, this should teach us not to presume upon anything connected with our position here below. You may be the child of godly parents who watch over you with sedulous care, and yet you may grow up to be a man of Belial. You may never enter a haunt of iniquity, your journeys may be only to and from the house of God, and yet you may be a bond-slave of iniquity. The house in which you live may be none other than the house of God and the very gate of heaven through your father's prayers, and yet you may yourself live to blaspheme. Your reading may be bound up with the Bible; your companions may be of the choicest; your talk may concern holy things; you may be as if you were in the garden of the Lord, shut in to everything that is good, and every evil shut out from you; and yet you may have no part nor lot with the people of God. As there were a Ham and an ungodly Canaan even in Noah's Ark, so may it turn out that you may be such in the very midst of all that should make you gracious and sanctified. It is unhappy indeed to read the annals of human life, and to meet with men that have gone from their mother's side

—have gone from where their father knelt in prayer—have gone out from brothers and sisters whose piety was not only unquestionable, but even remarkable,—and they have gone to be leaders in every form of wickedness. Many of the enemies of the cross of Christ have been so trained in godliness that we find it hard to believe that they can indeed be so vile; an apostle must declare it with tears ere he is believed. The sons of God they seemed to be, but they turned out to be sons of perdition after all. Let no man, therefore, arise and shake himself, as though no sins could ever bind him, because he feels himself to be a very Samson through his connections and surroundings. Yes, sir, it may be that you shall fall—fall foully, fall desperately, unless the grace of God be in you—fall so as never to come to God, and Christ, and find eternal life. It was so with these angels. The best natural thing that creation can work is not sufficient to preserve the fickle creature from sin: regeneration must come in—the work of the Holy Ghost, a yet higher work than the material creating power of God, or else you may put the creature where you please, and that creature may be perfect, and yet sin will reach and destroy him. You and I are far from perfect. We are not angels unfallen: we are not angels at all; but we have evil hearts within us; therefore let us not imagine for a moment that the most select position can screen us from the worst of sin.

The next thought is that the greatest possible ability, apparently consecrated, is still nothing to rely upon as a reason why we should not yet fall so low as to prostitute it all to the service of the worst of evils. Angels are beings of remarkable power. We know that they have amazing intelligence and beauty. We read of one whose face was like that of an angel of God. When a thing is spoken of as being exceedingly good, it is often connected with angels: "men did eat angels' food." It is supposed that everything with regard to them is of superior order and of refined quality. I suppose that a spirit that is not cumbered with flesh and blood, as we are, must be delivered from much that hampers and beclouds. Oftentimes a clear judgment is dimmed by a headache, or an attack of indigestion. Anything that affects the body drags down the mind; but these angelic beings are delivered from such weakness, and they are clothed with a glory of strength, and beauty, and power.

Hear then and observe! However great Lucifer was, he degenerated into Satan: the Son of the Morning became Apollyon the Destroyer. However excellent the fallen angels may once have been, they have now become potent only for mischief; their wisdom has curdled into cunning, and their strength has soured into a vicious force; so that no man may say within himself, "I am a clear thinker, therefore I shall never become a blaspheming infidel;" or, "I am gifted in prayer, therefore I shall never become a blasphemer." You know not what you may become. There is a great difference between gift in prayer and grace in prayer: gift will breed pride, and pride will ensure destruction; it is only grace that can preserve unto eternal glory. There is also a great difference between office and person; therefore, a man may not say, "I am a minister: I shall be kept faithful in the church of God." Ah me! But we have seen leaders turn aside, and we need not marvel; for if angels fall, what man may think that he can stand? To trust our office as a security is to rest upon a broken reed. The grace of God can keep the least and weakest of us; but apart from that heavenly power how dare any man hope to be preserved to the end? Self-confidence is the beginning of declension. He that reckons that he is past temptation, is already entangled in its net. We must never presume. Angels fell: why should not men? An angel occupies a high position near the throne of God: "Are they not all ministering spirits?" We have evidence in Scripture that they are called on grand occasions to discharge high commissions for the King of kings. And yet these courtiers, these household messengers of the palace of heaven, these domestics of glory, even these went astray, and fell, and turned to devils. Let no man dream that because he occupies an office in the church his salvation is therefore secure: an apostle fell. The arrows of the prince of darkness can reach the highest seats of the synagogue. The high places of the field of service are not free from danger; nay, they are the more perilous as they are the more notable. The powers of darkness make their direst onset upon the foremost soldiers of the cross, hoping to overthrow the standard-bearers, and create confusion throughout the camp.

Neither, dear friends—to continue my warning—must any of us suppose that we shall be kept by the mere fact that we are engaged in the sublimest possible office. Apart from the perpetual miracle of God's grace, nothing can keep us from declension, apostacy, and spiritual

death. "Oh, but I spend my time," one may say—"I spend my time wholly in the service of God! I go from door to door seeking the lost souls of men, as a city missionary"; or "I conduct a large class in the school, and I have brought many to the Savior." All this is good; but if thou trustest in it for thy standing before God it will certainly fail thee. If any one of us were to say, "But I am a minister, called to offer prayer, and to preach the precious word: my engagements are so sanctified, they bring me into such hallowed fellowship with holy things, that it is not possible that I should fall,"—this would be the height of folly. We need not go beyond the pale of professed ministers of Christ to find specimens of every infamy of which man is capable. After having preached to others there is grave cause for trembling lest we be castaways ourselves. No, there is nothing in the most sacred office in the church to preserve us or our characters. Office, if we trust in it, may even become, as in the case of Judas, a Tarpeian rock, from which we may be cast down to our destruction; for the angelic office in heaven did not keep the angels from being hurled over the battlements of glory when once they dared to sin. Let not the angels of the churches hope to be kept from falling unless he that beareth the seven stars in his right hand shall keep them even to the end.

I want you to notice, as a great warning, that this sin of the angels was not prevented! even by the fullest happiness. Oh, what a change, dear friends, from the joy they once knew, when they were the servants of God, to being cast down to hell in chains of darkness, as they now are! The devils go about the world tempting men, but they are never released from their darkness. They cannot escape from the prison which they make for themselves—the blackness and horror of God's judgment which always shuts them in, be they where they may. What a difference between that and the throne of God, and the vision thereof, which was once their joy! The service of God was once theirs, but now the slavery of evil holds them in iron bonds. Once they took delight in the high praises of their Creator, and now they curse him in their heart of hearts. Once, on high days, when the servants of God came together, they sang for joy as they beheld new worlds created by their great Lord and King; now, everything he does is as gall and wormwood to them. They curse him and themselves, and they are busily occupied always in seeking to pull down his kingdom, and to quench his light among the sons of men. Oh, the misery of these old

offenders! They once were supremely happy—but this happiness of theirs did not suffice to preserve their fidelity. The most golden wages will not keep a servant loyal to the kindest of masters. The most blessed experience will not preserve a soul from sinning. You may come here and be greatly blessed under a sermon, and sweetly sing, and pray with intense fervor, and seem carried up to the gates of heaven by it—but do remember that no feelings of joy or happiness can be relied upon as sufficient holdfasts to keep us near the Lord. We have seen men drink of the cup of the Lord till they appeared to be full of love to him; and yet they have gone back to be drunken with the cup of devils. We have known men preach the gospel, and yet afterwards blaspheme every truth of revelation, and deny the inspiration of the Book of God. We have known them appear to be among the holiest and the best, and yet they have come at last to be common frequenters of the most evil haunts of the city, and to be ringleaders in folly. Is not this a dreadful thing, and should it not be a warning to every one of us? "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." There is one who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before his presence with exceeding great joy; but if we do not trust in him, and abide in him, we shall perish. If we dare to confide in our position, our ability, our office, our service, or our experience, we shall, sooner or later, discover that we are prone to sin, and that when we sin God will not spare us any more than he spared the angels that sinned.

This warning, be it noted, applies itself to the very foulest of sin. The angels did not merely sin and lose heaven, but they passed beyond all other beings in sin, and made themselves fit denizens for hell. When Christ was describing the most wicked of men, he said that he was a devil. "One of you is a devil," was his expression; for the devil is the wickedest form of existence. Now, is it not singular that after being in heaven it remained possible for an angel to become so dreadful a being as a devil in hell now is? If any of us come very near to the kingdom, and yet the life of God is not in us; if we are joined with the church of God, and perform holy duties, and yet we depend upon ourselves, and so fall into sin, we may fall into the foulest of sins. I do not think that Judas could have been what he was if he had not been an apostle. The best of that which looks like goodness must be used as the raw material with which to make a

traitor who will sell his Master. The devils have gone into open war with God: the same beings that once bowed before his awful majesty are now openly and defiantly at war with the God that made them. They once could sing their chorales with delight, and day without night circle the throne of God rejoicingly, but now they blaspheme, and rage, and rave against all that is good in earth or heaven. They go about like roaring lions seeking whom they may devour,—even they who once would have been ministering spirits, eager to save and bless. They were once loyal subjects, but now they are traitors, rebels, seducers. They try to lead the people of God astray; they do their utmost to stir up sin in every human bosom. So bad have they become that their leader actually met the Son of God himself, and tempted him to fall down and worship him. Was ever such infamous, such infernal impudence as for the devil himself to ask the eternal Son of God to do him homage? O base proposal, that the purity of the Most High should bow itself before the impiety of a fallen spirit! Yet, so far have devils proceeded that in them evil has reached its ripeness and maturity. Let this be a lesson to us. I must not for a moment think that apart from the keeping of God's Spirit I am incapable even of the foulest sin. Recall the story of Hazael. When the prophet told him what he would do, he exclaimed in amazement, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" He was not only dog enough to seek the Syrian throne, but he was devil enough to suffocate his master with a wet cloth, and then to carry out with eagerness all those terrible deeds of barbarity which the prophet had foretold. We may yet do horrible deeds which we think ourselves incapable of doing. How much of devil there lies within the unregenerate heart no man can tell. O my unrenewed hearer, I would not slander thee, but I must warn thee: there are all the makings of a hell within thy heart! It only needs that the restraining hand of God should be removed, and thou wouldst come out in thy true colors, and those are the colors of iniquity. If it were not for the restraints of society and providence, there would be eruptions of evil, even in the most moral, sufficient to shake society to its foundations. An officer in India had tamed a leopard. From the time when it was quite a kitten he had brought it up, till it went about the house like a cat, and everybody played with it; but he was sitting in his chair one day asleep, and the leopard licked his hand—licked it in all innocence; but as he licked, the skin was broken, and the taste of blood came to the leopard, and from that moment it was

not content to dwell with men. It rushed forth to kill, and was no more at ease till it reached the jungle. That leopard, though tamed, was a leopard still. So a man, sobered by moral motives, but unchanged in heart, is a fallen man still, and the taste of blood, I mean the taste of sin, will soon reveal the tiger in him. Wash a Russian, and you find a Tartar; tempt a moralist, and you discover a sinner! The thin crust of goodness, which is formed by education, soon disappears under temptation. You may be everything that looks like good, but except you have been born again you are still capable of the direst evil. It does seem a horrible thing to me that there should stream from a man's lips the foulest blasphemy, and yet he that utters it was once accustomed to sing in the house of God, and bow his knee with the saints. O God, that ever a creature bidding fair to serve his Maker, should sink to such a depth! Yet such horrors abound! The vessel which adorned the lordly festival is broken and thrown on the dunghill, and even so the excellent and honorable are defiled and cast away. I know what some are whispering, "I never should become an open reprobate I" How know you that? You already question the warnings of Scripture, you may go further before long. He that is the most sure is the most insecure; but he that cries, "Hold thou me up," shall be made to stand. Be this our confession, "O Lord, I know that I shall become utterly vile except thy sovereign grace prevent! "In humility let us cast ourselves upon the mighty grace of God, and we shall be kept. In fervent earnestness let us cry to the strong for strength, and we shall not be overcome of evil. He that presumes shall fall; he that confides shall stand.

The text may lead us a little farther before we leave it, by giving us a warning against the punishment of sin as well as against the sin itself. Read this,—"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell." They were very great; they were very powerful; but God did not spare them for that. If sinners are kings, princes, magistrates, millionaires, God will cast them into hell. If they were commanders of all the forces of the world, he that is a just and righteous judge would not spare them because of their dignities and powers. "God spared not the angels," why should he spare you, ye great ones of the earth? They were very numerous, too. I do not know how many there were, but we read of legions of devils on one occasion. But God did not spare angelic sinners because there were so many of them: he made room in hell for them all;

and set them in darkness and in bonds, every one of them. God will not spare sinful men because of their millions: "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Be they few or many, sinners must be punished, and God will not turn away his wrath from those who do iniquity. God did not spare the rebel angels because of their unity. I never heard of devils quarrelling: it is very wonderful in Scripture to notice their unanimity—their concord with one another; but "though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished." You unbelievers may combine together to hate and oppose the gospel, but it matters not, God will deal with your confederacies and break up your unities, and make you companions in hell even as you have been comrades in sin. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell."

Neither did he spare them because of their craft. There were never such subtle creatures as these are—so wise, so deep, so crafty; but these serpents and all the brood of them had to feel the power of God's vengeance, notwithstanding their cunning. Men often escape at the bar of their country because of their long-headed ways of evading the law; they keep within legal bounds, and yet are great villains; or if they go over the line they hire a clever tongue to plead for them, be they as guilty as they may, and through crafty pleading they escape from a righteous sentence. Thus is it with men, but no counsellors can pervert judgment with the Most High. He will deal out justice even to a hair's breadth, and he will by no means spare the guilty. "God spared not the angels that sinned:" why should he spare any guilty son of Adam? Be sure that he will not spare any one of us, if we live in sin. Unless we accept the way of salvation by Jesus Christ our sin will find us out, and God will find our sin out, and he will cast us also down to the place prepared for the devil and his angels. Let the flatterers of to-day preach what they may, the Lord will punish men who live and die in their sins. He spared not the angels that sinned; certainly he will not spare men if they sin. Let this stand as a warning to us.

II. But now I want to carry you on and ask all your attention to this second point for OUR ADMIRATION.

I want you to admire, dear friends, the fact that though angels fell the

saints of God are made to stand. The angels sinned fatally; but the saints of God "cannot sin, for they are born of God." You know the sense in which the apostle means that; not that we do not all sin, but that we do not so sin as to depart from the living God, give up our allegiance to him, and cease to be his loving children. No. "He keepeth himself," says the Scripture, "and that wicked one toucheth him not." But what a wonder it is! I tell you, when the tales of God's people shall be written, and the records of the saints shall be read by the light of glory, we shall be miracles of grace to ourselves and to one another. "Oh," we shall say, "I had almost gone, but the hand of grace interposed, and snatched me from slipping over the awful precipice. My mind almost consented to that sin, and yet I was able to cry out, 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' There was great stress of weather, and my poor barque was almost on the rocks; but still, though I grazed the bottom, yet I did not make shipwreck." "Oh, if I had been left at that moment," one will say, "what would have become of me? Though I had tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come, yet, had I been left to myself at that hour, I should have so fallen that I could never again have been brought to repentance. But I was kept; preserved by as great a miracle as if a spark should fall into the sea and yet burn on, or a straw should be blown into a heated furnace and should not be consumed, or a moth should be trodden on by a giant and yet remain uncrushed.

"Kept alive with death so near,
I to God the glory give."

To think that men should stand where angels fall! We are by sovereign grace called to be as near to God as the angels ever were, and in some respects we are nearer still. We are the body-guard of Christ, his chosen ones with whom he communes. We are the table companions of our Lord—we eat of his bread, and drink of his cup, and are made partakers with him. We are lifted up to be one with him, and are made to be "members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones;" yet God's eternal unbounded power keeps us in the day of temptation, and leads us so that if we go through the rivers we are not drowned, and when we pass through the fires we are not burned. O, the splendor of triumphant grace! Neither the glory of our calling, nor the unworthiness of our original, shall cause us to

be traitors; we shall neither perish through pride nor lust; but the new nature within us shall overcome all sin, and abide faithful to the end.

"Now, unto him that is able to keep us from falling, unto him be honor and glory, and dominion and power for ever and ever." I cannot look back on my past life without feeling the tears rush into my eyes at the remembrance of how I have been preserved in the trial-hour. We could not possibly tell, nor would we wish to tell in public, of those hours of weakness, those times of strong delusion, those moments of foot-slipping and of heart-fainting, which have happened to us. We grieve as we remember our worse than childish weaknesses. And yet we have not stained our garments; we have not dishonored the holy name by which we are named; we have not been suffered to turn aside from the straightness of our path so as to bring grief to the Holy Ghost and dishonor to the Church of God. Verily this is a wonder. Mr. Bunyan tells us that Christian by the light of day looked back on the Valley of the Shadow of Death which he had passed through in the nighttime, and saw what a narrow path he had kept, and what a quay there was on one side, and what a miry place on the other, and where the hobgoblins were, and all the fiends of hell. When he looked back on it he was lost in admiration and gratitude. So it must be, and will be with you if through a dangerous way you have yet held on in your plain course, and have not turned from your integrity. We shall be brim full of gratitude and love. Grace shall reign unto eternal life. Redeemed men shall stand where angels fall, for God shall keep them. He is able to hold them up, and he will do it even to the end.

Now, let us learn another lesson full of admiration, and that is that God should deal in grace with men and not with angels.

"From heaven the sinning angels fell,
And wrath and darkness chained them down;
But man, vile man, forsook his bliss,
And mercy lifts him to a crown.

"Amazing work of sovereign grace
That could distinguish rebels so!
Our guilty treasons called aloud

For everlasting fetters too."

Now, you that do not believe in the doctrine of election, but kick at it, and bite your lips at the mention of it, listen to this! God gave fallen angels no Savior, no gospel, no space for repentance, yet he gives these to men: why is this? What reason was there? Can you conceive one? Why did God pass the fallen angels by, and yet look in love upon the sons of men? "Oh," says one, "perhaps fallen angels were the greater offenders of the two." I do not think it; certainly many men go far to rival devils in rebellion.

"Perhaps men were tempted and angels were not." Stop, let us be clear on this point. Very likely Satan, the first angel that fell, was not tempted; but just as likely all the others were. Their leader tempted them as much as Eve tempted Adam, or the serpent tempted Eve. The mass of fallen angelhood may have been seduced by the example of Satan, the Prince of devils. I do not therefore see any great difference as to that matter. This I do know, that some men are greater sinners than devils. "No," say you, "how is that?" I answer that the devil never yet rejected free grace and dying love; the devil never yet struggled against the Holy Spirit in his own conscience; the devil never yet refused the mercy of God. These supreme pinnacles of wickedness are only reached by you who are hearers of the gospel, and yet cast its precious message behind your backs. Singular it is that God should deal in mercy with men who act so wickedly, while yet he never discoursed of mercy to the fallen angels, nor set before them terms of peace. They were given over there and then to be bound in chains of darkness until the judgment of the last great day.

Notice that God gave the angels no respite. He did not wait for them to continue in sin for years; but when they sinned, they fell. The punishment followed hard on the crime. They cast God out of their hearts, and he cast them out of heaven. How different is his conduct to some of you! You have sinned through a series of years. How old are you? Twenty years? Thirty? Forty? Fifty? Sixty? Seventy? Is it eighty years that you have lived in rebellion against God? And yet he has not cut you down! Wonderful patience! The angels he banished from his presence at once. He spared not the angels, but he has spared you. Why is this?

The Lord never entered into any parley with the angels—never invited them to repentance or to mercy. Oh, but what parleys God has had with some of you! I am not the only one who has entreated and persuaded you, but yet with some of you I have pleaded very earnestly that you would turn from the error of your ways and live—that you would believe in Christ and find eternal life. But why should the Lord treat concerning peace with men and not with fallen angels?

For the angels God never made a covenant of grace, "ordered in all things and sure." They broke their covenant of works, and they fell never to rise again. For the angels there was never a sacrifice: no dying Son of God for them: no bloody sweat and wounded hands and feet for them! And yet a great atonement is prepared for men. What sovereignty of God's grace is here displayed! He opens the golden gates of love for us, and shuts the iron gate on beings nobler than we are. The Spirit of God strives with us, but he never strives with fallen angels. Devils are left to themselves; but concerning man the Lord cries "how can I give thee up?" How justly might God have left us alone, for we have been given unto idols, and yet he follows us with the admonitions of his mercy.

For the devils there is no pardon, no hope, no gate of heaven; and yet there is all this for men. Oh, dear hearers, do not, I pray you, reject these choice gifts of Almighty love. If God is so specially gracious to the race of men, let not man become singularly ungrateful to his God, presumptuously wanton in his sin. Let us turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart, seeing that he turns to us with such speciality of favor.

I am sure that it is a great wonder and a thing for admiration that God should look upon us and not on fallen angels; because, as I have already said, angels certainly are not worse sinners than some men have been. Angels are not more wilful than we have been, for we have sinned against light and knowledge with deliberate intent and purpose.

Angels are certainly more valuable: if God had wanted one of the two races to be employed as his servants, the best would have been chosen, and these are not men, but angels. Angels can do more for God than we can: yet he has chosen us. Angels must, surely, be more missed than men: their downfall made a great gap in heaven. We go there to fill the space,

and to repair the breach which was made when they were cast down from glory. But, surely, it were easier to restore the angels who came from heaven than to take up inferior creatures who had never been there. If we make a distinction between men in the distribution of our charity, we very properly say, "Let us do good to those first who would be the most miserable without it." Now, men have never known heaven, and consequently cannot so much feel the loss of it as those who have been there and have fallen from it. We are like people that have always been poor; but the angels have been in heaven, and are therefore like wealthy persons who have come down to poverty. What a hell to them to be out of heaven! What misery to those spirits to miss the eternal glories which they once enjoyed! One would have thought, therefore, that God would have restored the angels before he upraised the human race. But he has not: he has redeemed us, and left the elder race of rebels unrestored. No man knoweth why, and in our amazement we cry,—How is this? Whence this election of grace?

Tell me, ye who would leave God no choice, but would deify the will of man, what all this means? Where is your proud theory that God is bound to treat all alike, as if we had a claim on God? I point you to the fallen angels, and what can you say?

Sometimes princes, when they mean to give pardon according to their will, say to themselves, "We will pardon the man who will be most dangerous if we leave him to be our enemy." Now, bad as men are, and great enemies of God as they become, yet the devil has more power to harm God than a man can have—and yet God does not pardon the devil. He lets Satan go on with all his dreadful power and do his worst in reviling his Lord; and yet the Lord's mercy comes to us whose powers are within so narrow a range, compared with the fallen angels; he makes choice of puny man to receive his grace.

One would think that to restore an angel was more easy and more agreeable to the plan of the universe than to exalt fallen man. There is nothing to do but to put an angel back in his place; but men must be taken into a new existence. Christ himself must come and be a man; and, to wash away the sin of man, Christ must die; nothing more could have been needed had devils been saved. I cannot conceive the salvation of

angels to be more difficult than the salvation of men. I rather conceive it to have been the easier thing of the two if the Lord had so willed it. And yet, involving as it did the incarnation of the Son of God and his death to make atonement, the infinitely gracious Father condescended to ordain that he would take up men, and would not take up the fallen angels. It is a marvel: it is a mystery. I put it before you for your admiration. Oh, sirs, do not despise it! Let not such amazing sovereignty of grace be treated with contempt by any one of us. Talk no more about the injustice of the election of certain men, for if you do the devils will bear witness that you are cavilling at the royal prerogative of the great Lord who saith, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Now, I think that I see in this a great argument with God's people. Has the Lord given up angels and chosen you? It reminds me of that famous text, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee. Therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. I gave Egypt for thy ransom; Ethiopia and Seba for thee." See, he has passed angels by, and he has made choice of us; what a height of grace! Behold how he loves us! What shall we do in return? Let us do angels' work. Come, brothers and sisters, let us glow with such a fire of devotion as might have burned in an auger's heart. Let us be as intensely zealous as a redeemed angel might have been. Let us glorify God as angels would have done had they been restored and made again to taste divine favor and infinite love. What manner of people ought we to be? What manner of lives ought we to live? What manner of consecration ought to be upon us? Should not our whole being live unto God?

I have given you this somewhat in the rough, for time flies; but think it over, and profit by it. Think it over, you ungodly ones, and not cast away mercy like this. When you read, "He took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham," be full of surprise, and fly at once to Jesus. And, O ye saints, as ye read it, say to yourselves—

"For more love than seraphs know
We will like seraphs burn."

God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Ascension of Christ

"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it, but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."—Ephesians 4:7-12.

Our blessed Lord and Master has gone from us. From the mount of Olives, the place where in dread conflict his garments were rolled in blood, he has mounted in triumph to his throne. After having shown himself for forty days amongst his beloved disciples, giving them abundant evidence that he had really risen from the dead, and enriching them by his divine counsels, he was taken up. Slowly rising before them all, he gave them his blessing as he disappeared. Like good old Jacob, whose departing act was to bestow a benediction on his twelve sons and their descendants, so ere the cloud received our Lord out of our sight, he poured a blessing upon the apostles, who were looking upward, and who were the representatives of his church. He is gone! His voice of wisdom is silent for us, his seat at the table is empty, the congregation on the mountain hears him no more. It would be very easy to have found reasons why he should not have gone. Had it been a matter of choice to us, we should have entreated him to tarry with us till the dispensation closed. Unless, peradventure, grace had enabled us to say: "Not as we will! but as thou wilt," we should have constrained him, saying, "Abide with us." What a comfort to disciples to have their own beloved teacher visibly with them! What a consolation to a persecuted band to see their

leader at their head; difficulties would disappear, problems would be solved, perplexities removed, trials made easy, temptations averted! Let Jesus himself, their own dear Shepherd be near, and the sheep will lie down in security. Had he been here we could have gone to him in every affliction, like those of whom it is said, "they went and told Jesus."

It seemed expedient for him to stay, to accomplish the conversion of the world. Would not his presence have had an influence to win by eloquence of gracious word and argument of loving miracle? If he put forth his power the battle would soon be over, and his rule over all hearts would be for ever established. "Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee." Go not from the conflict, thou mighty bowman, but still cast thine all-subduing darts abroad. In the days of our Lord's flesh, before he had risen from the dead, he did but speak, and those who came to take him fell to the ground; might we but have him near us no persecuting hand could seize us; at his bidding, the fiercest enemy would retire. His voice called the dead out of their graves; could we but have him still in the church his voice would awaken the spiritually dead. His personal presence would be better to us than ten thousand apostles, at least, so we dream; and we imagine that with him visibly among us the progress of the church would be like the march of a triumphant army.

Thus might flesh and blood have argued, but all such reasoning is hushed by our Lord's declaration, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." He might have told us that his majestic presence was expected by the saints in heaven to complete their felicity; he might have said that for himself it was fitting that after so long an exile and the performance of such stupendous labors, he should rise to his reward; he might also have added that it was due to his Father that he should return into the bosom of his love; but, as if he knew that their trembling at his departure was mainly occasioned by fear for their own personal interests, he puts the consoling word into this form: "It is expedient for you that I go away." He has gone then, and whether our weak understandings are able to perceive it or not, it is better for us that Jesus should be at the right hand of God than here corporeally in our assemblies below. Fain would a hundred Bethanias

entertain him, a thousand synagogues would rejoice to see him open the Scriptures; women there are among us who would kiss his feet, and men who would glory to unloose the latchets of his shoes; but he has gotten him away to the mountains of myrrh and the hills of frankincense. He no more sits at our tables, or walks with us on our highways; he is leading another flock to living fountains of waters, and let not his sheep below imagine that he has injured them by his removal; unerring wisdom has declared that it is expedient for us that he is gone.

This morning, instead of standing here gazing up into heaven; like the men of Galilee, deploring that we have lost our Lord, let us sit down in quiet contemplation, and see if we cannot gather profitable redactions from this great thing which has come to pass. Let our meditations ascend the yet glowing trackway of our Lord's ascension,—

"Beyond, beyond this lower sky,
Up where eternal ages roll."

We shall, by the Holy Spirit's aid, first consider, with a view to practical good, the fact of his ascension; secondly, the triumph of that ascension; thirdly, the gifts of that ascension; and then we shall conclude by noticing the bearings of that ascension upon the unconverted.

I. First, then, let our earnest thoughts gaze upward, viewing THE FACT OF THE ASCENSION. We lay aside all controversy or attempt at mere doctrinal definition, and desire to meditate upon the ascension with a view to comfort, edification, and soul profit.

It should afford us supreme joy to remember that he who descended into the lower parts of the earth has now "ascended up far above all heavens." The descent was a subject of joy to angels and men, but it involved him in much humiliation and sorrow, especially when, after having received a body which, according to the psalmist, was "curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth," he further descended into the bowels of the earth, and slept as a prisoner in the tomb. His descent on earth, though to us the source of abounding joy, was full of pain, shame, and humiliation to him. In proportion, then, ought to be our joy that the shame is swallowed up in glory, the pain is lost in bliss, the death in immortality.

Did shepherds sing at his descent, let all men sing at his rising. Well deserves the warrior to receive glory, for he has dearly won it. Our love of justice and of him compels us to rejoice in his rejoicing. Whatever makes the Lord Jesus glad makes his people glad. Our sympathy with him is most intense; we esteem his reproach above all wealth, and we set equal store by his honor. As we have died with him, were buried with him in baptism, have also risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who raised him from the dead, so also have we been made to sit together in the heavenly places, and have obtained an inheritance. If angels poured forth their sweetest minstrelsy when the Christ of God returned to his royal seat, much more should we. Those celestial beings had but slight share in the triumphs of that day compared with us; for it was a man who led captivity captive, it was one born of woman who returned victoriously from Bozrah. We may well say with the psalmist, in the sixty-eighth Psalm, to which our text refers, "Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him." It was none other than Christ, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; it was the second Adam who mounted to his glory. Rejoice, O believers, as those who shout because of victory, divide ye the spoil with the strong.

"Bruised is the serpent's head,
Hell is vanquished, death is dead,
And to Christ gone up on high,
Captive is captivity.

All his work and warfare done,
He into his heaven is gone,
And beside his Father's throne,
Now is pleading for his own:

Sing, O heavens! O earth, rejoice!
Angel harp and human voice,
Round him, in his glory, raise
Your ascended Savior's praise."

Reflect yet again that from the hour when our Lord left it, this world has lost all charms to us. If he were in it, there were no spot in the universe which would hold us with stronger ties; but since he has gone up he draws us upward from it. The flower is gone from the garden, the first ripe fruit is gathered. Earth's crown has lost its brightest jewel, the star is gone from the night, the dew is exhaled from the morning, the sun is eclipsed at noon. We have heard of some who, when they lost a friend or favorite child never smiled again, for nothing could supply the dreary vacuum. To us it could not be that any affliction should bring us such grief, for we have learned to be resigned to our Father's will; but the fact that "Jesus, our all, to heaven is gone," has caused something of the same feeling in our souls; this world can never be our rest now, its power to content us is gone. Joseph is no more in Egypt, and it is time for Israel to be gone. No, earth, my treasure, is not here with thee, neither shall my heart be detained by thee. Thou art, O Christ, the rich treasure of thy people, and since thou art gone thy people's hearts have climbed to heaven with thee.

Flowing out of this is the great truth that "our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Brethren, inasmuch as Christ is gone our life is hid with him in God. To the glory-land our Head is gone, and the life of the members is there. Since the head is occupied with things celestial, let not the members of the body be groveling as slaves to terrestrial things. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Our Bridegroom has gone into the ivory palaces, he dwelleth in the midst of his brethren; do we not hear him calling us to commune with him? Hear ye not his voice, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away"? Though awhile our bodies linger here, let our spirits even now walk the golden streets, and behold the King in his beauty. Begin, O faithful souls, to-day the occupation of the blessed, praising God even while ye linger yet below, and honoring him if not by the same modes of service as the perfect ones above, yet with the same obedient delight. "Our conversation is in heaven." May you and I know what that means to the full. May we take up our celestial burgess-rights, exercise our privileges and avocations as heavenly citizens, and live as those that

are alive from the dead, who are raised up together and made partakers of his resurrection life. Since the head of the family is in the glory, let us by faith perceive how near we are to it, and by anticipation live upon its joys and in its power. Thus the ascension of our Lord will remind us of heaven, and teach us the holiness which is our preparation for it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has gone from us. We return again to the thought. We cannot speak into his ear and hear his voice reply in those dear accents with which he spoke to Thomas and to Philip. He no longer sits at feasts of love with favored friends, such as Mary and Martha and Lazarus. He has departed out of this world unto the Father, and what then? Why he has taught us by this the more distinctly, that we must henceforth walk by faith and not by sight. The presence of Jesus Christ on earth would have been, to a great extent, a perpetual embargo upon the life of faith. We should all have desired to see the Redeemer; but since, as man, he could not have been omnipresent, but could only have been in one spot at one time, we should have made it the business of our lives to provide the means for journey to the place where he might be seen; or if he himself condescended to journey through all lands, we should have fought our way into the throng to feast our eyes upon him, and we should have envied each other when the turn came for any to speak familiarly with him. Thank God we have no cause for clamor or strife or struggle about the mere sight of Jesus after the flesh; for though once he was seen corporeally by his disciples, yet now after the flesh know we even him no more. Jesus is no more seen of human eyes; and it is well, for faith's sight is saving, instructing, transforming, and mere natural sight is not so. Had he been here we should have regarded much more the things which are visible, but now our hearts are taken up with the things which are not seen, but which are eternal. This day we have no priest for eyes to gaze upon, no material altar, no temple made with hands, no solemn rites to satisfy the senses; we have done with the outward and are rejoicing in the inward. Neither in this mountain nor in that do we worship the Father, but we worship God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. We now endure as seeing him who is invisible; whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In the same fashion as we walk towards our Lord, so walk we towards all that he reveals; we walk by faith, not by

sight. Israel, in the wilderness, instructed by types and shadows, was ever prone to idolatry; the more there is of the visible in religion, the more is there of difficulty in the attainment of spirituality. Even baptism and the Lord's Supper, were they not ordained by the Lord himself, might be well given up, since the flesh makes a snare of them, and superstition engrafts on them baptismal regeneration and sacramental efficacy. Our Lord's presence might thus have become a difficulty to faith, though a pleasure to sense. His going away leaves a clear field for faith; it throws us necessarily upon a spiritual life, since he who is the head, the soul, the center of our faith, hope, and love is no more within the range of our bodily organs. It is poor believing which needs to put its finger into the nail-prints; but blessed is he that hath not seen and yet hath believed. In an unseen Savior we fix our trust, from an unseen Savior we derive our joy. Our faith is now the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Let us learn this lesson well, and let it never be said to us, "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Let us never attempt to live by feeling and evidence. Let us banish from our soul all dreams of finding perfection in the flesh, and equally let us discard all cravings for signs and wonders. Let us not be like the children of Israel, who only believed while they saw the works of the Lord. If our Beloved has hidden himself from our sight, let him even hide everything else, if so it pleases him. If he only reveals himself to our faith, the eye which is good enough to see him with is good enough to see everything else with, and we will be content to see his covenant blessings, and all else with that one eye of faith, and no other, till the time shall come when he shall change our faith to sight.

Beloved, let us further reflect how secure is our eternal inheritance now that Jesus has entered into the heavenly places. Our heaven is secured to us, for it is in the actual possession of our legal representative, who can never be dispossessed of it. Possession is nine points of the law, but it absolutely secures completely our tenure under the gospel. He who possesses a covenant blessing shall never lose it, for the covenant cannot be changed, nor its gifts withdrawn. We are heritors of the heavenly Canaan by actual hold and sure title, for our legal representative,

appointed by the highest court of judicature, has entered into possession and actual occupancy of the many mansions of the great Father's house. He has not merely taken possession, but he is making all ready for our reception and eternal inhabitation. A man who enters a house and claims it, if he has any question about his rights, will not think of preparing it for the inhabitants, he will leave any expenditure of that kind till all doubts are cleared up: but our good Lord has taken such possession of the city of the new Jerusalem for us, that he is daily preparing it for us, that where he is we may be also. If I could send to heaven some mere human being like myself to hold my place for me till my arrival, I should fear that my friend might lose it: but since my Lord, the King of heaven and the Master of angels, has gone thither to represent all his saints and claim their places for them, I know that my portion is secure. Rest content, beloved, and sing for joy as the apostle's heart did when he wrote "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance."

Further, if Jesus has gone into the glory, how successful must our prayers be. You send a petition to court, and you hope for its success, for it is drawn up in proper style, and it has been countersigned by an influential person; but when the person who has backed your plea for you is himself at court, to take the petition and present it there, you feel safer still. To-day our prayers do not only receive our Savior; imprimatur, but they are presented by his own hand, as his own requests. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," "let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." No prayer which Jesus urges can ever be dismissed unheard, that case is safe for which he is advocate.

"Look up, my soul, with cheerful eye
See where the great Redeemer stands;
The glorious Advocate on high,
With precious incense in his hands.

He sweetens every humble groan,
He recommends each broken prayer;
Recline thy hope on him alone,
Whose power and love forbid despair."

Once more, though I feel this theme might detain us long, we must leave it, and remark further that, as we consider Christ ascended, our hearts burn within us at the thought that he is the type of all his people. As he was, so are we also in this world; and as he is, so shall we also be. To us also there remain both a resurrection and an ascension. Unless the Lord come very speedily, we shall die as he did, and the sepulcher shall receive our bodies for awhile; there is for us a tomb in a garden, or a rest in the Machpelah of our fathers. For us there are winding-sheets and grave-clothes; yet like our Lord we shall burst the bonds of death, for we cannot be holden of them. There is a resurrection morning for us, because there was a rising again for him. Death could as soon have held the head as the members; the prison doors once taken away, post and bar and all, the captives are set free. Then when we have risen from the dead at the blast of the archangel's trumpet, we shall ascend also, for is it not written that we shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall be for ever with the Lord? Have courage, brother; that glittering road up to the highest heavens, which Christ has trodden, you too must tread; the triumph which he enjoyed shall be yours in your measure. You, too, shall lead your captivity captive, and amidst the acclamations of angels you shall receive the "well done" of the ever-blessed Father, and shall sit with Jesus on his throne, even as he has overcome and sits with the Father upon his throne.

I have rather given you suggestions for meditation than the meditations themselves. May the Holy Spirit bless them to you; and as you in imagination sit down on Olivet and gaze into the pure azure, may the heavens open to you, and, like Stephen, may you see the Son of Man at the right hand of God.

II. Let us advance to the second point, and dwell upon it very briefly—**THE TRIUMPH OF THE ASCENSION.** Psalmists and apostles have delighted to speak upon our Lord's triumphal ascension to the hill of the Lord. I shall not attempt to do more than refer to what they have said. Call to your minds how the Psalmist in vision saw the Savior's ascension, and, in the twenty-fourth Psalm, represented the angels as saying: "Lift

up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." The scene is described in rich poetic imagery of the most sublime kind, and it evidently teaches us that when our Savior left the sight of mortals, he was joined by bands of spirits, who welcomed him with acclamations and attended him in solemn state as he entered the metropolis of the universe. The illustration which has usually been given is, I think, so good that we cannot better it. When generals and kings returned from war, in the old Roman ages, they were accustomed to celebrate a triumph; they rode in state through the streets of the capital, trophies of their wars were carried with them, the inhabitants crowded to the windows, filled the streets, thronged the house-tops, and showered down acclamations and garlands of flowers upon the conquering hero as he rode along. Without being grossly literal, we may conceive some such a scene as that attending our Lord's return to the celestial seats. The sixty-eighth Psalm is to the same effect: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." So also in Psalm forty-seven: "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." Angels and glorified spirits, saluted our returning champion; and, leading captivity captive, he assumed the mediatorial throne amidst universal acclamations. "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly triumphing over them in it."

Our Lord's ascension was a triumph over the world. He had passed through it unscathed by its temptations; he had been solicited on all hands to sin, but his garments were without spot or blemish. There was no temptation which had not been tried upon him, the quivers of the earth had been emptied against him, but the arrows had glanced harmlessly from his armor of proof. They had persecuted him relentlessly; he had been made to suffer all that cruel scorn could invent, but he came forth from the furnace with not the smell of fire upon him. He had endured death itself with love unquenched and courage invincible. He had conquered by enduring all. As he rose he was infinitely beyond their reach; though they hated him no less than before, he had

been forty days amongst them, and yet no hand was outstretched to arrest him. He had shown himself openly in divers places, and yet not a dog dare move his tongue. In the clear air, from far above the hills of Salem, he who was once tempted in the desert, looked down upon the kingdoms of the earth, which had been shown him by Satan as the price of sin, and reserved them all as his own by right of merit. He rises above all, for he is superior to all. As the world could not injure his character by its temptations, so no longer could it touch his person by its malice. He has defeated altogether this present evil world.

There, too, he led captive sin. Evil had assailed him furiously, but it could not defile him. Sin had been laid upon him, the weight of human guilt was borne upon his shoulders, it crushed him down, but he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and proved that he had shaken off the load, and left it buried in his sepulcher. He has abolished the sins of his people; his atonement has been so efficacious that no sin is upon him, the Surety, and certainly none remains upon those for whom he stood as substitute. Though once the Redeemer stood in the place of the condemned, he has so suffered the penalty that he is justified now, and his atoning work is finished for ever. Sin, my brethren, was led captive at our Immanuel's chariot-wheels when he ascended.

Death also was led in triumph. Death had bound him, but he snapped each fetter, and bound death with his own cords.

"Vain the stone, the water, the seal,
Christ has burst the gates of hell;
Death in vain forbids his rise,
Christ hath opened paradise.

Lives again our glorious King!
'Where, O death, is now thy sting?'
Once he died our souls to save;
'Where's thy victory, boasting grave?'"

Our Savior's ascension in that same body which descended into the lower parts of the earth, is so complete a victory over death, that every dying saint may be sure of immortality, and may leave his body behind without

fear that it shall for ever abide in the vaults of the grave.

So, too, Satan, was utterly defeated! He had thought that he should overcome the seed of the woman when he had bruised his heel, but lo! as the conqueror mounts aloft, he breaks the dragon's head beneath his feet. See ye not the celestial coursers as they drag the war chariot of the Prince of the house of David up the everlasting hills! He comes who has fought the prince of darkness! Lo! he has bound him in iron fetters. See how he drags him at his chariot wheels, amidst the derision of all those pure spirits who retained their loyalty to the almighty King! Oh, Satan! thou wast worsted then! Thou didst fall like lightning from heaven when Christ ascended to his throne.

Brethren in Christ, everything that makes up our captivity Christ has led captive. Moral evil he has defeated, the difficulties and trials of this mortal life he has virtually overcome. There is nothing in heaven, or earth, or hell, that can be thought to be against us which now remaineth, he hath taken all away. The law he hath fulfilled; its curse he hath removed: the handwriting against us, he hath nailed to his cross. All foes of ours he hath made a show of openly. What joy there is to us in this triumph! What bliss to be interested in it by the gift of faith in him!

III. We may now turn to consider THE GIFTS OF THE ASCENSION. Our Lord ascended on high, and gave gifts to men. What were these gifts which he both received from God and gave to men? Our text says that he ascended that he might fill all things. I do not think this alludes to his omnipresence—in that respect he does fill all things; but allow me to explain, as I receive it, the meaning of the passage, by a very simple figure. Christ descended into the lowest parts of the earth, and thereby he laid the foundations of the great temple of God's praise: he continued in his life laboring, and thereby he built the walls of his temple: he ascended to his throne, and therein he laid the topstone amidst shoutings. What remained then? It remained to furnish it with inhabitants, and the inhabitants with all things necessary for their comfort and perfection. Christ ascended on high that he might do that. In that sense the gift of the Spirit fills all things, bringing in the chosen, and furnishing all that is necessary for their complete salvation. The blessings which come to us through the ascension, are "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work

of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Observe next, that these filling blessings of the ascension are given to all the saints. Does not the first verse of our text say: "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." The Holy Spirit is the particular benediction of the ascension, and the Holy Spirit is in measure given to all truly regenerated persons. You have all, my brethren, some measure of the Holy Spirit; some more; some less but whatever you have of the Holy Spirit comes to you, because Christ, when he ascended up on high, received gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Every Christian having the gift of Christ in his measure, is bound to use it for the general good; for in a body no joint or member exists for itself, but for the good of the whole. You, brother, whether you have much grace or little, must, according to the effectual working in you, supply your part to the increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. See that ye regard your gifts in this light; trace them to Christ, and then use them for the object for which he designed them.

But to some persons the Holy Spirit is given more largely. As the result of the ascension of Christ into heaven the church received apostles, men who were selected as witnesses because they had personally seen the Savior—an office which necessarily dies out, and properly so, because the miraculous power also is withdrawn. They were needed temporarily, and they were given by the ascended Lord as a choice legacy. Prophets, too, were in the early church. They were needed as a link between the glories of the old and new covenant; but each prophetic gift came from the Spirit through the Redeemer's ascent to glory. There remain rich gifts among us still, which I fear we do not sufficiently prize. Among men God's richest gifts are men of high vocation, separated for the ministry of the gospel. From our ascended Lord come all true evangelists; these are they who preach the gospel in divers places, and find it the power of God unto salvation; they are founders of churches, breakers of new soil, men of a missionary spirit, who build not on other men's foundations, but dig out for themselves. We need many such deliverers of the good news where as

yet the message has not been heard. I scarcely know of any greater blessing to the church than the sending forth of earnest, indefatigable, anointed men of God, taught of the Lord to be winners of souls. Who among us can estimate the value of George Whitfield to the age in which he lived? Who shall ever calculate the price of a John Williams or a William Knibb? Whitfield was, under God, the salvation of our country, which was going down straight to Pandemonium; Williams reclaimed the islands of the sea from cannibalism, and Knibb broke the negro's chains. Such evangelists as these are gifts beyond all price. Then come the pastors and teachers, doing one work in different forms. These are sent to feed the flock; they abide in one place, and instruct converts which have been gathered—these also are invaluable gifts of the ascension of Jesus Christ. It is not given unto all men to be pastors, nor is it needed; for if all were shepherds, where were the flock? Those to whom this grace is especially given are fitted to lead and instruct the people of God, and this leading is much required. What would the church be without her pastors? Let those who have tried to do without them be a warning to you.

Wherever you have pastors or evangelists they exist for the good of the church of God. They ought to labor for that end, and never for their own personal advantage. Their power is their Lord's gift, and it must be used in his way.

The point I want to come at is this. Dear friends, since we all, as believers, have some measure of the Spirit, let us use it. Stir up the gift that is in thee. Be thou not like to him in the parable who had but one talent and hid it in a napkin. Brother, sister, if thou be in the body the least known joint, rob not the body by indolence or selfishness, but use the gift thou hast in order that the body of Christ may come to its perfection. Yet since thou hast not great personal gifts, serve the church by praying the Lord who has ascended to give us more evangelists, pastors, and teachers. He alone can give them; any that come without him are imposters. There are some prayers you must not pray, there are others you may pray, but there are a few you must pray. There is a petition which Christ has commanded us to offer, and yet I very seldom hear it. It is this one. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." We greatly lack evangelists and pastors. I do not mean that we lack muffs,

who occupy the pulpits and empty the pews. I believe the market has for many years been sufficiently supplied therewith; but we lack men who can stir the heart, arouse the conscience, and build up the church. The scatterers of flocks may be found everywhere; the gatherers of them, how many have we of such? Such a man at this day is more precious than the gold of Ophir. The Queen can make a bishop of the Established Church, but only the ascended Lord can send a bishop to the true church. Prelates, popes, cardinals, vicars, prebends, canons, deans, the Lord has nothing to do with. I see not even the name of them in his word, but the very poorest pastor whom the Lord ordains is a gift of his ascending glory. At this moment we are deploring that in the mission field our good men are grey. Duff, Moffat, and the like, are passing from the stage of action. Where are their successors? I was almost about to say, Echo answers, Where? We want evangelists for India, for China, for all the nations of the earth; and though we have many godly fathers among us, who are instructors in the faith, yet have we in all our pastorates few of eminence, who could be mentioned in the same day as the great Puritanic divines. If the ministry should become weak and feeble among us, the church richly deserves it, for this, the most important part of her whole organization, has been more neglected than anything else. I thank God this church has not only prayed for ministers, but has proved the sincerity of her prayer by helping such as God has called, by affording them leisure and assistance for understanding the way of God more perfectly. We have thought that Christ's gifts were valuable enough for us to treasure up and improve them. Our College has now received and sent forth, in the name of Jesus, more than two hundred ministers of the word. Look around you and see how few churches care to receive the ascension gifts of Christ, and how few pastors encourage young men to preach. I read the other day, with unutterable horror, the complaint that our churches were like to have too many ministers; an almost blasphemous complaint, impugning the value of Christ's ascension gifts. O that God would give us ten times the number of men after his own heart, and surely there would be then great lack of more! But there are too many, say they, for the present pulpits. Oh, miserable soul is it come to this, that a minister of Christ must have a pulpit ready to hand? Are we all to be builders on other men's foundations? Have we none among us who can gather their own flocks? In a three million city like this can any man say that laborers for

Christ are too many? Loiterers are too many, doubtless; and when the church drives out the drones, who shall pity them? While there remain hundreds of towns and villages without a Baptist church, and whole districts of other lands without the gospel, it is idle to dream that of evangelists and teachers we can have too many. No man is so happy in his work as he who presides over a flock of his own gathering, and no pastor is more beloved than he who raised from ruin a destitute church and made it to become a joy and praise in the earth. Pray the Lord to send true pastors and true evangelists. Christ procured them by his ascension. Let us not forget this. What! shall it be thought that the blessings of the crucifixion are worth the having, and the blessings of the resurrection worth receiving, but the blessings of the ascension are to be regarded with indifference or even with suspicion? No; let us prize the gifts which God gives by his Son, and when he sends us evangelists and pastors, let us treat them with loving respect. Honor Christ in every true minister; see not so much the man as his Master in him. Trace all gospel success to the ascended Savior. Look to Christ for more successful workers. As they come receive them from his hands, when they come treat them kindly as his gifts, and daily pray that the Lord will send to Zion mighty champions of the faith.

IV. We shall conclude by noticing THE BEARING OF OUR LORD'S ASCENSION UPON sinners.

We will utter few words, but full of comfort. Did you notice in the sixty-eighth Psalm the words: "He received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also"? When the Lord went back to his throne he had thoughts of love towards rebels still. The spiritual gifts of the church are for the good of the rebels as well as for the building up of those who are reconciled. Sinner, every true minister exists for thy good, and all the workers of the church have an eye to you.

There are one or two promises connected with our Lord's ascension which show his kindness to you: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." An ascended Savior draws you—run after him. Here is another word of his: "He is exalted on high." To curse? No; "to give repentance and remission of sins." Look up to the glory into which he has entered; ask for repentance and remission. Do ye doubt his power

to save you? Here is another text: "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Surely he has gone to heaven for you as well as for the saints. You ought to take good heart, and put your trust in him at this happy hour.

How dangerous it will be to despise him! They who despised him in his shame perished. Jerusalem became a field of blood because it rejected the despised Nazarene. What will it be to reject the King, now that he has taken to himself his great power? Remember, that this same Jesus who is gone up to heaven, will so come in like manner as he was seen to go up into heaven. His return is certain, and your summons to his bar equally certain; but what account can you give if you reject him? O come and trust him this day. Be reconciled to him lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little. The Lord bless you, and grant you a share in his ascension. Amen, and Amen.

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The Blessing of Full Assurance

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. - 1 John 5:13

John wrote to believers - "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." It is worthy of note that all the epistles are so written. They are not letters to everybody, they are letters to those who are called to be saints. It ought to strike some of you with

awe when you open the Bible and think how large a part of it is not directed at you. You may read it, and God's Holy Spirit may graciously bless it to you, but it is not directed to you. You are reading another man's letter: thank God that you are permitted to read it, but long to be numbered with those to whom it is directed. Thank God much more if any part of it should be used of the Holy Ghost for your salvation. The fact that the Holy Spirit speaks to the churches and to believers in Christ should make you bow the knee and cry to God to put you among the children, that this Book may become your Book from beginning to end, that you may read its precious promises as made to you. This solemn thought may not have struck some of you: let it impress you now.

We do not wonder that certain men do not receive the epistles, for they were not written to them. Why should they cavil at words which are addressed to men of another sort from themselves? Yet we do not marvel, for we knew it would be so. Here is a will, and you begin to read it; but you do not find it interesting: it is full of words and terms which you do not take the trouble to understand, because they have no relation to yourself; but should you, in reading that will, come upon a clause in which an estate is left to you, I warrant you that the nature of the whole document will seem changed to you. You will be anxious now to understand the terms, and to make sure of the clauses, and you will even wish to remember every word of the clause which refers to yourself. O dear friends, may you read the Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ as a testament of love to yourselves, and then you will prize it beyond all the writings of the sages.

This leads me to make the second remark, that as these things are written to believers, believers ought especially to make themselves acquainted with them, and to search into their meaning and intent. John says, "These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God." Do not, I beseech you, neglect to read what the Holy Ghost has taken care to write to you. It is not merely John that writes. John is inspired of the Lord, and these things are written to you by the Spirit of God. Give earnest heed to every single word of what God has sent as his own epistle to your hearts. Value the Scriptures. Luther said that "he would not be in paradise, if he might, without the Word of the Lord; but with the Word

he could live in hell itself." He said at another time that "he would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible." The Scriptures are everything to the Christian - his meat and his drink. The saint can say, "O how I love thy law!" If we cannot say so, something is wrong with us. If we have lost our relish for Holy Scripture, we are out of condition, and need to pray for spiritual health.

This much is the porch of my sermon, let us now enter more fully into our subject, noticing, first, that John wrote with a special purpose; and then going on to assert, secondly, that this purpose we ought to follow up.

I. First, JOHN WROTE WITH A SPECIAL PURPOSE. Men do not write well unless they have some end in writing. To sit down with paper and ink before you, and so much space to fill up, will ensure very poor writing. John knew what he was at. His intent and aim were clear to his own mind, and he tells us what they were.

According to the text the beloved apostle had one clear purpose which branched out into three.

To begin with, John wrote that we might enjoy the full assurance of our salvation. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

Many who believe on the name of Jesus are not sure that they have eternal life; they only hope so. Occasionally they have assurance, but the joy is not abiding. They are like a minister I have heard of, who said he felt assured of his salvation, "except when the wind was in the east." It is a wretched thing to be so subject to circumstances as many are. What is true when the wind is in the soft south or the reviving west is equally true when the wind is neither good for man nor beast. John would not have our assurance vary with the weather-glass, nor turn with the vane. He says, "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." He would have us certain that we are partakers of the new life, and so know it as to reap the golden fruit of such knowledge, and be filled with joy and peace through believing.

I speak affectionately to the weaker ones, who cannot yet say that they know they have believed. I speak not to your condemnation, but to your consolation. Full assurance is not essential to salvation, but it is essential to satisfaction. May you get - may you get it at once; at any rate may you never be satisfied to live without it. You may have full assurance. You may have it without personal revelations: it is wrought in us by the Word of God. These things are written that you may have it; and we may be sure that the means used by the Spirit are equal to the effect which he desires. Under the guidance of the Spirit of God, John so wrote as to attain his end in writing. What, then, has he written with the design of making us know that we have eternal life? Go through the whole Epistle, and you will see that it all presses in that direction; but we shall not at this present have time to do more than glance through this chapter.

He begins thus: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Do you believe that Jesus is the anointed of God? Is he so to you? Is he anointed as your prophet, priest, and king? Have you realized his anointing so as to put your trust in him? Do you receive Jesus as appointed of God to be the Mediator, the Propitiation for sin, the Saviour of men? If so, you are born of God. "How may I know this?" Brethern, our evidence is the witness of God himself as here recorded. We need no other witness. Suppose an angel were to tell you that you are born of God, would that be a more sure testimony than the infallible Scripture? If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. John has thus positively declared the truth, that you may know that you have eternal life. Can anything be more clear than this?

The loving spirit of John leads him to say, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Do you love God? Do you love his Only-begotten Son? You can answer those two questions surely. I knew a dear Christian woman who would sometimes say, "I know that I love Jesus; but my fear is that he does not love me." Her doubt used to make me smile, for it never could have occurred to me. If I love him, I know it is because he first loved me. Love to God in us is always the work of God's love towards us. Jesus loved us, and gave himself for us, and therefore we love him in return. Love to Jesus is an effect which proves the existence of its cause. Do you love Jesus? Do you feel a delight in

him? Is his name as music to your ear, and honey to your mouth? Do you love to hear him extolled? Ah, dear friends! I know that to many of you a sermon full of his dear name is as a royal banquet; and if there is no Christ in a discourse, it is empty, and vain, and void to you. Is it not so? If you do indeed love him that begat and him that is begotten of him, then this is one of the things that is written "that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

John goes on to give another evidence: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Do you love God? and do you love his children? Listen to another word from the same apostle: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." That may appear to be a very small evidence; but I can assure you it has often been a great comfort to my soul. I know I love the brethren: I can say unto my Lord,

"Is there a lamb among thy flock
I would disdain to feed?"

I would gladly cheer and comfort the least of his people. Well, then, if I love the brethren, I love the Elder Brother. If I love the babes, I love the Father; and I know that I have passed from death unto life. Brethren, take this evidence home in all its force. It is conclusive: John has said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"; and he would not have spoken so positively if it had not been even so. Brethren, never be content with sentimental comforts; set your feet firmly upon the rock of fact and truth. True Christian assurance is not a matter of guesswork, but of mathematical precision. It is capable of logical proof, and is no rhapsody or poetical fiction. We are told by the Holy Ghost that, if we love the brethren, we have passed from death to life. You can tell whether you love the brethren, as such, for their Master's sake, and for the truth's sake that is in them; and if you can truly say that you thus love them, then you may know that you have eternal life.

Our apostle gives us this further evidence: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." Obedience is the grand test of love. If you are living after your own will,

and pay no homage to God, you are none of his. If you never think of the Lord Jesus as your Master, and never recognize the claims of God, and never wish to be obedient to his will, you are not in possession of eternal life. If you desire to be obedient, and prove that desire by your actions, then you have the divine life within you. Judge yourselves. Is the tenor of your life obedience or disobedience? By the fruit you can test the root and the sap.

But note, that this obedience must be cheerful and willing. No doubt some for a while obey the commands of God unwillingly. They do not like them, though they bow to them. They fret and grizzle because of the restraints of piety; and this proves that they are hypocrites. What you wish to do you practically are doing in the sight of God. If there could be such a thing as holiness forced upon a man, it would be unholiness. O my hearer, it may be that you cannot fall into a certain line of sin; but if you could, you would: your desires show what you really are. I have heard of Christian people, so called, going to sinful amusements, just, as they say, to enjoy a little pleasure. Ah well, we see where you are! Where your pleasure is, your heart is. If you enjoy the pleasures of the world, you are of the world, and with the world you will be condemned. If God's commands are grievous to you, then you are a rebel at heart. Loyal subjects delight in the royal law. "His commandments are not grievous." I said to one who came to join the church the other day, "I suppose you are not perfect"? and the reply was, "No, sir, I wish I might be." I said, "And suppose you were"? "Oh, then," she said, "that would be heaven to me." So it would be to me. We delight in the law of God after the inward man. Oh, that we could perfectly obey in thought, and word, and deed! This is our view of heaven. Thus we sing of it:

"There shall we see his face,
And never, never sin;
There from the rivers of his grace
Drink endless pleasures in."

We would scarce ask to be rid of sorrow, if we might be rid of sin. We would bear any burden cheerfully if we could live without spot we shall also be without grief. His commandments are not grievous, but they are

ways of pleasantness and peace to us. Do you feel that you love the ways of God, that you desire holiness, and follow after it joyfully? Then, dear friends, you have eternal life, and these are the sure evidences of it. Obedience, holiness, delight in God never came into a human heart except from a heavenly hand. Wherever they are found they prove that the Lord has implanted eternal life, for they are much too precious to be buried away in a dead soul.

John then proceeds to mention three witnesses. Now, dear hearers, do you know anything about these three witnesses? "There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Do you know "the Spirit" ? Has the Spirit of God quickened you, changed you, illuminated you, sanctified you? Does the Spirit of God dwell in you? Do you feel his sacred impulses? Is he the essence of the new life within you? Do you know him as clothing you with his light and power? If so, you are alive unto God. Next, do you know "the water," the purifying power of the death of Christ? Does the crucified Lord crucify your sins? Is the water applied to you to remove the power of sin? Do you now long to perfect holiness in the fear of God? This proves that you have eternal life. Do you also know "the blood"? This is a wretched age, in which men think little of the precious blood. My heart has well-nigh been broken, and my very flesh has been enfeebled, as I have thought upon the horrible things which have been spoken of late about the precious blood by men called Christian ministers. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." Beloved friends, do you know the power of the blood to take away sin, the power of the blood to speak peace to the conscience, the power of the blood to give access to the throne of grace? Do you know the quickening, restoring, cheering power of the precious blood of Christ which is set forth in the Lord's Supper by the fruit of the vine? Then in the mouth of these three witnesses shall the fact of your having eternal life be fully established. If the Spirit of God be in you, he is the earnest of your eternal inheritance. If the water has washed you, then you are the Lord's. Jesus said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." But ye are washed, and therefore the Lord's. If the precious blood has cleansed you from the guilt of sin, you know that it has also purchased you from death, and it is to you the guarantee of eternal life. I pray that

you may from this moment enjoy the combined light of these three lamps of God - "the spirit, and the water, and the blood," and so have full assurance of faith.

One thing more I would notice. Read the ninth verse: the apostle puts our faith and assurance on the ground that we receive "the witness of God." If I believe that I am saved because of this, that, and the other, I may be mistaken: the only sure ground is "the witness of God." The inmost heart of Christian faith is that we take God as his word; and we must accept that word, not because of the probabilities of its statements, nor because of the confirmatory evidence of science and philosophy, but simply and alone because the Lord has spoken it. Many professing Christians fall sadly short of this point. They dare to judge the Word instead of bowing before it. They do not sit at the Master's feet, but become doctors themselves. I thank God that I believe everything that God has spoken, whether I am able to see its reason or not. To me the fact that the mouth of God hath spoken it stands in the place of all argument, either for or against. If Jehovah says so, so it is. Do you accept the witness of God? If not, you have made him a liar, and the truth is not in you; but if you have received "the witnesses of God," then this is his witness, that "He hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." I say again, if your faith stands in the wisdom of men, and is based upon the cleverness of a preacher, it will fail you; but if it stands on the sure Word of the Lord it will stand for ever, and this may be to you a special token that you have eternal life. I have said enough upon this subject; oh that God may bless it to you! May we be enabled, from what John has written, to gather beyond doubt that we have the life of God within our souls.

Furthermore, John wrote that we might know our spiritual life to be eternal. Please notice this, for there are some of God's children who have not yet learned this cheering lesson. The life of God in the soul is not transient, but abiding; not temporary but eternal. Some think that the life of God in the believer's soul may die out; but how, then, could it be eternal? If it die it is not eternal life. If it be eternal life it cannot die. I know that modern deceivers deny that eternal means eternal, but you and I have not learned their way of pumping the meanings out of the words which the Holy Spirit uses. We believe that "eternal" means endless, and

that if I have eternal life, I shall live eternally, Brethren, the Lord would have us know that we have eternal life.

Learn, then, the doctrine of the eternity of life given in the new birth. It must be eternal life, because it is "the life of God." We are born again of the Spirit of God by a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. We are said to be "made partakers of the divine nature." Surely, this means, among other things, that we receive an undying life; for immortality is of the essence of the Life of God. His name is "I am that I am." He hath life in himself, and the Son hath life in himself, and of this life we are the receivers. This was his purpose concerning his Son, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. If it be the life of God which is in a believer - and certainly it is, for he hath begotten us again - then that life must be eternal. As children of God, we partake of his life, and as heirs of God, we inherit his eternity. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ calls the life of his people eternal life. How often do I quote this text! It seems to lie on the tip of my tongue: "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." And again, "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." It is not temporary life, not life which at a certain period must grow old and die, but everlasting life. "It shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This is the life of Christ within the soul. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." If our life is Christ's life, we shall not die until Christ dies. If our life is hidden in him, it will never be discovered and destroyed until Christ himself is destroyed. Let us rest in this.

Mark again how our Lord has put it: "Because I live, ye shall live also." As long, then, as Jesus lives, his people must live, for the argument will always be the same, "Because I live, ye shall live also." We are so one with Christ that while the head lives the members cannot die. We are so one with Christ that the challenge is given, "Who shall separate us from the love of

God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" A list is added of things which may be supposed to separate, but we are told that they cannot do so, for "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Is it not clear, then, that we are quickened with a life so heavenly and divine that we can never die? John tells us in this very chapter, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." He does not go back to his old sin, he does not again come under the dominion of sin; but, "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Beloved, I entreat you to keep a hard and firm grip of this blessed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. How earnestly do I long "that ye may know that ye have eternal life"! Away with your doctrine of being alive in Christ to-day and dead tomorrow. Poor, miserable doctrine that! Hold fast to eternal salvation through the eternal covenant carried out by eternal love unto eternal life; for the Spirit of God has written these things unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.

Once more, according to the Authorized text, though not according to the Revised Version, John desired the increase and confirmation of their faith. He says, "That ye might believe on the name of the Son of God." John wrote to those who believed, that they might believe in a more emphatic sense. As our Saviour has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly, so does John write, that having faith we may have more of it. Come beloved, listen for a moment to this! You have the milk of faith, but God wills that you should have this cream of assurance! He would increase your faith. May you believe more extensively. Perhaps you do not believe all the truth, because you have not yet perceived it. There were members of the Corinthian church who had not believed in the resurrection of the dead, and there were Galatians who were very cloudy upon justification by faith. Many a Christian man is narrow in the range of his faith from ignorance of the Lord's mind. Like certain tribes of Israel, they have conquered a scanty territory as yet, though all the land is theirs from Dan to Beersheba. John would have us push out our fences, and increase the enclosure of our faith. Let us believe all that God has revealed, for every truth is precious and practically useful. Perhaps your doctrinal belief has been poor and thin.

Oh that the Lord would turn the water into wine! Many of you live upon milk, and yet your years qualify you to feed on meat. Why keep the babes' diet? You that believe are exhorted to "go in and out, and find pasture"; range throughout the whole revelation of God.

It will be well for you if your faith also increases intensively. Oh that you may more fully believe what you do believe! We need deeper insight and firmer conviction. We do not half believe, as yet, any of us. Many of you only skim the pools of truth. Blessed is the wing which brushes the surface of the river of life; but infinitely more blessed is it to plunge into the depths of it. This is John's desire for you, that you would believe with all you heart, and soul, and strength.

He would have you believe more constantly, so that you may say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." It is not always so with us. We are at times chicken-hearted. We play the man today, and the mouse tomorrow. Lord have mercy upon us: we are an inconsistent people, fickle as the wind. The Lord would have us abide always in him with strong and mighty confidence, being rooted and built up in him.

He would have us trust courageously. Some can believe in a small way about small things. Oh for a boundless trust in the infinite God! We need more of a venturesome faith: the faith to do and dare. Often we see the way of power, but have not the faith which would be equal to it. See Peter walking on the sea! I do not advise any of you to try it, neither did our Lord advise Peter to do so: we do well enough if we walk uprightly on land. But when Peter had once taken a few steps on the sea, he ought to have known that his Lord could help him all the rest of the way; but alas! His faith failed, and he began to sink. He could have walked all the way to Jesus if he had believed right on. So is it with us: our faith is good enough for a spurt, but it lacks staying power. Oh, may God give us to believe, so that we may not only trip over a wave or two, but walk on the water to the end! If the Lord bids you, you may go through fire and not be burned, through the floods and not be drowned. Such a fearless, careless, conquering faith may the Lord work in us!

We need also to have our faith increased in the sense of its becoming more practical. Some people have a fine new faith, as pretty as the bright poker in the parlour, and as useless. We want an everyday faith, not to look at, but to use. Brothers and sisters, we need faith for the kitchen and the pantry, as well as for the drawing-room and the conservatory. We need workshop faith, as well as prayer-meeting faith. We need faith as to the common things of life, and the trying things of death. We could do with less paint if we had more power. We need less varnish and more verity. God give to you that you may believe on the name of the Son of God with a sound, common-sense faith, which will be found wearable, and washable, and workable throughout life.

We need to believe more joyfully. Oh what a blessed thing it is when you reach the rest and joy of faith! If we would truly believe the promise of God, and rest in the Lord's certain fulfillment of it, we might be as happy as the angels. I notice how very early in the morning how the birds begin to sing: before the sun is up or even the first grey tints of morning light are visible, the little songsters are awake and singing. Too often we refuse to sing until the sun is more than up, and noon is near. Shame on us! Will we never trust our God? Will we never praise him for favours to come? Oh for a faith that can sing through the night and through the winter! Faith that can live on a promise is the faith of God's elect. You will never enjoy heaven below until you believe without wavering. The Lord give you such faith.

II. Thus I have gone through my first head, and taken nearly all the time. I must now come to push of pike, as the old soldiers used to say. We must drive our teaching home. THE PURPOSE WHICH JOHN HAD IN HIS MIND WE OUGHT TO FOLLOW UP. If he wished us to know that we have eternal life, brothers and sisters, let us try to know it. The Word of God was written for this purpose; let us use it for its proper end. The whole of these Scriptures were written that "we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing we might have life through his name." This Book is written to you who believe, that you may know that you believe. Will you suffer your Bibles to be a failure to you? Will you live in perpetual questioning and doubt? If so, the Book has missed its mark for you. The Bible is sent that you may have full assurance of of your

possession of eternal life; do not, therefore, dream that it will be presumptuous on your part to aspire to it. Our conscience tells us that we ought to seek full assurance of salvation. It cannot be right for us to be children of God, and not to know our own Father. How can we kneel down and say, "Our Father which art in heaven," when we do not know whether he is our Father or not? Will not a life of doubt tend to be a life of falsehood? May we not be using language which is not true to our consciousness? Can you sing joyful hymns which you fear are not true to you? Will you join in worship when your heart does not know that God is your God? Until the spirit of adoption enables you to cry, "Abba, Father," where is your love to God? Can you rest? Dare you rest, while it is a question whether you are saved or not? Can you go home to your dinner to-day and enjoy your meal, while there is a question about your soul's eternal life? Oh, be not so foolhardy as to run risks on that matter! I pray you, make sure work for eternity. If you leave anything in uncertainty, let it concern your body or your estate, but not your soul. Conscience bids you seek to know that you have eternal life, for without this knowledge many duties will be impossible of performance. Many Scriptures which I cannot quote this morning stir you up to this duty. Are you not bidden to make your calling and election sure? Are you not a thousand times over exhorted to rejoice in the Lord, and to give thanks continually? But how can you rejoice, if the dark suspicion haunts you, that perhaps, after all, you have not the life of God? You must get this question settled, or you cannot rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Come, brothers and sisters, I beseech you, as you would follow Scripture, and obey the Lord's precepts, get the assurance without which you cannot obey them.

Listen, as I close, to this mass of reasons why each believer should seek to know that he has eternal life. Here they are. Assurance of your salvation will bring you "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." If you know that you are saved, you can sit down in poverty, or in sickness, or under slander, and feel perfectly content. Full assurance is the Koh-i-noor amongst the jewels wherewith the heavenly Bridegroom adorns his spouse. Assurance is a mountain of spices, a land that floweth with milk and honey. To be the assured possessor of eternal life is to find a paradise beneath the stars, where the mountains and the hills break forth before you into singing.

Full assurance will sometimes overflow in cataracts of delight. Peace flows like a river, and here and there it leaps in cascades of ecstatic joy. There are seasons when the plant of peace is in flower, and then it sheds a perfume as of myrrh and cassia. Oh, the blessedness of the man who knows that he has eternal life! Sometimes in our room alone, when we have been enjoying this assurance, we have laughed outright, for we could not help it. If anybody had wondered why a man was laughing by himself alone, we could have explained that it was nothing ridiculous which had touched us, but our mouth was filled with laughter because the Lord had done great things for us, whereof we were glad. That religion which sets no sweatmeats on the table is a niggardly housekeeper. I do not wonder that some people give up their starveling religion: it is hardly worth the keeping. The child of God who knows that he has eternal life goes to school, he has many a holiday; and he anticipates that day of home-going when he shall see the face of his Beloved for ever.

Brethren, full assurance will give us the full result of the gospel. The gospel ought to make us holy; and so it will when we are in full possession of it. The gospel ought to make us separate from the world, the gospel ought to make us lead a heavenly life here below; and so it will if we drink deep draughts of it; but if we take only a sip of it now and again, we give it no chance of working out its design in us. Do not paddle about the margin of the water of life, but first wade in up to your knees, and then hasten to plunge into the waters to swim in. Beware of contentment with shallow grace. Prove what the grace of God can do for you by giving yourself up to its power.

Full assurance gives a man a grateful zeal for the God he loves. These are the people that will go to the Congo for Jesus, for they know they are his. These are the people that will lay down their all for Christ, for Christ is theirs. These are the people that will bear scorn and shame and misrepresentation for the truth's sake, for they know that they have eternal life. These are they that will keep on preaching and teaching, spending and working, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and they know it. Men will do little for what they doubt, and much for what they believe. If you have lost your title deeds, and you do not know whether

your house is your own or not, you are not going to spend much in repairs and enlargements. When you know that heaven is yours, you are anxious to get ready for it. Full assurance finds fuel for zeal to feed upon.

This also creates and sustains patience. When we know that we have eternal life, we do not fret about the trials of this passing life. I could point to the brethren here this morning, and I could mention sisters at home, who amaze me by their endurance of pain and weakness. This I know concerning them, that they never have a doubt about their interest in Christ; and for this cause they are able to surrender themselves into those dear hands which were pierced for them. They know that they are the Lord's, and so they say, "Let him do what seemeth him good." A blind child was in his father's arms, and a stranger came into the room, and took him right away from his father. Yet he did not cry or complain. His father said to him, "Johnny, are you afraid? You do not know the person who has got hold of you." "No, father," he said, "I do not know who he is, but you do." When pain gives us an awkward nip, and we do not know whether we shall live or die, when we are called to undergo a dangerous operation, and pass into unconciousness, then we can say, "I do not know where I am, but my Father knows, and I leave all with him." Assurance makes us strong to suffer.

This, dear friends, will give you constant firmness in your confession of divine truth. You who do not know whether you are saved or not, I hope the Lord will keep you from denying the faith; but those who have a firm grip of it, these are the men who will never forsake it. A caviller in an omnibus said to a Christian man one day, "Why, you have nothing after all to rest upon. I can prove to you that your Scriptures are not authentic." The humble Christian man replied, "Sir, I am not a learned man, and I cannot answer you questions; but I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I have experienced such a change in character, and I feel such a joy and peace through believing, that I wish you knew my Saviour, too." The answer he received was a very unexpected one: the unbeliever said, "You have got me there; I cannot answer that." Just so: we have got them there. If we know what has been wrought in us by grace, they cannot overcome us. The full-assurance man baffles the very devil. Satan is cunning enough, but those who know and are persuaded, are birds which

he cannot take in the snares of hell. When you know that your Lord is able to keep that which you have committed to him until that day, then you are firm as a rock. God make you so.

Dear brethren, this is the kind of thing that will enable you to bear a telling testimony for your Lord. It is of no use to stand up and preach things that may or may not be true. I am charged with being a dreadful dogmatist, and I am not anxious to excuse myself. When a man is not quite sure of a thing, he grows very liberal: anybody can be a liberal with money which he cannot claim to be his own. The broad-school man says, "I am not sure, and I do not suppose that you are sure, for indeed nothing is sure." Does this sandy foundation suit you? I prefer rock. The things which I have spoken to you from my youth up have been such as I have tried and proved, and to me they wear an absolute certainty, confirmed by my personal experience. I have tried these things: they have saved me, and I cannot doubt them. I am a lost man if the gospel I have preached to you be not true; and I am content to bide the issue of the day of Judgement. I do not preach doubtingly, for I do not live doubtingly. I know what I have told you to be true; why should I speak as if I were not sure? If you want to make your own testimony tell in such a day as this, you must have something to say that you are sure about; and until you are sure about it I would advise you to hold you tongue. We do not require any more questionings; the market is overstocked. We need no more doubt, honest or dishonest; the air is dark with these horrible blacks.

Brethren, if you know that you have eternal life, you are prepared to live, and equally prepared to die. How frequently do I stand at the bedside of our dying members! I am every now and then saying to myself, "I shall certainly meet with some faint-hearted one. Surely I shall come across some child of God who is dying in the dark." But I have not met with any such. Brethren, a child of God may die in the dark. One said to old Mr. Dodd, the quaint old Puritan - "How sad that our brother should have passed away in the darkness! Do you doubt his safety?" "No," said old Mr. Dodd, "no more than I doubt the safety of him who said, when he was dying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"" Full assurance, as we have said before, is not of the essence of salvation. Still, I beg of you

to note this, that all along through these many years, in each case, when I have gone to visit any of our brethren and our sisters at death, I have always found them departing in sure and certain hope of seeing the face of their Lord in glory. I have often marvelled that this should be without exception, and I glory in it. Often have they said to me, "We have fed on such good food that we may well be strong in the Lord." God grant that you may have this assurance, all of you! May sinners begin to believe in Jesus, and saints believe more firmly, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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The Day of Atonement

This shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. - Leviticus 16:34

The Jews had many striking ceremonies which marvellously set forth the death of Jesus Christ as the great expiation of our guilt and the salvation of our souls. One of the chief of these was the day of atonement, which I believe was pre-eminently intended to typify that great day of vengeance of our God, which was also the great day of acceptance of our souls, when Jesus Christ "died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." That day of atonement happened only *once a year*, to teach us that only once should Jesus Christ die; and that though he would come a second time, yet it would be without a sin offering unto salvation. The lambs were perpetually slaughtered; morning and evening they offered sacrifice to God, to remind the people that they always needed a sacrifice; but the day of atonement being the type of the one great propitiation, it was but once

a year that the high priest entered within the vail with blood as the atonement for the sins of the people. And this was on a certain set and *appointed time*; it was not left to the choice of Moses, or to the convenience of Aaron, or to any other circumstance which might affect the date; it was appointed to be on a peculiar set day, as you find at the 29th verse: "In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month;" and at no other time was the day of atonement to be, to show us that God's great day of atonement was appointed and predestinated by himself. Christ's expiation occurred but once, and then not by any chance; God had settled it from before the foundation of the world; and at that hour when God had predestinated, on that very day that God had decreed that Christ should die, was he led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers he was dumb. It was but once a year, because the sacrifice should be once; it was at an appointed time in the year, because in the fulness of time Jesus Christ should come into the world to die for us.

Now, I shall invite your attention to the ceremonies of this solemn day, taking the different parts in detail. First, we shall consider the *person who made the atonement*; secondly, *the sacrifice whereby the atonement was typically made*; thirdly, *the effects of the atonement*; and fourthly, *our behaviour on the recollection of the atonement*, as well set forth by the conduct prescribed to the Israelites on that day.

I. First, THE PERSON WHO WAS TO MAKE THE ATONEMENT. And at the outset, we remark that *Aaron, the high priest*, did it. "Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place; with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering." Inferior priests slaughtered lambs; other priests at other times did almost all the work of the sanctuary; but on this day nothing was done by any one, as a part of the business of the great day of atonement, except by the high priest. Old rabbinical traditions tell us that everything on that day was done by him, even the lighting of the candles, and the fires, and the incense, and all the offices that were required, and that, for a fortnight beforehand, he was obliged to go into the tabernacle to slaughter the bullocks and assist in the work of the priests and Levites, that he might be prepared to do the work which was unusual to him. All the labour was left to him. So, beloved, Jesus Christ, the High Priest, and he only, works the atonement. There are other

priests, for "he hath made *us* priests and kings unto God." Every Christian is a priest to offer sacrifice of prayer and praise unto God, but none save the High Priest must offer atonement; he, and he alone, must go within the vail; he must slaughter the goat and sprinkle the blood; for though thanksgiving is shared in by all Christ's elect body, atonement remains alone to him, the High Priest.

Then it is interesting to notice, that the high priest on this day was a *humbled priest*. You read in the 4th verse, "He shall put on the holy *linen* coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments." On other days he wore what the people were accustomed to call the golden garments; he had the mitre with a plate of pure gold around his brow, tied with brilliant blue; the splendid breastplate, studded with gems, adorned with pure gold and set with precious stones; the glorious ephod, the tinkling bells, and all the other ornaments, wherewith he came before the people as the accepted high priest. But on this day he had none of them. The golden mitre was laid aside, the embroidered vest was put away, the breastplate was taken off, and he came out simply with the holy linen coat, the linen breeches, the linen mitre, and girded with a linen girdle. On that day he humbled himself just as the people humbled themselves. Now, that is a notable circumstance. You will see sundry other passages in the references which will bear this out, that the priest's dress on this day was different. As Mayer tells us, he wore garments, and glorious ones, on other days, but on this day he wore four humble ones. Jesus Christ, then, when he made atonement, was a humbled priest. He did not make atonement arrayed in all the glories of his ancient throne in heaven. Upon his brow there was no diadem, save the crown of thorns; around him was cast no purple robe, save that which he wore for a time in mockery; on his head was no sceptre, save the reed which they thrust in cruel contempt upon him; he had no sandals of pure gold, neither was he dressed as king; he had none of those splendours about him which should make him mighty and distinguished among men; he came out in his simple body, ay, in his naked body, for they stripped off even the common robe from him, and made him hang before God's sun and God's universe, naked, to his shame, and to the disgrace of those who chose to do so cruel and

dastardly a deed. Oh! my soul, adore thy Jesus, who when he made atonement, humbled himself and wrapped around him a garb of thine inferior clay. Oh! angels, ye can understand what were the glories that he laid aside. Oh! thrones, and principalities, and powers, ye can tell what was the diadem with which he dispensed, and what, the robes he laid aside to wrap himself in earthly garbs. But, men, ye can scarce tell how glorious is your High Priest now, and ye can scarce tell how glorious he was before. But oh! adore him, for on that day it was the simple clean linen of his own body, of his own humanity, in which he made atonement for your sins.

In the next place, the high priest who offered the atonement must be a *spotless high priest*; and because there were none such to be found, Aaron being a sinner himself as well as the people, you will remark that Aaron had to sanctify himself and make atonement for his own sin before he could go in to make an atonement for the sins of the people. In the 3rd verse you read, "Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering." These were for himself. In the 6th verse it is said, "And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house." Yea, more, before he went within the vail with the blood of the goat which was the atonement for the people, he had to go within the vail to make atonement there for himself. In the 11th, 12th, and 13th verses, it is said, "And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself. And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail. And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." "And he shall take of the blood of the bullock (that is, the bullock that he killed for himself), and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times." This was before he killed the goat, for it says, "Then shall he kill the goat." Before he took the blood which was a type of Christ within the vail, he took the blood (which was a type of Christ in another sense), wherewith

he purified himself. Aaron must not go within the veil until by the bullock his sins had been typically expiated, nor even then without the burning smoking incense before his face, lest God should look on him, and he should die, being an impure mortal. Moreover, the Jews tell us that Aaron had to wash himself, I think, five times in the day; and it is said in this chapter that he had to wash himself many times. We read in the 4th verse, "These are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on." And at the 24th verse, "He shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments." So you see it was strictly provided for that Aaron on that day should be a spotless priest. He could not be so as to nature, but, ceremonially, care was taken that he should be clean. He was washed over and over again in the sacred bath. And besides that, there was the blood of the bullock and the smoke of the incense, that he might be acceptable before God. Ah! beloved, and we have a spotless High Priest; we have one who needed no washing, for he had no filth to wash away; we have one who needed no atonement for himself, for he, for ever, might have sat down at the right hand of God, and ne'er have come on earth at all. He was pure and spotless; he needed no incense to wave before the mercy seat to hide the angry face of justice; he needed nothing to hide and shelter him; he was all pure and clean. Oh! bow down and adore him, for if he had not been a holy High Priest, he could never have taken thy sins upon himself, and never have made intercession for thee. Oh! reverence him, that, spotless as he was, he should come into this world and say, "For this cause I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." Adore and love him, the spotless High Priest, who, on the day of atonement took away thy guilt.

Again, the atonement was made by a *solitary high priest*—alone and unassisted. You read in the 17th verse, "And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel." No other man was to be present, so that the people might be quite certain that everything was done by the high priest alone. It is remarkable, as Matthew Henry observes, that no disciple died with Christ. When he was put to death, his disciples forsook him and fled; they crucified none of his

followers with him, lest any should suppose that the disciple shared the honor of atonement. Thieves were crucified with him because none would suspect that they could assist him; but if a disciple had died, it might have been imagined that he had shared the atonement. God kept that holy circle of Calvary select to Christ, and none of his disciples must go to die there with him. O glorious High Priest, thou hast done it all alone. O, glorious antitype of Aaron, no son of thine stood with thee; no Eliezer, no Phineas, burned incense; there was no priest, no Levite save himself. "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me." Then give all the glory unto his holy name, for alone and unassisted he made atonement for your guilt. The bath of his blood is your only washing; the stream of water from his side is your perfect purification. None but Jesus, none but Jesus, has wrought out the work of our salvation.

Again, it was a *laborious high priest* who did the work on that day. It is astonishing how, after comparative rest, he should be so accustomed to his work as to be able to perform all that he had to do on that day. I have endeavoured to count up how many creatures he had to kill, and I find that there were fifteen beasts which he slaughtered at different times, besides the other offices, which were all left to him. In the first place, there were the two lambs, one offered in the morning, and the other in the evening; they were never omitted, being a perpetual ordinance. On this day the high priest killed those two lambs. Further, if you will turn to Numbers xxix. 7-11, "And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month an holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work therein: But ye shall offer a burnt unto the Lord for a sweet savour; one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year; they shall be unto you without blemish: And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals to a bullock, and two tenth deals to one ram. A several tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: One kid of the goats for a sin offering: besides the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and the meat offering of it, and their drink offerings." Here, then, was one bullock, a ram, seven lambs, and a kid of the goats; making ten. The two lambs made twelve. And in the chapter we have been studying, it is said in the 3rd verse: "Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin

offering, and a ram for a burnt offering;" which makes the number fourteen. Then, after that, we find there were two goats, but only one of them was killed, the other being allowed to go away. Thus, then, there were fifteen beasts to be slaughtered, besides the burnt offerings of thanksgiving which were offered by way of showing that the people now desired to dedicate themselves to the Lord from gratitude, that the atonement of sin offering had been accepted. He who was ordained priest in Jeshurun, for that day, toiled like a common Levite, worked as laboriously as priest could do, and far more so than on any ordinary day. Just so with our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, what a labour the atonement was to him! It was a work that all the hands of the universe could not have accomplished; yet he completed it alone. It was a work more laborious than the treading of the wine-press, and his frame, unless sustained by the divinity within, could scarce have borne such stupendous labour. There was the bloody sweat in Gethsemane; there was the watching all night, just as the high priest did for fear that uncleanness might touch him; there was the hooting and the scorn which he suffered every day before—something like the continual offering of the Lamb; then there came the shame, the spitting, the cruel flagellations in Pilate's hall; then there was the *via dolorosa* through Jerusalem's sad streets; then came the hanging on the cross, with the weight of his people's sins on his shoulders. Ay, it was a Divine labour that our great High Priest did on that day—a labour mightier than the making of the world: it was the new making of a world, the taking of its sins upon his Almighty shoulders and casting them into the depths of the sea. The atonement was made by a toilsome laborious High Priest, who worked, indeed, that day; and Jesus, thought he had toiled before, yet never worked as he did on that wondrous day of atonement.

II. Thus have I led you to consider the person who made the atonement: let us now consider for a moment or two THE MEANS WHEREBY THIS ATONEMENT WAS MADE. You read at the 5th verse, "And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering." And at the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th verses, "And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the

scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness." The first goat I considered to be the great type of Jesus Christ the atonement: *such I do not consider the scapegoat to be*. The first is a type of the means whereby the atonement was made, and we shall keep to that first.

Notice that this goat, of course, answered all the pre-requisites of every other thing that was sacrificed; it must be *a perfect, unblemished goat of the first year*. Even so was our Lord a perfect man, in the prime and vigour of his manhood. And further, this goat was an eminent type of Christ from the fact that *it was taken of the congregation of the children of Israel*, as we are told at the 5th verse. The public treasury furnished the goat. So, beloved, Jesus Christ was, first of all, purchased by the public treasury of the Jewish people before he died. Thirty pieces of silver they had valued him at, a goodly price; and as they had been accustomed to bring the goat, so they brought him to be offered: not, indeed, with the intention that he should be their sacrifice, but unwittingly they fulfilled this when they brought him to Pilate, and cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Oh, beloved! Indeed, Jesus Christ came out from the midst of the people, and the people brought him. Strange that it should be so! "He came unto his own, and his own received him not;" his own led him forth to slaughter; his own dragged him before the mercy seat.

Note, again, that though this goat, like the scapegoat, was brought by the people, *God's decision was in it still*. Mark, it is said, "Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats: one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat." I conceive this mention of lots is to teach that although the Jews brought Jesus Christ of their own will to die, yet, Christ had been appointed to die; and even the very man who sold him was appointed to it —so saith the Scripture. Christ's death was fore-ordained, and there was not only man's hand in it, but God's. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." So it is true that man put Christ to death, but it was of the Lord's disposal that Jesus Christ was slaughtered, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

Next, behold the goat that destiny has marked out to make the atonement. Come and *see it die*. The priest stabs it. Mark it in its agonies; behold it struggling for a moment; observe the blood as it gushes forth. Christians, ye have here your Saviour. See his Father's vengeful sword sheathed in his heart; behold his death agonies; see the clammy sweat upon his brow; mark his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth; hear his sighs and groans upon the cross; hark to his shriek, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," and you have more now to think of than you could have if you only stood to see the death of a goat for your atonement. Mark the blood as from his wounded hands it flows, and from his feet it finds a channel to the earth; from his open side in one great river see it gush. As the blood of the goat made the atonement typically, so, Christian, thy Saviour dying for thee, made the great atonement for thy sins, and thou mayest go free.

But mark, this goat's blood was not only shed for many for the remission of sins as a type of Christ, but that blood was *taken within the veil*, and there it was sprinkled. So with Jesus's blood, "Sprinkled now with blood the throne." The blood of other beasts (save only of the bullock) was offered before the Lord, and was not brought into the most holy place; but this goat's blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat, to make an atonement. So, O child of God, thy Saviour's blood has made atonement within the veil; he has taken it there himself; his own merits and his own agonies are now within the veil of glory, sprinkled now before the throne. O glorious sacrifice, as well as High Priest, we would adore thee, for by thy one offering hot hast made atonement for ever, even as this one slaughtered goat made atonement once in a year for the sins of all the people.

III. We now come to the EFFECTS.

One of the first effects of the death of this goat was *sanctification of the holy things which had been made unholy*. You read at the end of the 15th verse, "He shall sprinkle it upon the mercy seat: and he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall

he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness." The holy place was made unholy by the people. Where God dwelt should be holy, but where man comes there must be some degree of unholiness. This blood of the goat made the unholy place holy. It was a sweet reflection to me as I came here this morning. I thought, "I am going to the house of God, and that house is a holy place;" but when I thought how many sinners had trodden its floors, how many unholy ones had joined in its songs, I thought, "Ah! it has been made defiled; but oh! there is no fear, for the blood of Jesus has made it holy again." "Ah!" I thought, "there is our poor prayer that we shall offer: it is a holy prayer, for God the Holy Spirit dictates it, but then it is an unholy prayer, for *we* have uttered it, and that which cometh out of unholy lips like ours, must be tainted." "But ah!" I thought again, "it is a prayer that has been sprinkled with blood, and therefore it must be a holy prayer." And as I looked on all the harps of this sanctuary, typical of your praises, and on all the censers of this tabernacle, typical of your prayers, I thought within myself, "There is blood on them all; our holy service this day has been sprinkled with the blood of the great Jesus, and as such it will be accepted through him." Oh! beloved, it is not sweet to reflect that our holy things are now really holy; that through sin is mixed with them all, and we think them defiled, yet they are not, for the blood has washed out every stain; and the service this day is as holy in God's sight as the service of the cherubim, and is acceptable as the psalms of the glorified; we have washed our worship in the blood of the Lamb, and it is accepted through him.

But observe, the second great fact was that *their sins were taken away*. This was set forth by the scapegoat. You read at the 20th, "And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." When that was done, you see, the great and wonderful atonement was finished, and the effects of it were set forth to

the people. Now, I do not know how many opinions there are about this scapegoat. One of the most strange opinions to me is that which is held by a very large portion of learned men, and I see it is put in the margin of my Bible. Many learned men think that this word scapegoat, *Azazel*, was the name of the devil who was worshipped by the heathen in the form of a goat; and they tell us that the first goat was offered to God as an atonement for sin, and the other went away to be tormented by the devil, and was called *Azazel*, just as Jesus was tormented by Satan in the wilderness. To this opinion, it is enough to object that it is difficult to conceive when the other goat was offered to God, this should be sent among demons. Indeed, the opinion is too gross for belief. It needs only to be mentioned to be refuted. Now the first goat is the Lord Jesus Christ making atonement by his death for the sins of the people; the second is sent away into the wilderness, and nothing is heard of it any more for ever; and here a difficulty suggests itself—"Did Jesus Christ go where he was never heard of any more for ever?" That is what we have not to consider at all. The first goat was a type of the atonement; the second is the type of the effect of the atonement. The second goat went away, after the first was slaughtered, carrying the sins of the people on its head, and so it sets forth, as a scapegoat, how our sins are carried away into the depth of the wilderness. There was this year exhibited in the Art Union a fine picture of the scapegoat dying in the wilderness: it was represented with a burning sky above it, its feet sticking in the mire, surrounded by hundreds of skeletons, and there dying a doleful and miserable death. Now, that was just a piece of gratuitous nonsense, for there is nothing in the Scripture that warrants it in the least degree. The rabbis tell us that this goat was taken by a man into the wilderness and here tumbled down a high rock to die; but, as an excellent commentator says, if the man did push it down the rock he more than God ever told him to do. God told him to take a goat and let it go: as to what became of it neither you nor I know anything; that is purposely left. Our Lord Jesus Christ has taken away our sins upon his head, just as the scapegoat, and he is gone from us—that is all: the goat was not a type in its dying, or in regard to its subsequent fate. God has only told us that it should be taken by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. The most correct account seems to be that of one Rabbi Jarchi, who says that they generally took the goat twelve miles out of Jerusalem, and at each mile there was a booth

provided where the man who took it might refresh himself till he came to the tenth mile, when there was no more rest for him till he had seen the goat go. When he had come to the last mile he stood and looked at the goat till it was gone, and he could see it no more. Then the people's sins were all gone too. Now, what a fine type that is if you do not enquire any further! But if you will get meddling where God intended you to be in ignorance, you will get nothing by it. This scapegoat was not designed to show us the victim or the sacrifice, but simply what became of the sins. The sins of the people are confessed upon that head; the goat is going; the people lose sight of it; a fit man goes with it; the sins are going from them, and now the man has arrived at his destination; the man sees the goat in the distance skipping here and there overt the mountains, glad of its liberty; it is not quite gone; a little farther, and now it is lost to sight. The man returns, and says he can no longer see it; then the people clap their hands, for their sins are all gone too. Oh! soul; canst thou see thy sins all gone? We may have to take a long journey, and carry our sins with us; but oh! how we watch and watch till they are utterly cast into the depths of the wilderness of forgetfulness, where they shall never be found any more against us for ever. But mark, this goat did not sacrificially make the atonement; it was a type of the sins going away, and so it was a type of the atonement; for you know, since our sins are thereby lost, it is the fruit of the atonement; but the sacrifice is the means of making it. So we have this great and glorious thought before us, that by the death of Christ there was full, free, perfect remission for all those whose sins are laid upon his head. For I would have you notice that on this day all sins were laid on the scapegoat's head—sins of presumption, sins of ignorance, sins of uncleanness, sins little and sins great, sins few and sins many, sins against the law, sins against morality, sins against ceremonies, sins of all kinds were taken away on that great day of atonement. Sinner, oh, that thou hadst a share in my Master's atonement! Oh! that thou couldst see him slaughtered on the cross! Then mightest thou see him go away leading captivity captive, and taking thy sins where they might ne'er be found.

I have now an interesting fact to tell you, and I am sure you will think it worth mentioning. Turn to Leviticus xxv. 9, and you will read: "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of *the jubilee* to sound on the tenth day of

the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall yet make the trumpet sound throughout all your land." So that one of the effects of the atonement was set forth to us in the fact that when the year of jubilee came, it was not on the first day of the year that it was proclaimed, but "on the tenth day of the seventh month." Ay, methinks, that was the best part of it. The scapegoat is gone, and the sins are gone, and no sooner are they gone than the silver trumpet sounds,

"The year of jubilee is to come,
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home."

On that day sinners go free; on that day our poor mortgaged lands are liberated, and our poor estates which have been forfeited by our spiritual bankruptcy are all returned to us. So when Jesus dies, slaves win their liberty, and lost ones receive spiritual life again; when he dies, heaven, the long lost inheritance is ours. Blessed day! Atonement and jubilee ought to go together. Have you ever had a jubilee, my friends, in your hearts? If you have not, I can tell you it is because you have not had a day of atonement.

One more thought concerning the effects of this great day of atonement, and you will observe that it runs throughout the whole of the chapter—*entrance within the vail*. Only on one day in the year might the high priest enter within the vail, and then it must be for the great purposes of the atonement. Now, beloved, the atonement is finished, and you may enter within the vail: "Having boldness, therefore, to enter into the holiest, let us come with boldness into the throne of the heavenly grace." The vail of the temple is rent by the atonement of Christ, and access to the throne is now ours. O child of God, I know not of any privilege which thou hast, save fellowship with Christ, which is more valuable than access to the throne. Access to the mercy seat is one of the greatest blessings mortals can enjoy. Precious throne of grace! I never should have had any right to come there if it had not been for the day of atonement; I never should have been able to come there if the throne had not been sprinkled with the blood.

IV. Now we come to notice, in the fourth place, what is our PROPER

BEHAVIOUR WHEN WE CONSIDER THE DAY OF ATONEMENT. You read at the 29th verse, "And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall *afflict your souls*." That is one thing that we ought to do when we remember the atonement. Sure, sinner, there is nothing that move thee to repentance like the thought of that great sacrifice of Christ which is necessary to wash away thy guilt. "Law and terrors do but harden." but methinks, the thought that Jesus died is enough to make us melt. It is well, when we hear the name of Calvary, always to shed a tear, for there is nothing that ought to make a sinner weep like the mention of the death of Jesus. On that day "ye shall afflict your souls." And even you, ye Christians, when ye think that your Saviour died, should afflict your souls: ye should say,

"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?"

Drops of grief ought to flow, ay, streams of undissembled sympathy with him; to show our grief for what we did to pierce the Saviour. "Afflict your souls," O ye children of Israel, for the day of atonement is come. Weep o'er your Jesus; weep for him that died; weep for him who was murdered by your sins, and "afflict your souls."

Then, better still, we are to "*do not work at all*," as ye find the same verse, 29th. When we consider the atonement, we should rest, and "do no work at all." Rest from your works as God did from his on the great Sabbath of the world; rest from your own righteousness; rest from your toilsome duties: rest in him. "We that believe do enter into rest." As soon as thou seest the atonement finished, say, "it is done, it is done? Now will I serve my God with zeal, but now I will no longer seek to save myself, it is done, it is done for aye."

Then there was another thing which always happened. When the priest had made the atonement, it was usual for him, after he had washed himself, to *come out again in his glorious garments*. When the people saw him they attended him to his house with joy, and they offered burnt

offerings of praise on that day: he being thankful that his life was spared, (having been allowed to go into the holy place and to come out of it) and they being thankful that the atonement was accepted; both of them offering burnt offerings as a type that they desired now to be "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God." Beloved, let us go into our houses with joy; let us go into our gates with praise. The atonement is finished; the High Priest is gone within the veil; salvation is now complete. He has laid aside the linen garments, and he stands before you with his breastplate, and his mitre, and his embroidered vest, in all his glory. Hear how he rejoices over us, for he hath redeemed his people, and ransomed them out of the hands of his enemies. Come, let us go home with the High Priest; let us clap our hands with joy, for he liveth, he liveth; the atonement is accepted, and we are accepted too; the scapegoat is gone, our sins are gone with it. Let us then go to our houses with thankfulness, and let us come up to his gates with praise, for he hath loved his people, he hath blessed his children, and given unto us a day of atonement, and a day of acceptance, and a year of jubilee. Praise ye the Lord? Praise ye the Lord!

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The Old, Old Story

"In due time Christ died for the ungodly."—Romans 5:6.

There is a doctor of divinity here to-night who listened to me some years ago. He has been back to his own dwelling-place in America, and he has come here again. I could not help fancying, as I saw his face just now, that he would think I was doting on the old subject, and harping on the old strain; that I had not advanced a single inch upon any new domain of thought, but was preaching the same old gospel in the same old terms as ever. If he should think so he will be quite right. I suppose I am something like Mr. Cecil when he was a boy. His father once told him to wait in a gateway till he came back, and the father, being very busy, went about the city; and amidst his numerous cares and engagements, he

forgot the boy. Night came on, and at last when the father reached home, there was great enquiry as to where Richard was. The father said, "Dear me, I left him early in the morning standing under such-and-such a gateway, and I told him to stay there until I came for him; I should not wonder but what he is there now." So they went, and there they found him. Such an example of childish simple faithfulness it is no disgrace to emulate. I received some years ago orders from my Master to stand at the foot of the cross until he came. He has not come yet, but I mean to stand there till he does. If I should disobey his orders and leave those simple truths which have been the means of the conversion of souls, I know not how I could expect his blessing. Here, then, I stand at the foot of the cross and tell out the old, old story, stale though it sound to itching ears, and worn threadbare as critics may deem it. It is of Christ I love to speak—of Christ who loved, and lived, and died, the substitute for sinners, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

It is somewhat singular, but just as they say fish go bad at the head first, so modern divines generally go bad first upon the head and main doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ. Nearly all our modern errors, I might say all of them, begin with mistakes about Christ. Men do not like to be always preaching the same thing., There are Athenians in the pulpit as well as in the pew who spend their time in nothing but hearing some new thing. They are not content to tell over and over again the simple message, "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." So they borrow novelties from literature, and garnish the Word of God with the words which man's wisdom teacheth. The doctrine of atonement they mystify. Reconciliation by the precious blood of Jesus ceases to be the corner-stone of their ministry. To shape the gospel to the diseased wishes and tastes of men enters far more deeply into their purpose, than to re-mould the mind and renew the heart of men that they receive the gospel as it is. There is no telling where they will go who once go back from following the Lord with a true and undivided heart, from deep to deep descending, the blackness of darkness will receive them unless grace prevent. Only this you may take for a certainty.

"They cannot be right in the rest,
Unless they speak rightly of Him."

If they are not sound about the purpose of the cross, they are rotten everywhere. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." On this rock there is security. We may be mistaken on any other points with more impunity than this. They who are builded on the rock, though they build wood, and hay, and stubble, thereupon to their sore confusion, for what they build shall be burned, themselves shall be saved yet so as by fire. Now that grand doctrine which we take to be the keystone of the evangelical system, the very corner-stone of the gospel, that grand doctrine of the atonement of Christ we would tell to you again, and then, without attempting to prove it, for that we have done hundreds of times, we shall try to draw some lessons of instruction from that truth which is surely believed among us. Man having sinned, God's righteousness demanded that the penalty should be fulfilled. He had said, "The soul that sinneth shall die;" and unless God can be false, the sinner must die. Moreover, God's holiness demanded it, for the penalty was based on justice. It was just that the sinner should die. God had not appended a more heavy penalty than he should have done. Punishment is the just result of offending. God, then, must either cease to be holy, or the sinner must be punished. Truth and holiness imperiously demanded that God should lift his hand and smite the man who had broken his law and offended his majesty. Christ Jesus, the second Adam, the federal head of the chosen ones, interposed. He offered himself to bear the penalty which they ought to bear; to fulfil and honour the law which they had broken and dishonoured. He offered to be their day's-man, a surety, a substitute, standing in their room, place, and stead. Christ became the vicar of his people; vicariously suffering in their stead; vicariously doing in their stead that which they were not strong enough to do by reason of the weakness of the flesh through the fall. This which Christ proposed to do was accepted of God. In due time Christ actually died, and fulfilled what he promised to do. He took every sin of all his people, and suffered every stroke of the rod on account of those sins. He had compounded into one awful draught the punishment of the sins of all the elect. He took the cup; he put it to his lips; he sweat as it were great drops of blood while he tasted the first sip thereof, but he never desisted, but drank on, on, on, till he had exhausted the very dregs, and turning the vessel upside down he said, "It is finished!" and at one tremendous draught of love the Lord God of salvation had drained destruction dry. Not a dreg, not the slightest

reside was left; he had suffered all that ought to have been suffered; had finished transgression, and made an end of sin. Moreover, he obeyed his Father's law to the utmost extent of it; he fulfilled that will of which he had said of old—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God: thy law is my delight;" and having offered both an atonement for sin and a complete fulfilment of the law, he ascended up on high, took his seat on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool, and interceding for those whom he bought with blood that they may be with him where he is. The doctrine of the atonement is very simple. It just consists in the substitution of Christ in the place of the sinner; Christ being treated as if he were the sinner, and then the transgressors being treated as if he were the righteous one. It is a change of persons; Christ becomes sinner; he stands in the sinner's place and stead; he was numbered with the transgressors; the sinner becomes righteous; he stands in Christ's place and stead, and is numbered with the righteous ones. Christ has no sin of his own, but he takes human guilt, and is punished for human folly. We have no righteousness of our own, but we take the divine righteousness; we are rewarded for it, and stand accepted before God as though that righteousness had been wrought out by ourselves. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," that he might take away their sins.

It is not my present object to prove this doctrine. As I said before, there is no need to be always arguing what we know to be true. Rather let us say a few earnest words by way of commending this doctrine of the atonement; and afterwards I shall propound it by way of application to those who as yet have not received Christ.

I. First, then, BY WAY OF COMMENDATION.

There are some things to be said for the gospel which proclaims the atonement as its fundamental principle. And the first thing to be said of it is, that in comparison with all modern schemes how simple it is! Brethren, this is why our great gentlemen do not like it, it is too plain. If you will go and purchase certain books which teach you how sermons ought to be made, you will find that the English of it is this,—pick all the hard words you can out of all the books you read in the week, and then pour them out on your people on Sunday; and there is a certain set of

people who always applaud the man they cannot understand. They are like the old woman who was asked when she came home from Church, "Did you understand the sermon?" "No;" she answered, "I would not have the presumption;" she thought it would be presumption to attempt to understand the minister. But the Word of God is understood with the heart, and makes no strange demands on the intellect.

Now, our first commendation on the doctrine of the atonement is, that it commends itself to the understanding. The way-faring man, though his intellect be but one grade beyond an idiot, may get a hold on the truth of substitution without any difficulty. Oh, these modern theologians, they will do anything to spirit away the cross! They hang over it the gaudy trappings of their elocution, or they introduce it with the dark mysterious incantations of their logic, and then the poor troubled heart looks up to see the cross and sees nothing there but human wisdom. Now I say it again, there is not one of you here but can understand this truth, that Christ died in the stead of his people. If you perish, it will not be because the gospel was beyond your comprehension. If you go down to hell, it will not be because you were not able to understand how God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It is astonishing in this age how little is known of the simple truisms of the Bible; it seems to be always admonishing us how simple we ought to be in setting them forth. I have heard that when Mr. Kilpin was once preaching a very good and earnest sermon, he used the word "Deity," and a sailor sitting down below leaned forward and said, "Beg your pardon, sir, but who's he, pray? Do you mean God Almighty?" "Yes," said Mr. Kilpin, "I do mean God, and I ought not to have used a word which you could not understand." "I thank you sir," said the sailor, and looked as if he would devour the rest of the sermon in the interest which he felt in it even to the close. Now that one unvarnished face is but an index of that which prevails in every land. There must be simple preaching. A doctrine of atonement that is not simple, a doctrine which comes from Germany, which needs a man to be a great scholar before he can comprehend it himself, and to be a still greater adept before he can tell it to other—such a doctrine is manifestly not of God, because it is not suited to God's creatures. It is fascinating to one in a thousand of them, but it is not suited to those poor of this world who are rich in faith; not suited to those babes to whom God has revealed

the things of the kingdom while he has hidden them from the wise and prudent. Oh, you may always judge of a doctrine in this way. If it is not a simple doctrine, it does not come from God; if it puzzles you, if it is one which you cannot see through at once because of the mysterious language in which it is couched, you may begin to suspect that it is man's doctrine, and not the Word of God.

Nor is this doctrine of the atonement to be commended merely for its simplicity, but because while suiting the understand it also suits the conscience. How it satisfies the conscience no tongue can tell! When a man is awakened and his conscience stings him, when the Spirit of God has shown him his sin and his guilt, there is nothing but the blood of Christ that can ever give him peace. Peter might have stood up at the prow of the boat and have said to the winds and to the waves, "Peace, be still," but they would have gone on to roaring with unabated fury. The Pope of Rome, who pretends to be Peter's successor, may stand up with his ceremonies and say to the troubled conscience, "Peace, be still," but it will not cease its terrible agitations. The unclean spirit that sets conscience in so much turmoil cries out, "Jesus I know, and his cross I know, but who are ye?" Yea, and it will not be case out. There is no chance whatever of our finding a pillow for a head which the Holy Ghost, has made to ache save in the atonement and the finished work of Christ. When Mr. Robert Hall first went to Cambridge to preach, the Cambridge folks were nearly Unitarians. So he preached upon the doctrine of the finished work of Christ, and some of them came to him in the vestry and said, "Mr Hall, this will never do." "Why not?" said he, "Why, your sermon was only fit for old women." "And why only fit for old women?" said Mr. Hall. "Because," said they, "they are tottering on the borders of the grave, and they want comfort, and, therefore, it will suit them, but it will not do for us." "Very well," said Mr. Hall, "you have unconsciously paid me all the compliment that I can ask for; if this is good for old women on the borders of the grave, it must be good for you if you are in your right senses, for the borders of the grave is where we all stand." Here, indeed, is a choice feature of the atonement, it is comforting to us in the thought of death. When conscience is awakened to a sense of guilt, death is sure to cast his pale shadow on all our prospects, and encircle all our steps with dark omens of the grave. Conscience is accompanied

generally in its alarms with the thoughts of the near-approaching judgment, but the peace which the blood gives is conscience-proof, sickness-proof, death-proof, devil-proof, judgment-proof, and it will be eternity-proof. We may well be alarmed at all the uprisings of occupation and all the remembrance of past defilement, but only let our eyes rest on they dear cross, O Jesus, and our conscience has peace with God, and we rest and are still. Now we ask whether any of these modern systems of divinity can quiet a troubled conscience? We would like to give them some cases that we meet with sometimes—some despairing ones—and say, "Now, here, cast this devil out if you can try your hand at it," and I think they would find, that this kind goeth not out save by the tears, and groans, and death of Jesus Christ the atoning sacrifice. A gospel without an atonement may do very well for young ladies and gentlemen who do not know that they ever did anything wrong. It will just suit your lackadaisical people who have not got a heart for anybody to see; who have always been quite moral, upright, and respectable; who feel insulted if you told them they deserved to be sent to hell; who would not for a moment allow that they could be depraved or fallen creatures. The gospel, I say, of these moderns will suit these gentlefolks very well I dare say, but let a man be really guilty and know it; let him be really awake to his lost state, and I aver that none but Jesus—none but Jesus, nothing but the precious blood can give him peace and rest. For these two things, then, commend us to the doctrine of the atonement, because it suits the understanding of the mostly lowly, and will quiet the conscience of the most troubled.

It has, moreover, this peculiar excellency, that it softens the heart. There is a mysterious softening and melting power in the story of the sacrifice of Christ. I know a dear Christian woman who loved her little ones and sought their salvation. When she prayed for them, she thought it right to use the best means she could to arrest their attention and awaken their minds. I hope you all do likewise. The means, however, which she thought best calculated for her object was the terrors of the Lord. She used to read to her children chapter after chapter of Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted*. Oh, that book! how many dreams it gave her boy at night about the devouring flames and the everlasting burnings. But the boy's heart grew hardened, as if it were annealed rather than melted by the

furnace of fear. The hammer welded the heart to sin, but did not break it. But even then, when the lad's heart was hard, when he heard of Jesus's love to his people, though he feared he was not one of them, still it used to make him weep to think Jesus should love anybody after such a sort. Even now that he has come to manhood, law and terrors make him dead and stolid, but thy blood, Jesus, thine agonies, in Gethsemane and on the tree, he cannot bear; they melt him; his soul flows through his eyes in tears; he weeps himself away from grateful love to thee for what thou hast done. Alas for those that deny the atonement! They take the very sting out of Christ's sufferings; and then, in taking out the sting, they take out the point with which sufferings of Christ pierce, and probe, and penetrate the heart. It is because Christ suffered for my sin, because he was condemned that I might be acquitted and not be damned as the result of my guilt: it is this that makes his sufferings such a cordial to my heart.

"See on the bloody tree,
The Illustrious sufferer hangs,
The torments due to thee,
He bore the dreadful pangs;
And cancelled there, the mighty sum,
Sins present, past, and sins to come."

At this present hour there are congregations met in the theatres of London, and there are persons addressing them. I do not know what their subjects are, but I know what they ought to be. If they want to get at the intellects of those who live in the back-slums, if they want to get at the consciences of those who have been thieves and drunkards, if they want to melt the hearts of those who have grown stubborn and callous through years of lust and iniquity, I know there is nothing will do it but the death on Calvary, the five wounds, the bleeding side, the vinegar, the nails, and the spear. There is a melting power here which is not to be found in all the world besides.

I will detain you yet once more on this point. We commend the doctrine of the atonement because, besides suiting the understanding, quieting the conscience, and melting the heart, we know there is a power in it to affect the outward life. No man can believe that Christ suffered for his sins and yet live in sin. No man can believe that his iniquities were the murderers

of Christ, and yet go and hug those murderers to his bosom. The sure and certain effect of a true faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ is the purging out of the old leaven, the dedication of the soul to him who bought it with his blood, and the vowing to have revenge against those sins which nailed Jesus to the tree. The proof, after all, is the trial. Go into any parish in England where there lives a philosophical divine who has cut the atonement out of his preaching, and if you do not find more harlots, and thieves, and drunkards there than is usual, write me down mistaken; but go, on the other hand, into a parish where the atonement is preached, and that with rigid integrity and with loving earnestness, and if you do not find the ale-houses getting empty, and the shops shut on the Sunday, and the people walking in honesty and uprightness, then I have looked about the world in vain. I knew a village once that was perhaps one of the worst villages in England for many things; where many an illicit still was yielding it noxious liquor to a manufacturer without payment of the duty to the Government, and where, in connection with that, all manner of riot and iniquity were rife. There went a lad into that village, and but a lad, and one who had no scholarship, but was rough, and sometimes vulgar. He began to preach there, and it pleased God to turn that village upside down, and in a short time the little thatched chapel was crammed, and the biggest vagabonds of the village were weeping floods of tears, and those who had been the curse of the parish became its blessings; and where there had been robberies and villainies of every kind all round the neighbourhood, there were none, because the men who did the mischief were themselves in the house of God, rejoicing to hear of Jesus crucified. Mark me, I am not telling you an exaggerated story now, nor a thing that I do not know. Yet this one thing I remember to the praise of God's grace, it pleased the Lord to work signs and wonders in our midst. He showed the power of Jesus' name, and made us witnesses of the gospel which can win souls, draw reluctant hearts, and mould the life and conduct of men afresh. Why, there are some brethren here who go to the refuges and homes to talk to those poor fallen girls who have been reclaimed. I wonder what they would do if they had not the gospel tale to carry with them to the abodes of wretchedness and shame. If they should take a leaf out of some divinity essays, and should go and talk to them in high-flowing words, and philosophies, what good would it be to them? Well, what is not good to them is not good to us. We

want something we can grasp, something we can rely upon, something we can feel; something that will mould our character and conversation, and make us to be like Christ.

II. Secondly, one or two points BY WAY OF EXHORTATION.

Christian man, you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them. What shall we say to you? To you first we say, what a joyful Christian you ought to be! How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven, what matters what happens to you now? Luther said, "Smite, Lord, smite, for my sin is forgiven. If thou hast but forgiven me, smite as hard as thou wilt;" as if he felt like a child who had done wrong, and cared not how his father might whip him if he would but forgive him. So I think you can say, "Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, slander, persecution, what thou wilt, thou hast forgiven me, and my soul is glad, and my spirit is rejoiced." And then, Christian, if thou art thus saved, and Christ really did take thy sin, whilst thou art glad, be grateful and be loving. Cling to that cross which took thy sin away; serve thou him who served thee. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let not your zeal bubble over with some little ebullition of song. You may say,

"I love my God with zeal so great, that I could give him all,"

but sing it not in words unless thou dost mean it. Oh, do mean it! Is there nothing in your life that you do because you belong to Christ? Are you never anxious to show your love in some expressive tokens? Love the brethren of him who loved thee. If there be a Mephibosheth anywhere who is lame or halt, help him for Jonathan's sake. If there be a poor tired believer, try and weep with him, and bear his cross for the sake of him who wept for thee and carried thy sins.

And yet, again, Christian, if this be true that there is an atonement made for sin, tell it, tell it, tell it. "We cannot all preach," say you; no, but tell it, tell it. "I would not prepare a sermon;" tell it; tell out the story; tell out the mystery and wonder of Christ's love. "But I should never get a

congregation;" tell it in your house; tell it by the fire-side. "But I have none but little children:" tell it to your children, and let them know the sweet mystery on the cross, and the blessed history of him who lived and died for sinners. Tell it, for you know not into what ears you may speak. Tell it often, for thus you will have the better hope that you may turn sinners to Christ. Lacking talent, lacking the graces of oratory, be glad that you lack these, and glory in your infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon you, but do tell it. Sometimes there are some of our young men get preaching who had better hold their tongues, but there are many others who have gifts and abilities which they might use for Christ, but who seem tongue-tied. I have often said that if you get a young man to join a rifle corps, he has got something to do, and he puts his heart in it; but if you get the same young man to join a church, well, his name is in the book, and he has been baptized, and so on, and he thinks he has nothing more to do with it. Why, brethren, I do not like to have member of the church who feel they can throw the responsibility on a few of us while they themselves sit still. That is not the way to win battles. If at Waterloo some nine out of ten of our soldiers had said, "Well, we need not fight; we will leave the fighting to the few, there they are; let them go and do it all." Why, if they had said that, they would very soon have all been cut in pieces. They must every one of them take their turns, home, and foot, and artillery; men who were light-armed, and men of all kinds; they must march to the fray; yes, and even the guards, if they are held back as a reserve to the last, yet they must be called for,—"Up guards, and at 'em;" and if there are any of you here that are old men and women and think you are like the guards, and ought to be spared the heavy conflict, yet up and at them, for now the world needs you all, and since Christ has bought you with His blood, I beseech you be not content till you have fought for him, and have been victorious through His name. Tell it; tell it' tell it; with a voice of thunder tell it; year, with many voices mingling together as the sound of many waters; tell it till the dwellers in the remotest wilderness shall hear the sound thereof. Tell it there shall be ne'er a cot upon the mountain where it is not known, ne'er a ship upon the sea where the story has not been told. Tell it till there is never a dark alley that has not been illuminated by its light, nor a loathsome den which has not been cleansed by its power. Tell out the story that Christ died for the ungodly.

With a few words of application to unbelievers I draw to a close. Unbeliever, If god cannot and will not forgive the sons of penitent men without Christ taking their punishment, rest assured he will surely bring you to judgment. If, when Christ, God's Son, had imputed sin laid on him, God smote him, how will he smite you who are his enemy, and who have your own sins upon your head? God seemed at Calvary, as it were, to take an oath—sinner, hear it!—he seemed, as it were, to take an oath and say. "By the blood of my Son I swear that sin must be punished," and if it is not punished in Christ for you, it will be punished in you for yourselves. Is Christ yours, sinner? Did he die for you? Do you trust him? If you do, he died for you. Do not say, "No, I do not?" Then remember that if you live and die without faith in Christ, for every idle word and for every ill act that you have done, stroke for stroke, and blow for blow, vengeance must chastise you.

Again, to another class of you, this word. If God has in Christ made an atonement and opened a way of salvation, what must be your guilt who try to open another way; who say, "I will be good and virtuous; I will attend to ceremonies; I will save myself?" Fool that thou art, thou hast insulted God in his tenderest point, for thou hast, in fact, trampled on the blood of Christ, and said, "I need it not." Oh, if the sinner who repents not be damned, with what accumulated terrors shall he be damned, who, in addition to his impenitence, heaps affronts upon the person of Christ by going about to establish his own righteousness. Leave it; leave your rags, you will never make a garment of them; leave the pilfered treasure of thine; it is a counterfeit; forsake it. I counsel thee to buy of Christ fine raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and fine gold that thou mayest be rich.

And consider this, one and all of you, oh my hearers! If Christ hath made atonement for the ungodly, then let, the question go round, let it go round the aisles and round the gallery, and let it echo in every heart, and let it be repeated by every lip,— "Why not for me?" And "Why not for me?" Hope, sinner, hope; he died for the ungodly. If it had said he died for the godly, there were no hope for thee. If it had been written that he died to save the good, the excellent, and the perfect, then thou hast no chance. He died for the ungodly; thou art such an one; what reason has thou to conclude that

he did not die for thee? Hark thee, man; this is what Christ said to thee, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved;" that is, trust, and thou shalt be saved. Trust thy soul in the hands of him who carried thy load upon the cross; thrust him now. He died for you; your faith is to us the evidence, and to you the proof that Christ bought you with his blood. Delay not; you need not even stay to go home to offer a prayer. Trust Christ with your soul now. You have nothing else to trust to; hang on him. You are going down; you are going down. The waves are gathering about you, and soon shall they swallow you up, and we shall hear your gurglings as you sink. See, he stretches out his hand. "Sinner," saith he, "I will bear thee up; though hell's fiery waves should dash against thee I will bear thee through them all, only trust me." What sayest thou, sinner? Wilt thou trust him? Oh, my soul, recollect the moment when first, I trusted in him! There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, but I hardly think that is greater joy than the joy of the repenting sinner when he first finds Christ. So simple and so easy it seemed to me when I came to know it. I had only to look and live, only to trust and be saved. Year after year had I been running about hither and thither to try and do what was done beforehand, to try and get ready for that which did not want any readiness. Oh, happy was that day when I ventured to step in by the open door of his mercy, to set at the table of grace ready spread, and to eat and drink, asking no question! Oh, soul, do the same! Take courage. Trust Christ, and if he cast thee away when thou has trusted him—my soul for thine as we meet at the bar of God, I will be pawn and pledge for thee at the last, great day if such thou needest; but he cannot and he will not cast out any that come to him by faith. May God now accept and bless us all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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Baptism--A Burial

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. - Romans 6:3-4

I shall not enter into controversy over this text, although over it some have raised the question of infant baptism or believers' baptism, immersion or sprinkling. If any person can give a consistent and instructive interpretation of the text, otherwise than by assuming believers' immersion to be Christian baptism, I should like to see them do it. I myself am quite incapable of performing such a feat, or even of imagining how it can be done. I am content to take the view that baptism signifies the burial of believers in water in the name of the Lord, and I shall so interpret the text. If any think not so, it may at least interest them to know what we understand to be the meaning of the baptismal rite, and I trust that they may think none the less of the spiritual sense because they differ as to the external sign. After all, the visible emblem is not the most prominent matter in the text. May God the Holy Spirit help us to reach its inner teaching.

I do not understand Paul to say that if improper persons, such as unbelievers, and hypocrites, and deceivers, are baptized they are baptized into our Lord's death. He says "so many of us," putting himself with the rest of the children of God. He intends such as are entitled to baptism, and come to it with their hearts in a right state. Of them he says, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" He does not even intend to say that those who were rightly baptized have all of them entered into the fullness of its spiritual meaning; for if they had, there would have been no need of the question, "Know ye not?" It would seem that some had been baptized who did not clearly know the meaning of their own baptism. They had

faith, and a glimmer of knowledge sufficient to make them right recipients of baptism, but they were not well instructed in the teaching of baptism; perhaps they saw in it only a washing, but had never discerned the burial. I will go further, and say that I question if any of us yet know the fullness of the meaning of either of the ordinances which Christ has instituted. As yet we are, with regard to spiritual things, like children playing on the beach while the ocean rolls before us. At best we wade up to our ankles like our little ones on the sea shore. A few among us are learning to swim; but then we only swim where the bottom is almost within reach. Who among us has yet come to lose sight of shore and to swim in the Atlantic of divine love, where fathomless truth rolls underneath, and the infinite is all around? Oh, may God daily teach us more and more of what we already know in part, and may the truth which we have as yet but dimly perceived come to us in a brighter and clearer manner, till we see all things in clear sunlight. This can only be as our own character becomes more clear and pure; for we see according to what we are; and as is the eye such is that which it sees. The pure in heart alone can see a pure and holy God. We shall be like Jesus when we shall see him as he is, and certainly we shall never see him as he is till we are like him. In heavenly things we see as much as we have within ourselves. He who has eaten Christ's flesh and blood spiritually is the man who can see this in the sacred Supper, and he who has been baptized into Christ sees Christ in baptism. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundantly.

Baptism sets forth the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and our participation therein. Its teaching is twofold. First, think of our representative union with Christ, so that when he died and was buried it was on our behalf, and we were thus buried with him. This will give you the teaching of baptism so far as it sets forth a creed. We declare in baptism that we believe in the death of Jesus, and desire to partake in all the merit of it. But there is a second equally important matter and that is our realized union with Christ which is set forth in baptism, not so much as a doctrine of our creed as a matter of our experience. There is a manner of dying, of being buried, of rising, and of living in Christ which must be displayed in each one of us if we are indeed members of the body of Christ.

I. First, then, I want you to think of OUR REPRESENTATIVE UNION WITH CHRIST as it is set forth in baptism as a truth to be believed. Our Lord Jesus is the substitute for his people, and when he died it was on their behalf and in their stead. The great doctrine of our justification lies in this, that Christ took our sins, stood in our place, and as our surety suffered, and bled, and died, thus presenting on our behalf a sacrifice for sin. We are to regard him, not as a private person, but as our representative. We are buried with him in baptism unto death to show that we accept him as being for us dead and buried.

Baptism as a burial with Christ signifies, first, acceptance of the death and burial of Christ as being for us. Let us do that at this very moment with all our hearts. What other hope have we? When our divine Lord came down from the heights of glory and took upon himself our manhood, he became one with you and with me; and being found in fashion as a man, it pleased the Father to lay sin upon him, even your sins and mine. Do you not accept that truth, and agree that the Lord Jesus should be the bearer of your guilt, and stand for you in the sight of God? "Amen! Amen!" say all of you. He went up to the tree loaded with all this guilt, and there he suffered in our room and stead as we ought to have suffered. It pleased the Father, instead of bruising us, to bruise him. He put him to grief, making his soul an offering for sin. Do we not gladly accept Jesus as our substitute? O beloved, whether you have been baptized in water or not, I put this question to you, "Do you accept the Lord Jesus as your surety and substitute?" For if you do not, you shall bear your own guilt and carry your own sorrow, and stand in your own place beneath the glance of the angry justice of God. Many of us at this moment are saying in our inmost hearts -

"My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."

Now, by being buried with Christ in baptism, we set our seal to the fact that the death of Christ was on our behalf, and that we were in him, and

died in him, and, in token of our belief, we consent to the watery grave, and yield ourselves to be buried according to his command. This is a matter of fundamental faith—Christ dead and buried for us; in other words, substitution, suretyship, vicarious sacrifice. His death is the hinge of our confidence: we are not baptized into his example, or his life, but into his death. We hereby confess that all our salvation lies in the death of Jesus, which death we accept as having been incurred on our account.

But this is not all; because if I am to be buried, it should not be so much because I accept the substitutionary death of another for me as because I am dead myself. Baptism is an acknowledgment of our own death in Christ. Why should a living man be buried? Why should he even be buried because another died on his behalf? My burial with Christ means not only that he died for me, but that I died in him, so that my death with him needs a burial with him. Jesus died for us because he is one with us. The Lord Jesus Christ did not take his people's sins by an arbitrary choice of God; but it was most natural and fit and proper that he should take his people's sins, since they are his people, and he is their federal head. It behooved Christ to suffer for this reason—that he was the covenant representative of his people. He is the Head of the body, the Church; and if the members sinned, it was meet that the Head, though the Head had not sinned, should bear the consequence of the acts of the body. As there is a natural relationship between Adam and those that are in Adam, so is there between the second Adam and those that are in him. I accept what the first Adam did as my sin. Some of you may quarrel with it, and with the whole covenant dispensation, if you please; but as God has pleased to set it up, and I feel the effect of it, I see no use in my controverting it. As I accept the sin of father Adam, and feel that I sinned in him, even so with intense delight I accept the death and atoning sacrifice of my second Adam, and rejoice that in him I have died and risen again. I lived, I died, I kept the law, I satisfied justice in my covenant Head. Let me be buried in baptism that I may show to all around that I believe I was one with my Lord in his death and burial for sin.

Look at this, O child of God, and do not be afraid of it. These are Grand truths, but they are sure and comforting. You are getting among Atlantic billows now, but be not afraid. Realize the sanctifying effect of this truth.

Suppose that a man had been condemned to die on account of a great crime; suppose, further, that he has actually died for that crime, and now, by some wonderful work of God, after having died he has been made to live again. He comes among men again as alive from the dead, and what ought to be the state of his mind with regard to his offence? Will he commit that crime again? A crime for which he has died? I say emphatically, God forbid. Rather should he say, "I have tasted the bitterness of this sin, and I am miraculously lifted up out of the death which it brought upon me, and made to live again: now will I hate the thing that slew me, and abhor it with all my soul." He who has received the wages of sin should learn to avoid it for the future. But you reply, "We never did die so; we were never made to suffer the due reward of our sins." Granted. But that which Christ did for you comes to the same thing, and the Lord looks upon it as the same thing. You are so one with Jesus, that you must regard his death as your death, his sufferings as the chastisement of your peace. You have died in the death of Jesus, and now by strange, mysterious grace you are brought up again from the pit of corruption unto newness of life. Can you, will you, go into sin again? You have seen what God thinks of sin: you perceive that he utterly loathes it; for when it was laid on his dear Son, he did not spare him, but put him to grief and smote him to death. Can you, after that, turn back to the accursed thing which God hates? Surely, the effect of the great grief of the Saviour upon your spirit must be sanctifying. How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein? How shall we that have passed under its curse, and endured its awful penalty, tolerate its power? Shall we go back to this murderous, villainous, virulent, abominable evil? It cannot be. Grace forbids.

This doctrine is not the conclusion of the whole matter. The text describes us as buried with a view to rising. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death,"—for what object?—"that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Be buried in Christ! What for? That you may be dead for ever? No, but that now getting where Christ is, you may go where Christ goes. Behold him, then: he goes, first, into the sepulchre, but next out of the sepulchre; for when the third morning came he rose. If you are one with Christ at all, you must be one with him all through; you must be one

with him in his death, and one with him in his burial, then you shall come to be one with him in his resurrection. Am I a dead man now? No, blessed be his name, it is written, "Because I live ye shall live also." True, I am dead in one sense, "For ye are dead"; but yet not dead in another, "For your life is hid with Christ in God"; and how is he absolutely dead who has a hidden life? No; since I am one with Christ I am what Christ is: as he is a living Christ, I am a living spirit. What a glorious thing it is to have arisen from the dead, because Christ has given us life. Our old legal life has been taken from us by the sentence of the law, and the law views us as dead; but now we have received a new life, a life out of death, resurrection-life in Christ Jesus. The life of the Christian is the life of Christ. Ours is not the life of the first creation, but of the new creation from among the dead. Now we live in newness of life, quickened unto holiness, and righteousness, and joy by the Spirit of God. The life of the flesh is a hindrance to us; our energy is in his Spirit. In the highest and best sense our life is spiritual and heavenly. This also is doctrine which is to be held most firmly.

I want you to see the force of this; for I am aiming at practical results this morning. If God has given to you and to me an entirely new life in Christ, how can that new life spend itself after the fashion of the old life? Shall the spiritual live as the carnal? How can you that were the servants of sin, but have been made free by precious blood, go back to your old slavery? When you were in the old Adam life, you lived in sin, and loved it; but now you have been dead and buried, and have come forth into newness of life: can it be that you can go back to the beggarly elements from which the Lord has brought you out? If you live in sin, you will be false to your profession, for you profess to be alive unto God? If you walk in lust, you will tread under foot the blessed doctrines of the Word of God, for these lead to holiness and purity. You would make Christianity to be a by-word and a proverb, if, after all, you who were quickened from your spiritual death should exhibit a conduct no better than the life of ordinary men, and little superior to what your former life used to be. As many of you as have been baptized have said to the world,—We are dead to the world, and we have come forth into a new life. Our fleshly desires are henceforth to be viewed as dead, for now we live after a fresh order of things. The Holy Spirit has wrought in us a new nature, and though we are in the

world, we are not of it, but are new-made men, "created anew in Christ Jesus." This is the doctrine which we avow to all mankind, that Christ died and rose again, and that his people died and rose again in him. Out of the doctrine grows death unto sin and life unto God, and we wish by every action and every movement of our lives to teach it to all who see us.

So far the doctrine: is it not a precious one indeed? Oh, if you be indeed one with Christ, shall the world find you polluting yourselves? Shall the members of a generous, gracious Head be covetous and grasping? Shall the members of a glorious, pure, and perfect Head be defiled with the lusts of the flesh and the follies of a vain life? If believers are indeed so identified with Christ that they are his fullness, should they not be holiness itself? If we live by virtue of our union with his body, how can we live as other Gentiles do? How is it that so many professors exhibit a mere worldly life, living for business and for pleasure, but not for God, in God, or with God? They sprinkle a little religion on a worldly life, and so hope to Christianize it. But it will not do. I am bound to live as Christ would have lived under my circumstances; in my private chamber or in my public pulpit, I am bound to be what Christ would have been in like case. I am bound to prove to men that union to Christ is no fiction, or fanatical sentiment: but that we are swayed by the same principles and actuated by the same motives.

Baptism is thus an embodied creed, and you may read it in these words: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

II. But , secondly, A REALIZED UNION WITH CHRIST is also set forth in baptism, and this is rather a matter of experience than of doctrine.

1. First, there is, as a matter of actual experience in the true believer, death. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" It must be contrary to all law to bury those who are yet alive. Until they are dead, men can have no right to be buried. Very well, then, the Christian is dead,—dead, first, to the dominion of sin. Whenever sin called him aforesaid he answered, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." Sin ruled his members, and if sin said, "Do this," he did it,

like the soldiers obedient to their centurion; for sin ruled over all the parts of his nature, and exercised over him a supreme tyranny. Grace has changed all this. When we are converted we become dead to the dominion of sin. If sin calls us now, we refuse to come, for we are dead. If sin commands us we will not obey, for we are dead to its authority. Sin comes to us now—oh, that it did not,—and it finds in us the old corruption which is crucified, but not yet dead; but it has no dominion over our true life. Blessed be God, sin cannot reign over us, though it may assail us and work us harm. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace." We sin, but not with allowance. With what grief we look back upon our transgressions! How earnestly do we endeavour to avoid them! Sin tries to maintain its usurped power over us; but we do not acknowledge it as our sovereign. Evil enters us now as an interloper and a stranger, and works sad havoc, but it does not abide in us upon the throne; it is an alien, and despised, and no more honoured and delighted in. We are dead to the reigning power of sin.

The believer, if spiritually buried with Christ, is dead to the desire of any such power. "What!" say you, "do not godly men have sinful desires?" Alas, they do. The old nature that is in them lusteth towards sin; but the true man, the real ego, desires to be purged of every speck or trace of evil. The law in the members would fain urge to sin, but the life in the heart constrains to holiness. I can honestly say, for my own self, that the deepest desire of my soul is to live a perfect life. If I could have my own best desire, I would never sin again; and though, alas, I do consent to sin so that I become responsible when I transgress, yet my innermost self loathes iniquity. Sin is my bondage, not my pleasure; my misery, not my delight; at the thought of it I cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" In our heart of hearts our spirit cleaves steadfastly to that which is good, and true, and heavenly, so that the real man delights in the law of God, and follows hard after goodness. The main current and true bent of our soul's wish and will is not towards sin, and the apostle taught us no mere fancy when he said, "For he that is dead is freed from sin."

Moreover, in the next place we are dead as to the pursuits and aims of the sinning and ungodly life. Brethren, are any of you that profess to be God's

servants living for yourselves? Then you are not God's servants; for he that is really born again lives unto God: the object of his life is the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men. This is the prize that is set before the quickened man, and towards this he runs. "I do not run that way," says one. Very well, then you will not come to the desired end. If you are running after the pleasures of the world or the riches of it, you may win the prize you run for, but you cannot win "the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus." I hope that many of us can honestly say that we are now dead to every object in life, except the glory of God in Christ Jesus. We are in the world, and have to live as other men do, carrying on our ordinary business; but all this is subordinate, and held in as with bit and bridle; our aims are above yon changeful moon. The flight of our soul, like that of an eagle, is above these clouds: though that bird of the sun alights upon the rock, or even descends to the plain, yet its joy is to dwell above, out soaring the lightning, rising over the black head of the tempest, and looking down upon all earthly things. Henceforth our grace-given life speeds onward and upward; we are not of the world, and the world's engagements are not those upon which we spend our noblest powers.

Again, we are dead in this sense, that we are dead to the guidance of sin. The lust of the flesh drives a man this way and that way. He steers his course by the question, "What is most pleasant? What will give me most present gratification?" The way of the ungodly is mapped out by the hand of selfish desire: but you that are true Christians have another guide, you are led by the Spirit in a right way. You ask, "What is good and what is acceptable in the sight of the Most High?" Your daily prayer is, "Lord, show me what thou wouldest have me to do?" You are alive to the teachings of the Spirit, who will lead you into all truth; but you are deaf, yea, dead to the dogmas of carnal wisdom, the oppositions of philosophy, the errors of proud human wisdom. Blind guides who fall with their victims into the ditch are shunned by you, for you have chosen the way of the Lord. What a blessed state of heart this is! I trust, my brethren, that we have fully realized it! We know the Shepherd's voice, and a stranger we will not follow. One is our teacher, and we submit our understandings to his infallible instruction.

Our text must have had a very forcible meaning among the Romans in Paul's time, for they were sunk in all manner of odious vices. Take an average Roman of that period, and you would have found in him a man accustomed to spend a large part of his time in the amphitheater, hardened by the brutal sight of bloody shows, in which gladiators slew each other to amuse a holiday crowd. Taught in such a school, the Roman was cruel to the last degree, and withal ferocious in the indulgence of his passions. A depraved man was not regarded as being at all degraded; not only nobles and emperors were monsters of vice, but the public teachers were impure. When those who were regarded as moral were corrupt, you may imagine what the immoral were. "Enjoy yourself; follow after the pleasures of the flesh," was the rule of the age. Christianity was the introduction of a new element. See here a Roman converted by the grace of God! What a change is in him! His neighbours say, "You were not at the amphitheater this morning. How could you miss the sight of the hundred Germans who tore out each other's bowels?" "No," he says, "I was not there; I could not bear to be there. I am totally dead to it. If you were to force me to be there, I must shut my eyes, for I could not look on murder committed in sport!" The Christian did not resort to places of licentiousness; he was as good as dead to such filthiness. The fashions and customs of the age were such that Christians could not consent to them, and so they became dead to society. It was not merely that Christians did not go into open sin, but they spoke of it with horror, and their lives rebuked it. Things which the multitude counted a joy, and talked of exultingly, gave no comfort to the follower of Jesus, for he was dead to such evils. This is our solemn avowal when we come forward to be baptized. We say by acts which are louder than words that we are dead to those things in which sinners take delight, and we wish to be so accounted.

2. The next thought in baptism is burial. Death comes first, and burial follows. Now, what is burial, brethren? Burial is, first of all, the seal of death; it is the certificate of decease. "Is such a man dead?" say you. Another answers, "Why, dear sir, he was buried a year ago." There have been instances of persons being buried alive, and I am afraid that the thing happens with sad frequency in baptism, but it is unnatural, and by no means the rule. I fear that many have been buried alive in baptism,

and have therefore risen and walked out of the grave just as they were. But if burial is true, it is a certificate of death. If I am able to say in very truth, "I was buried with Christ thirty years ago," I must surely be dead. Certainly the world thought so, for not long after my burial with Jesus I began to preach his name, and by that time the world thought me very far gone, and said, "He stinketh." They began to say all manner of evil against the preacher; but the more I stank in their nostrils the better I liked it, for the surer I was that I was really dead to the world. It is good for a Christian to be offensive to wicked men. See how our Master stank in the esteem of the godless when they cried, "Away with him, away with him!" Though no corruption could come near his blessed body, yet his perfect character was not savoured by that perverse generation. There must, then, be in us death to the world, and some of the effects of death, or our baptism is void. As burial is the certificate of death, so is burial with Christ the seal of our mortification to the world.

But burial is, next, the displaying of death. While the man is indoors the passers-by do not know that he is dead; but when the funeral takes place, and he is carried through the streets, everybody knows that he is dead. This is what baptism ought to be. The believer's death to sin is at first a secret, but by an open confession he bids all men know that he is dead with Christ. Baptism is the funeral rite by which death to sin is openly set forth before all men.

Next, burial is the separateness of death. The dead man no longer remains in the house, but is placed apart as one who ceases to be numbered with the living. A corpse is not welcome company. Even the most beloved object after a while cannot be tolerated when death has done his work upon it. Even Abraham, who had been so long united with his beloved Sarah, is heard to say, "Bury my dead out of my sight." Such is the believer when his death to the world is fully known: he is poor company for worldlings, and they shun him as a damper upon their revelry. The true saint is put into the separated class with Christ, according to his word, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." The saint is put away in the same grave as his Lord; for as he was, so are we also in this world. He is shut up by the world in the one cemetery of the faithful, if I may so call it, where all that are in Christ are

dead to the world together, with this epitaph for them all, "And ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

And the grave is the place—I do not know where to get a word—of the settledness of death; for when a man is dead and buried you never expect to see him come home again: so far as this world is concerned, death and burial are irrevocable. They tell me that spirits walk the earth, and we have all read in the newspaper "The Truth about Ghosts," but I have my doubts on the subject. In spiritual things, however, I am afraid that some are not so buried with Christ but what they walk a great deal among the tombs. I am grieved at heart that it should be so. The man in Christ cannot walk as a ghost, because he is alive somewhere else; he has received a new being, and therefore he cannot mutter and peep among the dead hypocrites around him. See what our chapter saith about our Lord: "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." If we have been once raised from dead works we shall never go back to them again. I may sin, but sin can never have dominion over me; I may be a transgressor and wander much from my God, but never can I go back to the old death again. When my Lord's grace got hold of me, and buried me, he wrought in my soul the conviction that henceforth and for ever I was to the world a dead man. I am right glad that I made no compromise, but came right out. I have drawn the sword, and thrown away the scabbard. Tell the world they need not try to fetch us back, for we are spoiled for them as much as if we were dead. All they could have would be our carcasses. Tell the world not to tempt us any longer, for our hearts are changed. Sin may charm the old man who hangs there upon the cross, and he may turn his leering eye that way, but he cannot follow up his glance, for he cannot get down from the cross: the Lord has taken care to use the mallet well, and he has fastened his hands and feet right firmly, so that the crucified flesh must still remain in the place of doom and death. Yet the true, the genuine life within us cannot die, for it is born of God; neither can it abide in the tombs, for its call is to purity and joy and liberty; and to that call it yields itself.

3. We have come as far as death and burial; but baptism, according to the

text, represents also resurrection: "That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Now, notice that the man who is dead in Christ, and buried in Christ, is also raised in Christ, and this is a special work upon him. All the dead are not raised, but our Lord himself is "the firstfruits of them that slept." He is the first-begotten from among the dead. Resurrection was a special work upon the body of Christ by which he was raised up, and that work, begun upon the Head, will continue till all the members partake of it, for -

"Though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust;
Yet as the Lord our Saviour rose,
So all his followers must."

As to our soul and spirit, the resurrection has begun upon us. It has not come to our bodies yet, but it will be given to them at the appointed day. For the present a special work has been wrought upon us by which we have been raised up from among the dead. Brethren, if you had been dead and buried, and had been lying one night, say, in Woking Cemetery, and if a divine voice had called you right up from the grave when the silent stars were shining on the open heath—if, I say, you had risen right out from the green mound of turf, what a lonely being you would have been in the vast cemetery amid the stilly night! How you would sit down on the grave and wait for morning! That is very much your condition with regard to the present evil world. You were once like the rest of the sinners around you, dead in sin, and sleeping in the grave of evil custom. The Lord by his power has called you out of your grave, and now you are alive in the midst of death. There can be no fellowship here for you; for what communion have the living with the dead? The man out there in the cemetery just quickened would find none among all the dead around him with whom he could converse, and you can find no companions in this world. There lies a skull, but it sees not from the eyeholes; neither is there speech in its grim mouth. I see a mass of bones lying in yon corner: the living one looks at them, but they cannot hear or speak. Imagine yourself there. All that you would say to the bones would be to ask, "Can these dry bones live?" You would be a foreigner in that home of corruption, and you

would haste to get away. That is your condition in the world: God has raised you up from among the dead, from out of the company among whom you had your former conversation. Now, I pray you, do not go and scratch into the earth, to tear up the graves to find a friend there. Who would rend open a coffin and cry, "Come, you must drink with me! You must go to the theatre with me"? No, we dread the idea of association with the dead, and I tremble when I see a professor trying to have communion with worldly men. "Come ye out from among them; be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing." You know what would happen to you if you were thus raised, and were forced to sit close to a dead body newly taken from the grave. You would cry, "I cannot bear it; I cannot endure it"; you would get to the wind side of the horrid corpse. So with a man that is really alive unto God: deeds of injustice, oppression, or unchastity he cannot endure; for life loaths corruption.

Notice that, as we are raised up by a special work from among the dead, that rising is by divine power. Christ is brought again "from the dead by the glory of the Father." What means that? Why did it not say, "by the power of the Father"? Ah, beloved, glory is a grander word; for all the attributes of God are displayed in all their solemn pomp in the raising of Christ from the dead. There was the Lord's faithfulness; for had he not declared that his soul should not rest in hell, neither should His Holy One see corruption? Was not the love of the Father seen there? I am sure it was a delight to the heart of God to bring back life to the body of his dear Son. And so, when you and I are raised out of our death in sin, it is not merely God's power, it is not merely God's wisdom that is seen, it is "the glory of the Father." Oh, to think that every child of God that has been quickened has been quickened by "the glory of the Father. " It has taken not alone the Holy Spirit, and the work of Jesus, and the work of the Father, but the very "glory of the Father." If the tiniest spark of spiritual life has to be created by "the glory of the Father," what will be the glory of that life when it comes into its full perfection, and we shall be like Christ, and see him as he is! O beloved, value highly the new life which God has given you. Think of it as making you richer than if you had a sea of pearls, greater than if you were descended from the loftiest of princes. There is in you that which it required all the attributes of God to create. He could make a world by power alone, but you must be raised from the dead by

"the glory of the Father."

Notice next, that this life is entirely new. We are to "walk in newness of life." The life of a Christian is an entirely different thing from the life of other men, entirely different from his own life before his conversion, and when people try to counterfeit it, they cannot accomplish the task. A person writes you a letter and wants to make you think he is a believer, but within about half-a-dozen sentences there occurs a line which betrays the imposter. The hypocrite has very neatly copied our expressions, but not quite. There is a freemasonry among us, and the outside world watch us a bit, and by-and-by they pick up certain of our signs; but there is a private sign which they can never imitate, and therefore at a certain point they break down. A godless man may pray as much as a Christian, read as much of the Bible as a Christian, and even go beyond us in externals; but there is a secret which he knows not and cannot counterfeit. The life divine is so totally new that the unconverted have no copy to work by. In every Christian it is as new as if he were the very first Christian. Even though in every one it is the image and superscription of Christ, yet there is a milled edge or a something about the real silver that these counterfeits cannot get a hold of. It is a new, a novel, a fresh, a divine thing.

And, lastly, this life is an active thing. I have often wished that Paul had not been so fast when I have been reading him. His style travels in seven-leagued boots. He does not write like an ordinary man. I beg to tell him that if he had written this text according to proper order, it should run, "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should be raised from the dead." But see; Paul has got over ever so much ground while we are talking: he has reached to "walking." The walking includes the living, of which it is the sign, and Paul thinks so fast when the Spirit of God is upon him that he has passed beyond the cause to the effect. No sooner do we get the new life than we become active: we do not sit down and say, "I have received a new life: how grateful I ought to be. I will quietly enjoy myself." Oh dear, no. We have something to do directly we are alive, and we begin walking, and so the Lord keeps us all our lives in his work; he does not allow us to sit down contented with the mere fact that we live, nor does he allow us to

spend all our time in examining whether we are alive or no; but he gives us one battle to fight, and then another; he gives us his house to build, his farm to till, his children to nurse, and his sheep to feed. At times we have fierce struggles with our own spirit, and fears lest sin and Satan should prevail, till our life is scarce discerned by itself, but it is always discerned by its acts. The life that is given to those who were dead with Christ is an energetic, forceful life, that is evermore busy for Christ, and would, if it could, move heaven and earth and subdue all things unto him who is its Head.

This life Paul tells us is an unending one. Once get it, and it will never go from you. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more."

Next, it is a life which is not under the law or under sin. Christ came under the law when he was here, and he had our sin laid on him, and therefore died; but after he rose again there was no sin laid on him. In his resurrection both the sinner and the Surety are free. What had Christ to do after his rising? To bear any more sin? No, but just to live unto God. That is where you and I are. We have no sin to carry now; it was all laid on Christ. What have we to do? Every time we have the headache, or feel ill, are we to cry out, "This is a punishment for my sin"? Nothing of the kind. Our punishment is all done with, for we have borne the capital sentence, and are dead: our new life must be unto God.

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King."

I have now to serve him and delight myself in him, and use the power which he gives me of calling others from the dead, saying, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." I am not going back to the grave of spiritual death nor to my grave-clothes of sin; but by divine grace I will still believe in Jesus, and go from strength to strength, not under law, not fearing hell, nor hoping to merit heaven, but as a new creature, loving because loved, living for Christ because Christ lives in me, rejoicing in glorious hope of that which is yet

to be revealed by virtue of my oneness in Christ.

Poor sinner, you do not know anything about this death and burial, and you never will till you have power to become sons of God, and that he gives to as many as believe on his name. Believe on his name, and it is all yours. Amen and Amen.

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The Beatitudes

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth, and taught them saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."--Matthew v.1-12.

One enjoys a sermon all the better for knowing some of the preacher. It is natural that, like John in Patmos, we should turn to see the voice which spake with us. Turn hither then, and learn that the Christ of God is the Preacher of the Sermon on the mount. He who delivered the Beatitudes was not only the Prince of preachers, but he was beyond all others qualified to discourse upon the subject which he had chosen. Jesus the Saviour was best able to answer the question, "Who are the saved?" Being himself the ever-blessed Son of God, and the channel of blessings, he was best able to inform us who are indeed the blessed of the Father. As Judge,

it will be his office to divide the blessed from the accursed at the last, and therefore it is most meet that in gospel majesty he should declare the principle of that judgment, that all men may be forewarned.

Do not fall into the mistake of supposing that the opening verses of the Sermon on the mount set forth how we are to be saved, or you may cause your soul to stumble. You will find the fullest light upon that matter in other parts of our Lord's teaching, but here he discourses upon the question, "Who are the saved?" or, "What are the marks and evidences of a work of grace in the soul?" Who should know the saved so well as the Saviour does? The shepherd best discerns his own sheep, and the Lord himself alone knoweth infallibly there that are his. We may regard the marks of the blessed ones here given as being the sure witness of truth, for they are given by him who cannot err, who cannot be deceived, and who, so their Redeemer, knows his own. The Beatitudes derive much of their weight from the wisdom and glory of him who pronounced them; and, therefore, at the outset your attention is called thereto. Lange says that "man is the mouth of creation, and Jesus is the mouth of humanity;" but we prefer, in this place, to think of Jesus as the mouth of Deity, and to receive his every word as girt with infinite power.

The occasion of this sermon is noteworthy; it was delivered when our Lord is described as "seeing the multitudes." He waited until the congregation around him had reached its largest size, and was most impressed with his miracles, and then he took the tide at its flood, as every wise man should. The sight of a vast concourse of people ought always to move us to pity, for it represents a mass of ignorance, sorrow, sin, and necessity, far too great for us to estimate. The Saviour looked upon the people with an omniscient eye, which saw all their sad condition; he saw the multitudes in an emphatic sense, and his soul was stirred within him at the sight. His was not the transient tear of Xerxes when he thought on the death of his armed myriads, but it was practical sympathy with the host of mankind. No one cared for them, they were like sheep without a shepherd, or like shocks of wheat ready to shatter for want of harvest-men to gather them in. Jesus therefore hastened to the rescue. He noticed, no doubt, with pleasure, the eagerness of the crowd to hear, and this drew him on to speak. A writer quoted in the

"Catena Aurea" has well said, "Every man in his own trade or profession rejoices when he sees an opportunity of exercising it; the carpenter, if he sees a goodly tree, desires to have it felled, that he may employ his skill on it; and even so the preacher, when he sees a great congregation, his heart rejoices, and he is glad of the occasion to teach." If men become negligent of hearing, and our audience dwindles down to a handful, it will be a great distress to us if we have to remember that, when the many were anxious to hear, we were not diligent to preach to them. He who will not reap when the fields are white unto the harvest, will have only himself to blame if in other seasons he is unable to fill his arm with sheaves. Opportunities should be promptly used whenever the Lord puts them in our way. It is good fishing where there are plenty of fish, and when the birds flock around the fowler it is time for to spread his nets.

The place from which these blessings were delivered is next worthy of notice: "Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain." Whether or no the chosen element was that which is now known as the Horns of Hattim, is not a point which it falls in our way to contest; that he ascended an elevation is enough for our purpose. Of course, this would be mainly because of the accommodation which the open hill-side would afford to the people, and the readiness with which, upon some jutting crag, the preacher might sit down, and be both heard and seen; but we believe the chosen place of meeting had also its instruction. Exalted doctrine might well be symbolized by an ascent to the mount; at any rate, let every minister feel that he should ascend in spirit when he is about to descant upon the lofty themes of the gospel. A doctrine which could not be hid, and which would produce a Church comparable to a city set on a hill, fitly began to be proclaimed from a conspicuous place. A crypt or cavern would have been out of all character for a message which is to be published upon the housetops, and preached to every creature under heaven.

Beside, mountains have always been associated with distinct eras in history of the people of God; mount Sinai is sacred to the law, and mount Zion symbolical of the Church. Calvary was also in due time to be connected with redemption, and the mount of Olives with the ascension of our risen Lord. It was meet, therefore, that the opening of the

Redeemer's ministry should be connected with a mount such as "the hill of the Beatitudes." 'Twas from that mountain that God proclaimed the law, it is on a mountain that Jesus expounds it. Thank God, it was not a mount around which bounds had to be placed; it was not the mount which burned with fire, from which Israel retired in fear. It was, doubtless, a mount all carpeted with grass, and dainty with fair flowers, upon whose side the olive and fig flourished in abundance, save where the rocks pushed upward through the sod, and early invited their Lord to honour them by making them his them his pulpit and throne. May I not add that Jesus was in deep sympathy with nature, and therefore delighted in an audience-chamber whose floor was grass, and whose roof was the blue sky? The open space was in keeping with his large heart, the breezes were akin to his free spirit, and the world around was full of symbols and parables, in accord with the truths he taught. Better than long-drawn aisle, or tier on tier of crowded gallery, was that grand hill-side setting-place. Would God we oftener heard sermons amid soul-inspiring scenery! Surely preacher and hearer would be equally benefited by the change from the house made with hands to the God-made temple of nature.

There was instruction in the posture of the preacher: "When he was set," he commenced to speak. We do not think that either weariness or length of the discourse suggested sitting down. He frequently stood when he preached at considerable length. We incline to the belief that, when he became a pleader with the sons of men, he stood with uplifted hands, eloquent from head to foot, entreating, beseeching, and exhorting, with every member of his body, as well as every faculty of his mind; but now that he was, as it were, a Judge award the blessings of the kingdom, or a King on his throne, separating his true subject from aliens and foreigners, he sat down. As an authoritative Teacher, he officially occupied the chair of doctrine, and spake ex cathedra, as men say as a Solomon acting as the master of assemblies, or a Daniel come to judgment. He sat as a refiner, and his word was as a fire. His posture is not accounted for by the fact that it was the Oriental custom for the teacher to sit and the pupil to stand, for our Lord was something more than a didactic teacher, he was a Preacher, a Prophet, a Pleader, and consequently he adopted other attitudes when fulfilling those offices; but on this occasion, he sat in his place as Rabbi of the Church, the authoritative Legislator of the kingdom

of heaven, the Monarch in the midst of his people. Come hither, then, and listen to the King in Jeshurun, the Divine Lawgiver, delivering not the ten commands, but the seven, or, if you will, the nine Beatitudes of his blessed kingdom.

It is then added, to indicate the style of his delivery, that "he opened his mouth," and certain cavilers of shallow wit have said, "How could he teach without opening his mouth?" to which the reply is that he very frequently taught, and taught much, without saying a word, since his whole life was teaching, and his miracles said deeds of love were the lessons of a master instructor. It is not superfluous to say that "he opened his mouth, and taught them," for he had taught them often when his mouth was closed. Besides that, teachers are to be frequently met with who seldom open their mouths; they hiss the everlasting gospel through their teeth, or mumble it within their mouths, as if they had never been commanded to "cry aloud, and spare not." Jesus Christ spoke like a man in earnest; he enunciated clearly, and spake loudly. He lifted up his voice like a trumpet, and published salvation far and wide, like a man who had something to say which he desired his audience to hear and feel. Oh, that the very manner and voice of those who preach the gospel were such as to bespeak their zeal for God and their love for souls! So should it be, but so it is not in all cases. When a man grows terribly in earnest while speaking, his mouth appears to be enlarged in sympathy with his heart: this characteristic has been observed in vehement political orators, and the messengers of God should blush if no such impeachment can be laid at their door.

"He opened his mouth, and taught them,"--have we not here a further hint that, as he had from the earliest days opened the mouths of his holy prophets, so now he opens his own mouth to inaugurate yet a fuller revelation? If Moses spake, who made Moses' mouth? If David sang, who opened David's lips that he might show forth the praises of god? Who opened the mouths of the prophets? Was it not therefore well said that now he opened his own mouth, and spake directly as the incarnate God to the children of men? Now, by his own inherent power and inspiration, he began to speak, not through the mouth of Isaiah, or of Jeremiah, but by his own mouth. Now was a spring of wisdom to be unsealed from which

all generations should drink rejoicingly; now would the most majestic and yet most simple of all discourses be heard by mankind. The opening of the fount which flowed from the desert rock was not one-half so full of joy to men. Let our prayer be, "Lord, as thou hast opened thy mouth, do thou open our hearts;" for when the Redeemer's mouth is open with blessings, and our hearts are open with desires, a glorious filling with all the fulness of God will be the result, and then, also shall our mouths be opened to show forth our Redeemer's praise.

Let us now consider the Beatitudes themselves, trusting that, by the help of God's Spirit, we may perceive their wealth of holy meaning. No words in the compass of Sacred Writ are more precious or more freighted with solemn meaning.

The first word of our Lord's great standard sermon is "Blessed." You have not failed to notice that the last word of the Old Testament is "curse", and it is suggestive that the opening sermon of our Lord's ministry commences with the word "Blessed." Nor did he begin in that manner, and then change his strain immediately, for nine times did that charming word fall from his lips in rapid succession. It has been well said that Christ's teaching might be summed up in two words, "Believe" and "Blessed." Mark tells us that he preached, saying, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel;" and Matthew in this passage informs us that he came saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." All his teaching was meant to bless the sons of men; for "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

"His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes his brow,
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below."

His lips, like a honeycomb, drop sweetness, promises and blessings are the overflowings of his mouth. "Grace is poured into thy lips," said the psalmist, and consequently grace poured from his lips; he was blessed for ever, and he continued to distribute blessings throughout the whole of his

life, till, "as he blessed them, he was taken up into heaven." The law had two mountains Ebal and Gerizim, one for blessing and other for cursing, but the Lord Jesus blesses evermore, and curses not.

The Beatitudes before us, which relate to character, are, seven; the eighth is a benediction upon the persons described in the seven Beatitudes when their excellence has provoked the hostility of the wicked; and, therefore, it may be regarded as a confirming and summing up of the seven blessings which precede it. Setting that aside, then, as a summary, we regard the Beatitudes as seven, and will speak of them as such. The whole seven describe a perfect character, and make up a perfect benediction. Each blessing is precious, ay, more precious than much fine gold; but we do well to regard them as a whole, for as a whole they were spoken, and from that point of view they are a wonderfully perfect chain of seven priceless links, put together with such consummate art as only our heavily Bezaleel, the Lord Jesus, ever possessed. No such instruction in the art of blessedness can be found anywhere else. The learned have collected two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions of the ancients with regard to happiness, and there is not one which hits the mark; but our Lord has, in a few telling sentences, told us all about it without using a solitary redundant word, or allowing the slightest omission. The seven golden sentences are perfect as a whole, and each one occupies its appropriate place. Together they are a ladder of light, and each one is a step of purest sunshine.

Observe carefully, and you will see that each one rises above those which precede it. The first Beatitude is by no means so elevated as the third, nor the third as the seventh. There is a great advance from the poor in spirit to the pure in heart and the peacemaker. I have said that they rise, but it would be quite as correct to say that they descend, for from the human point of view they so; to mourn is a step below and yet above being poor in spirit, and the peacemaker, while the highest form of Christian, will find himself often called upon to take the lowest room for peace sake. "The seven Beatitudes mark deepening humiliation and growing exaltation." In proportion as men rise in the reception of the divine blessing, they sink in their own esteem, and count it their honour to do the humblest works.

Not only do the Beatitudes rise one above another, but they spring out of each other, as if each one depended upon all that went before. Each growth feeds a higher growth, and the seventh is the product of all the other six. The two blessings which we shall have to consider have this relation. "Blessed are they that mourn" grows out of "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Why do they mourn? They mourn because they are "poor in spirit." "Blessed are the meek" is a benediction which no man reaches till he has felt his spiritual poverty, and mourned over it. "Blessed are the merciful" follows upon the blessing of the meek, because men do not acquire the forgiving, sympathetic, merciful spirit until they have been made meek by the experience of the two benedictions. This same rising and outgrowth may be seen in the whole seven. The stones are laid one upon the other in fair colours, and polished after the similitude of a palace; they are the natural sequel and completion of each other, even as were the seven days of the world's first week.

Mark, also, in this ladder of light, that though each step is above the other, and each step springs out of the other, yet each one is perfect in itself, and contains within itself a priceless and complete blessing. The very lowest of the blessed, namely, the poor in spirit, have their peculiar benediction, and indeed it is one of such an order that it is used in the summing up of all the rest. "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven" is both the first and the eighth benediction.

The highest character namely, the peacemakers, who are called the children of God, are not said to be more than blessed; they doubtless enjoy more of the blessedness, but they do not in the covenant provision possess more.

Note, also with delight, that the blessing is in every case in the present tense, a happiness to be now enjoyed and delighted in. It is not "Blessed shall be," but "Blessed are." There is not one step in the whole divine experience of the believer, not one link in the wonderful chain of grace, in which there is a withdrawal of the divine smile or an absence or real happiness. Blessed is the first moment of the Christian life on earth, and blessed is the last. Blessed is the spark which trembles in the flax, and blessed is the flame which ascends to heaven in a holy ecstasy. Blessed is the bruised reed, and blessed is that throne of the Lord, which is full of sap,

the cedar of Lebanon, which the Lord had planted. Blessed is the babe in grace, and blessed is the perfect man in Christ Jesus. As the Lord's mercy endureth for ever, even so shall our blessedness.

We must not fail to notice that, in the seven Beatitudes, the blessing of each one is appropriate to the character. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" is appropriately connected with enrichment in the possession of a kingdom more glorious than all the thrones of earth. It is also most appropriate that those who mourn should be comforted; that the meek, who renounce all self-aggrandizement, should enjoy most of life, and so should inherit the earth. It is divinely fit that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness should be filled, and that those who show mercy to others should obtain it themselves. Who but the pure in heart should see the infinitely pure and holy God? And who but the peacemakers should be called the children of the God of peace?

Yet the careful eye perceives that each benediction, though appropriate, is worded paradoxically. Jeremy Taylor says, "They are so many paradoxes and impossibilities reduced to reason." This is clearly seen in the first Beatitude, for the poor in spirit are said to possess a kingdom, and is equally vivid in the collection as a whole, for it treats of happiness, and yet poverty leads the van, and persecution brings up the rear; poverty is the contrary of riches, and yet how rich are those who possess a kingdom! and persecution is supposed to destroy enjoyment, and yet it is here made a subject of rejoicing. See the sacred art of him who spake as never man spake, he can at the same time make his words both simple and paradoxical, and thereby win our attention and instruct our intellects. Such a preacher deserves the most thoughtful of hearers.

The whole of the seven Beatitudes composing this celestial ascent to the house of the Lord conduct believers to an elevated table-land upon which they dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the people; their holy separation from the world brings upon them persecution for righteousness' sake, but in this they do not lose their happiness, but rather have it increased to them, and confirmed by the double repetition of the benediction. The hatred of man does not deprive the saint of the love of God; even revilers contribute to his blessedness. Who among us will be ashamed of the cross which must attend such a crown of

lovingkindness and tender mercies? Whatever the curses of man may involve, they are so small a drawback to the consciousness of being blessed in a sevenfold manner by the Lord, that they are not worthy to be compared with the grace which is already revealed in us.

Here we pause for this present, and shall, by God's help, consider one of the Beatitudes in our next homily.

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God Justified, Though Man Believes Not

For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, and every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. - Romans 3:3-4

The seed of Israel had great privileges even before the coming of Christ. God had promised by covenant that they should have those privileges; and they did enjoy them. They had a revelation and a light divine, while all the world beside sat in heathen darkness. Yet so many Jews did not believe, that, as a whole, the nation missed the promised blessing. A great multitude of them only saw the outward symbols, and never understood their spiritual meaning. They lived and died without the blessing promised to their fathers. Did this make the covenant of God to be void? Did this make the faithfulness of God to be a matter of question? "No, no," says Paul, "if some did not believe, and so did not gain the blessing, this was their own fault; but the covenant of God stood fast, and did not change because men were untrue." He remained just as true as ever; and he will be able to justify all that he has said, and all that he has done, and he will do so even to the end. When the great drama of human history

shall have been played out, the net result will be that the ways of God shall be vindicated notwithstanding all the unbelief of men.

I am going to talk of our text, at this time, first, as giving to us a sorrowful reminder: "For what if some did not believe?" It is sad to be reminded that there always have been some who did not believe. Next, here is a horrible inference, which some have drawn from this grievous fact, that is, because some did not believe, it has been hinted that their unbelief would make the faith of God or the faithfulness of God without effect; to which, in the third place, the apostle gives an indignant reply: "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

I. Well now, first, we have here A SORROWFUL REMINDER. There always have been some who have not believed.

When God devised the great plan of salvation by grace; when he gave his own Son to die as the Substitute for guilty men; when he proclaimed that whosoever believed in Jesus Christ should have everlasting life; you would have thought that everybody would have been glad to hear such good news, and that they would all have hastened to believe it. Christ is so suitable to the sinner. Why does not the sinner accept him? The way of salvation is so simple, so suitable to guilty men, it is altogether so glorious, so grand, that if we did not know the depravity of the human heart, we should expect that every sinner would at once believe the gospel, and receive its boons. But, alas, some have not believed!

Now, this is stated very mildly. The apostle says, "For what if some did not believe?" He might have said, "What if many did not believe?" But he is talking to his Hebrew friends, and he wishes to woo them; so he states the case as gently as he can. Remember, dear friends, the carcasses of all but two who came out of Egypt fell in the wilderness through unbelief. Only Joshua and Caleb entered the promised land; but the apostle does not wish to unduly press his argument, or speak so as to aggravate his hearers; and he therefore puts it, "For what if some did not believe?" Even in his own day, he might have said, "The bulk of the Jewish nation

has rejected Christ. Wherever I go, they seek my life. They would stone me to death, if they could, because I preach a dying Saviour's love;" but he does not put it so; he only mentions that some did not believe. Yet this is a very appalling thing, even when stated this mildly. If all here, except one person, were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was announced that that one unbeliever would be pointed out to the congregation, I am sure we would all feel in a very solemn condition. But, dear friends, there are many more than one here who have not believed on the Son of God, and who, therefore, are not saved. If the unconverted were not so numerous, there is all the greater need for our tears and our compassion.

The terms of Paul's question suggest a very sweet mitigation of the sorrow. "What if some did not believe?" Then it is implied that some did believe. Glory be to God, there is a numerous "some" who have believed that Jesus is the Christ; and believing in him, have found life through his name! These have entered into a new life, and now bear a new character, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Beloved, we do thank God that the preaching of the gospel has not been in vain. Up yonder, more numerous than the stars are they that walk in white robes which they have washed in the blood of the Lamb; and down here, despite our mourning, there is a glorious company, who still follow the Lamb, who is to them, their only hope.

Looking at the other side of the case, it is true that, at times, the "some" who did not believe meant the majority. It must be admitted that, sometimes, unbelievers have preponderated even among the hearers of the precious Word. Read the story of Israel through, in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, and you will be saddened to find how again and again they did not believe. The history of Israel, from the moment they became a nation, is a very painful one. It is full of the mercy of God; but it is also full of treachery of the human heart. In the days of the judges, the people served God while a good judge ruled over them; but as soon as he was dead, they went astray after false gods. I almost think that the Christian church is in the period of the judges now. When the Lord raises up, here one and there another, to preach his Word faithfully, the people

seem to take heed to it; but when the faithful preachers are gone, many of their hearers turn aside again. Blessed be to God, we expect the coming of the King soon; and when the King comes, and the period of the judges shall have ended, then we shall enter upon a time of rest and peace. It may be that, even among hearers of the gospel, those who do not believe preponderate over those who do believe. My text sounds like a solemn knell, and there is something terribly awful about it, like the deep rumbling of underground thunder.

Now, dear friends, this unbelief has usually been the case throughout all ages among the great ones of the earth. In our Saviour's day, they said, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?" The gospel has usually had a free course among the poor and among those who some call "the lower orders", though why they are said to be lower than others, I do not know, unless it is because the heavier and more valuable things generally sink to the bottom. The church of God owes very little to kings and princes and nobles. She owes far more to fishermen and peasants. Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.: I suspect that, until the King himself shall come, we shall still find that the common people will gladly hear the gospel; and that, while Christ the Lord will choose for his own some from all ranks and conditions of men, it will still be true that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."

I think we may also say, with deep solemnity that some who have not believed have belonged to the religious and to the teaching class. In the days of our Lord and his apostles, the scribes and Pharisees were the greatest haters of the doctrine of Christ. Those whom you might have supposed, being most familiar with the Scriptures, the scribes, would soonest have recognized the Messiah, were the men who would not acknowledge him. So it was with the priests, even the chief priests, the men who had to do with the sacrifices and with the temple. They rejected Christ, although they were the religious leaders of the people. Do you suppose it is very different now? Alas, my friends, we may be preachers, and yet not preach the gospel of Christ; we may be members of the

church, and yet not savingly know the gospel; we may go in and out of the house of God, and seem to take part in its holy service, and yet, all the while, we may be strangers and foreigners in the presence of the Most High. Believers are not always those whom you would suppose to be believers. The Lord often brings to himself, as in the case of the centurion, of whom we read this morning, far-off ones, rough soldiers, who were not thought likely to feel the power of such gentle teaching as the doctrine of the cross; and they bow before the Saviour. But alas! Alas! Among those who appear to be the children of the kingdom, brought up in the worship of God, there are some, yea, many, who have not believed on Christ; and, saddest of all, even among those who are the teachers of others in the things of God, there are some that have not savingly believed.

Now, dear friends, if we take the whole range of the nations favoured with the gospel, we shall have to say, and say it, as it were, in capital letters, "SOME DO NOT BELIEVE," and that "some" is a very large number. The question of the apostle is, "What if some did not believe?" Well, if I had to ask and answer that question, at this time, I would say, "What if some do not believe?" Then they are lost. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." There still remains, to those who hear the gospel, the opportunity to believe; and, believing in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." There still remains, to those who hear the gospel, the opportunity to believe; and, believing, they shall find life through the sacred name. Let us pray for them. If some do not believe, let us, who do believe, make them the constant subject of our prayers; and then let us tell them what is it to be believed, and bear our witness to the saving power of the gospel. When we have done that, let us scrupulously take care that our life and conduct are consistent with the doctrine that we teach, so that, if some do not believe, they may be won to Christ by the example of those who believe in him. Oh, that every Christian here would seek to bring another person to Christ! I pray you, beloved, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, be not barren nor unfruitful. If you know the great secret, tell it to others. Tell it out; tell it out; we all want stirring up to this blessed work; I am sure we do. I heard of a Christian who always spoke about Christ to, at least, one person every day. I commend

the example for your imitation. How many of us could say that we do that? I know there are some here who do ten times as much as that. It has grown to be a habit with them to speak of Christ to every one they meet; but it is not the habit even of all who believe. It takes some Christians a long time to begin to say anything for their Lord. Let us try and labour hard, that, if some people do not believe, we may bring them to the Saviour, that God may have praise from them also.

II. But now I advance a step further, and dwell upon A HORRIBLE INFERENCE drawn from the fact that some did not believe. The inference was, that their unbelief had made the faith of God, or the faithfulness of God, altogether without effect. I will translate what Paul said without dwelling on his words.

Some will say, "If So-and-so, and So-and-so do not believe the gospel, then religion is a failure." We have read of a great many things being failures nowadays. A little time ago, it was a question whether marriage was not a failure. I suppose that, by-and-by, eating our dinners will be a failure, breathing will be a failure, everything will be a failure. But now the gospel is said to be a failure. Why? Because certain gentlemen of professed culture and supposed knowledge do not believe it. Well, dear friends, there have been other things that have not been believed in by very important individuals, and yet they have turned out to be true. I am not quite old enough to remember all that was said about the introduction of the steam-engine, though I remember right well going to see a steam-engine and a railway-train as great wonders when I was a boy. Before the trains actually ran, all the old coachmen, and all the farmers that had horses to sell, would not believe for a moment that an engine could be made to go on the rails, and to drag carriages behind it; and in parliament they had to say that they thought they could produce an engine that could go at the speed of eight miles an hour. They dare not say more, because it would have been incredible if they did. According to the wise men of the time, everything was to go to the bad, and the engines would blow up, the first time they started with a train. But they did not blow up, and everybody now smiles at what those learned gentlemen (for some of them were men of standing and learning) ventured then to say. Look at the gentlemen who now tell us that the gospel is a failure. They

are the successors of those who have risen up, one after the other; whose principal object has been to refute all that went before them. They call themselves philosophers; and, as I have often said, the history of philosophy is a history of fools, a history of human folly. Man has gone from one form of philosophy to another, and every time that he has altered his philosophy, he has only made a slight variation in the same things. Philosophy is like a kaleidoscope. The philosopher turns it round, and exclaims that he has a new view of things. So he has; but all that he sees is a few bits of glass, which alter their form at every turn of the toy. If any of you shall live fifty years, you will see that the philosophy of today will be a football of contempt for the philosophy of that period. They will speak, amidst roars of laughter, of evolution; and the day will come, when there will not be a child but will look upon it as being the most foolish notion that ever crossed the human mind. I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet; but I know what has befallen many of the grand discoveries of the great philosophers of the past; and I expect that the same thing will happen again. I have to say, with Paul, "What if some did not believe?" It is no new thing; for there have always been some who have rejected the revelation of God. What then? You and I had better go on believing, and testing for ourselves, and proving the faithfulness of God, and living upon Christ our Lord, even though we see another set of doubters, and another, and yet another ad infinitum. The gospel is no failure, as many of us know.

Is the gospel to be disbelieved because some people will not receive it? I trow not, dear friends. As I have already said, many other things have been believed, although some people have not believed them; and the believers have had the best of it, and so they always will. Has the gospel changed your character? Has the gospel renewed you in the spirit of your mind? Does the gospel cheer and comfort you in the day of sorrow? Does it help you to live, and will it help you to die? Then do not give it up, even though some do not believe it.

Again, dear friends, has God failed to keep his promise to Israel because some Israelites did not believe? That is the point that Paul aims at, and the answer is, "No." He did bring Israel into the promised land, though all but two that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness. He did give that

promised land to Israel, albeit that, through their unbelief, God smote them, and they were destroyed; yet a nation came up again from their ashes, and God kept his covenant with his ancient people; and to-day he is keeping it. The "chosen seed of Israel's race" is "a remnant, weak and small"; but the day is coming when they shall be gathered in, and we shall then rejoice; for then shall be the fullness of the Gentiles, also, When Israel has come to her own Lord and King. God has not cast away his people, whom he did foreknow; nor has he broken his covenant made with Abraham, nor will he while the world standeth, even though many believe not on him.

Will God fail to keep his promise to anyone who believes on him? Because some do not believe, will God's promise therefore fail to be kept to those who do believe? I invite you to come and try. When two of John's disciples enquired of Jesus where he dwelt, he said to them, "Come and see." If any person here will try Christ, as I tried him, when yet a youth, as miserable as I could be, and ready to die with despair, if they shall feel in believing such joy as I felt, if they shall experience such a change of character as passed over me when I believed in Christ, they would not tolerate a doubt. What they have known, and felt, and tasted, and handled of the good Word of God, will prove to them that, if some believe not, yet God abideth faithful, he will never deny himself. One said that she believed the Bible because she was acquainted with the Author of it, which is an excellent reason for believing it. You will believe the gospel if you are so acquainted with the Saviour who brings that gospel to us. Personal dealings with God in Christ, personal trust in the living Saviour, will put you out of reach of this strange inference that God will be unfaithful because some do not believe in him.

I am going a step further. Will God be unfaithful to his Son if some do not believe? I have heard sometimes, a fear expressed that Christ will lose those for whom he dies. I thank God that I have no fear about that. "He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." I never come to you, and, in forma pauperis, ask you to accept Christ, begging and praying you to take Christ, because otherwise he will be a loser by you. It is you who must beg of him. He giveth grace as a king bestows his favours; nay more, he lovingly condescends to entreat you to come to

him. Suppose that you wickedly say, "We will not have Christ to reign over us." If you think that you will rob him of honour, and bring disgrace upon him by your rejection, you make a great mistake. If you will not have him, others will. If you who are so wise will not have Christ, there are plenty, whom you reckon to be fools, who will take him to be their "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." If you who are so gay and frivolous will not have my Lord, you will die in your sins; but there are others who will have him. Do not think that you can by any possibility rob him of his glory. "For what if some did not believe?" This word shall yet become true. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." If myriads reject him, there will be myriads who will receive him, and in all things he shall have the preeminence; and he will return to his Father not defeated, but more than a conqueror over all his foes.

To put the question in another shape, "For what if some did not believe?" Will God alter his revealed truth? If some do not believe, will God change the gospel to suit them? Will he seek to please their depraved taste? Ought we to change our preaching because of "the spirit of the age"? Never; unless it be to fight "the spirit of the age" more desperately than ever. We ask for no terms between Christ and his enemies except these, unconditional surrender to him. He will bate not jot of tittle of his claims; but he will still come to you, and say, "Submit yourselves; bow down, and own me King and Lord, and take me to be your Saviour. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is none else." If you wait till there is a revised version of the gospel, you will be lost. If you wait till there is a gospel brought out that will not cost you so much of giving up sin, or so much of bowing your proud necks, you will wait until you find yourself in hell. Come, I pray you, come even now, and believe the gospel. It cannot be altered to your taste; therefore alter yourself so as to meet its requirements.

Now suppose that these men, who will not believe, should all concert together to proclaim new views in order to upset the gospel. You see, up to the present time, they never have agreed. One wing of Satan's army of doubters always destroys the other. Just now the great scientists say to the modern-thought gentlemen, and say to them very properly, "If there

is no serpent, and no Eve, and no Adam, and no flood, and no Noah, and no Abraham. As you tell us now that all this is a myth, then your whole old Book is a lie." I am very much obliged to those who talk thus to the disciples of the higher criticism. They thought that they were going to have all the scientists on their side, to join them in attacking the ancient orthodoxies. There is a split in the enemy's camp; Amalek is fighting Edom, and Edom is contending against Moab.

But suppose they were all to agree. Well, what would happen then? I thought I saw a vision once, when I was by the seaside. To my closed eyes, there seemed to come down to the beach at Brighton a huge black horse, which went into the water, and began to drink; and I thought I heard a voice that said, "It will drink the sea dry." My great horse grew, and grew, till it was such a huge creature that I could scarcely measure it; and still it drank, and drank, and drank. All the while the sea did not appear to alter in the least, the water was still there as deep as ever. By-and-by the animal burst, and its remains were washed up on the beach, and there it lay dead, killed by its own folly. That will be the end of this big black horse of infidelity that boasts that it is going to drink up this everlasting gospel.

I remember that Christmas Evans put this truth rather roughly on one occasion. He said, "There was a dog on the hearthrug, and there was a kettle of boiling water on the fire. As the kettle kept puffing out steam and hot water, the dog sat up and growled. The more the kettle kept on puffing, the more the dog growled; and at last he seized the kettle by the throat, and of course the boiling water killed him." Thus will unbelievers do with the gospel. They growl at it to-day; but if they ever join together, and really make an attack upon it, the gospel will be a savour of death unto death to those who oppose it, as it is a savour of life to those who receive it.

Thus I have mentioned this horrible inference.

III. Now I close by speaking very briefly upon AN INDIGNANT REPLY to this horrible inference.

In reply to this question, "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" Paul give a solemn negative: "God forbid." All the opponents of the gospel cannot move it by a hair's breath; they cannot injure a single stone of this divine building. It remains ever the same. Let them do what they may, they cannot alter it.

Then Paul utters a vehement protestation: "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." Can you picture this great host? Here they come, all the men who ever lived, unnumbered millions! They come marching up; and we stand like the inspecting general at a review, and see them all go by; and as every man passes, he shouts, "The gospel is not true. Christ did not die. There is no salvation for believers in him." The apostle Paul, standing as it were at the saluting-point, and seeing the whole race of mankind go by, says, "God is true, and every one of you is a liar." "Let God be true, but every man a liar." You know the way that we have of counting beads, and if the majority goes in a particular direction, we almost go that way. If you count the heads, and there is a general consensus of opinion, you are apt to say, "It must be so, for everybody says so." But what everybody says is not therefore true. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." It is a strange, strong expression; but it is non too strong. If God says one thing, and every man in the world says another, God is true, and all men are false. God speaks the truth, and cannot lie. God cannot change; his word, like himself, is immutable. We are to believe God's truth if nobody else believes it. The general consensus of opinion is nothing to a Christian. He believes God's word, and he thinks more of that than of the universal opinion of men.

Paul next uses a Scriptural argument. Whenever he gets thoroughly redhot, and wants an overwhelming argument, he always goes to the divine treasury of revelation. He quotes what David had said in the fifty-first Psalm, "That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

God will be justified in everything that he has said. You may take every line of the Word of God, and rest assured that God will be justified in having directed the sacred penman to write that line.

God shall also be justified when he judges, and when he condemns men. When he pronounces his final sentence upon the ungodly, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" he shall be justified even in that dreadful hour.

A very startling expression is used here: "That thou mightest overcome when thou art judged." Think of this enormous evil; here are men actually trying to snatch the balance and the rod from the hand of God; and presuming to judge his judgments, and to sit as if they were the god of God. Suppose that they could be daring enough to do even that, the verdict would be in God's favour. It would be proved that he had neither said anything untrue, nor done anything unjust. We are confident that, although some do not believe God, he will be justified before men and angels, and we shall have nothing to do but to admire and adore him world without end.

Now, I could say much more; but I will not except just this, I want those who are the Lord's people to be very brave about the things of God. There has been too much of yielding, and apologizing, and compromising. I cannot bear it; it grieves me to see one truth after another surrendered to the enemy. A brother writes to me, saying, "You do not put so much mirth into your preaching as you used to do. When the captain at sea whistles, then all the sailors feel more cheerful." My friend adds, "Whistle a bit." I will do so. This is my way of whistling to cheer my shipmates. I believe in the everlasting God, and in his unchanging truth; and I am persuaded that the gospel will win the day, however long and stern the conflict rages. Therefore, my brethren, be not ashamed of the gospel, nor of Christ your Lord, who died that he might save you eternally. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." Even if it did come to this, that every other man in the world were against the truth of God, stand you to his word, and say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

The other word that I have to say is a message to the unsaved. If you are opposed to God, I beseech you give up your opposition at once. The battle cannot end well for you unless you yield yourself to God. He is your Maker and Preserver; every argument we can use ought to convince you that you should be on his side. I pray you remember that, for you to

contend with God, is for the gnat to contend with the fire, or the wax, to fight with the flame. You must be destroyed if you come into collision with him. Then yield to him at once. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." What is it to kiss the Son? Why, to accept the Lord Christ as your King and Saviour. To ask him to be your peace and your salvation. Ask him now, before that clock ceases striking. I pray that some may at this moment say, "I will have Christ, and I will be Christ's." The Lord grant it! This great transaction done now, it shall be done forever; and you and I will meet on the other side of Jordan, in the land of the blessed, and eternally praise him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God. The Lord be with you, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

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Believing on Jesus, and Its Counterfeits

"As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—John 8:30-32.

Our Lord, on this occasion, was surrounded by cavillers. We must not be astonished if the like should happen to us when declaring the gospel. Our Lord went on preaching all the same, and he did not conceal objectionable truth because of opposition; say, rather, that he set it forth with greater boldness and decision when surrounded by his enemies. The more they opposed, the more he testified.

The Lord Jesus also told the contradicting sinners that the day would come when cavillers would be convinced. Observe how he put it: "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself." Cavillers may have a fine time of it just now; but they will one day be convinced either to their conversion or their

confusion. Let us hope that many will see the truth before they die—early enough to seek and find a Savior. But many in our Lord's day who discovered it after his uplifting on the cross, and his uplifting from the grave, came by their knowledge sadly late; for in the mean time they had crucified the Lord of glory. Ah, how much of sin comes out of faith delayed! A far greater number of these Jews were convinced in their minds altogether too late; for when they were driven to feel, by the attendant circumstances of his crucifixion and resurrection, that he really was the Son of God, they still persevered in rebellion, and sank into obstinate rejection of his claims. On such his blood rested to their eternal condemnation. Cavillers, you may riot for a little season, but your time is short; the hour will come when you shall behold, and wonder, and perish. I pray that there may come an end to your unbelief by your being convinced in this life, and led to repentance; but if it be not so, you will certainly be ashamed and confounded in the day when the Lord shall come in his glory, and you shall in vain beseech the mountains to fall upon you and hide you from his face.

Cavillers ought to be convinced even now; the Savior implies this when he adds, "He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." The character of Jesus should have convinced the Jews of his mission. His evident obedience to God, and the equally evident witness of God to him, would have led them to see his Messiahship if they had not been blinded by prejudice and pride. Any candid man at the present day studying the life of Christ, and observing his unique character, should be convinced that he is the Son of God, and should come to believe in him.

But, beloved, though the Savior was thus surrounded with objectors and had so much to endure from their ignorance and their malice, yet his controversies with them were not without hopeful effects; for our text informs us, "As he spake these words, many believed on him." Albeit we may be surrounded with general and virulent opposition, yet there will be fruit from the preaching of the truth. The Word of the Lord shall not return unto him void: it shall prosper in the thing whereto God hath sent it. We may hope that not only a few, but many will accept the sacred testimony, since we see that, even in the midst of an exceedingly hot

dispute, it happened that "As he spake these words, many believed on him."

I. These believers were not all of one kind; and upon that fact I shall enlarge in this beginning of my sermon. Let that stand as our first observation upon the text—OUR LORD HAD DIFFERENT KINDS OF BELIEVERS ABOUND HIM. There were two sorts of believers evidently, who may be set forth to you by the differing expressions used in the Revised Version. We read in verse 30, "Many believed on him"; and then in the thirty-first verse we read of "those Jews which had believed him." Mark the distinction between "believed on him" and "had believed him." It is a singular expression also, "Those Jews which had believed him." They were Jews still as to their traditional belief and connection—Jews first of all, whatever they might be in connection with their Judaism. The omission of the word "on" or "in" is a happy one, because it is exactly accurate; and it helps to bring out an important distinction, while it also accounts for what seems so strange, that those who had believed him should, almost immediately after, charge him with being a Samaritan and having a devil, and should even take up stones to stone him. There were two sorts of believers, and on these I will speak a while.

The first "believed on him": these are the right kind. What is it to believe on Christ? It means not only to accept what he says as true, and to believe that he is the Messiah and the Son of God, but trustfully to rest in him. To believe on him is to take him as the ground of our hopes, as our Savior, upon whom we depend for salvation. When we believe in him or on him, we accept him as God sets him forth; and we make use of him by trusting on him to do for us what God has appointed him to do. This trusting on Jesus is saving faith. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." To believe him may be a very different thing from believing on him. Such belief may fall far short of saving faith. To believe on him means heartily to give yourself up to him, and to follow him as the way, the truth, and the life to you. Rejecting all rival confidences, the heart leans on Jesus all its weight, and leaves with him all its burdens. Believing in him, we repose all our concerns, for time and for eternity, in his hands. To believe on him is also to believe

implicitly. We believe all that he may yet say. We accept not only what he says which we can fully understand, but that which as yet is dark to us. We so believe in him that we go with him in all his teachings, be they what they may. We not only go as far as he has hitherto revealed himself to us, but we are prepared to go as much farther as he pleases. What he says is truth to us, on the sole evidence that he says it. We believe in Jesus, not because we judge that what he says can be endorsed by our understanding (though that is, indeed, the case), but because he says it. Our Lord's word is reason enough for us. The ipse dixit of the Son of God suffices us, even if all men deny his assertions. He has said it, and he is the truth itself. We believe on him; Son of God and Son of man, living, dying, risen again, ascended into the heavens, we trust him. He is our infallible prophet, and our omniscient teacher. We rest ourselves wholly on him. That is saving faith. Oh, that it may be said of this congregation, "Many believed on him"!

But there is another kind of faith which was produced by the Savior's testimony, and had much of hope in it, and yet it never came to anything. There is a temporary faith which believes Jesus in a sense, and after its own way of understanding him, or rather of misunderstanding him. This faith believes about him; believes that he was undoubtedly sent of God; that he was a great prophet; that what he says is, to a high degree, reasonable and right, and so forth. This faith believes what he has just now said; but it is not prepared to believe on him so as to accept everything that he may say at another time. This faith believes everything that commands itself to its own judgment: it does not, in fact, believe in Jesus, but believes in itself, and in him so far as he agrees with its own opinions. This faith is not prepared to obey Christ, and accept him as its Master and Lord. This was the kind of faith these Jews possessed: it was a faith which was so crowded up with a mass of favourite prejudices that before long it was smothered by them. They might accept Jesus as the Messiah, but then he must be the kind of Messiah they had always pictured in their own minds—a leader who would defeat the Romans, who would deliver Palestine from the foreign yoke, rebuild the temple, and glorify the Jewish race. They half hoped that he might turn out to be a great leader for their own purposes; but they did not believe in him as he revealed himself as the light of the world, as the Son of God, and as

one with the Father.

A great deal of disbelief and misbelief is current at the present day. We are encouraged by certain persons to include in our churches all that have any sort of belief; and, indeed, the line is to be more inclusive still, for these who have no belief at all are to find an open door. The Church of Christ is to be a menagerie of creatures of every kind. I fear, if they come into this Noah's ark wild beasts, they will also go out wild beasts. Only those who enter by the door of regeneration and spiritual faith will in very deed be within the kingdom of the Lord. If they have received Christ, we may receive them into his church, but not else. It is true the people of temporary faith will creep into the visible church, but they do so on their own responsibility. Nor need we think that some strange thing has happened unto us as a church when the baser sort are found among us; for one such entered into that college of apostles; a man who, doubtless, believed the words of Jesus, and thought him to be the Messiah: I mean Judas, who, with a traitor's hand, sold his Master. His intellect had been convinced, but his heart had never been renewed. He even dared to use his profession of religion, and the position which it brought him, as a means of unhallowed gain. Another notable believer of this sort was Simon Magus, who believed because he saw the signs and wonders wrought by the apostles; but as he also sought to make gain of godliness, he remained in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, and never became "a disciple indeed." There is a greater one than all these, even the devil. We read that "the devils believe and tremble." They hold the faith, and feel something of the power of it, for they tremble which is more than modern critics do. Devils know that Jesus is the Christ of God; for they have upon occasion confessed it, and have borne witness to the gospel in the open streets, crying after the preachers of the Word; and yet with all their knowledge, and with much of a sort of faith, and with an apprehension which leads to trembling, they remain devils still, and make no advance towards God. Ah, my hearers! beware of that faith which is a mere intellectual movement, which does not control the heart and the life. To come to faith through a cold argument, and to feel no spiritual life, is but a poor business. You want a faith that leads you to an entire reliance upon the person of Jesus, to the giving up of everything to him, to the reception of him as your Savior and King, your all in all. You have

not believed unto eternal life unless you have so believed on him that you make him the foundation and corner-stone of your hope? You must believe in him as taking away sin. God has set him forth to be the propitiation for sin, and you must believe on him in that capacity.

This will suffice upon our first head, and this very naturally leads us to the second remark.

II. OUR LORD TAKES NOTICE EVEN OF THE LOWEST SORT OF FAITH. When he saw that these people believed him in a measure and were willing to accept his testimony so far as they comprehended it, he looked upon them hopefully, and spoke to them. Out of a weak and imperfect faith, something better may arise. Saving faith, in its secret beginnings, may be contained in this common and doubtful faith. It is written, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Certainly he can find it if anyone can. He has a very quick eye for faith. He deals with little faith as we used to do with a spark in the tinder, in the days of our boyhood. When we had struck a spark, and it fell into the tinder—though it was a very tiny one—we watched it eagerly, we blew upon it softly, and we were zealous to increase it, so that we might kindle our match thereby. When our Lord Jesus sees a tiny spark of faith in a man's heart, though it be quite insufficient of itself for salvation, yet he regards, it with hope, and watches over it, if, haply, this little faith may grow to something more. It is the way of our compassionate Lord not to quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. If any of you have only a little faith now, and that marred by ignorance and prejudice, it may be like a connecting thread between you and Jesus, and the thread may thicken to a cable. Your partial and feeble faith as yet only takes hold upon a part of the revelation of God; but I am glad that it takes hold on anything which is from above. I would not roughly break that single holdfast which now links you to the truth; and yet I would not have you trust to it as though it would stand the stress of tempest. Oh, that your faith may be increased till you trustfully commit yourself to Jesus, and believe in him unto eternal life!

Our Lord addressed himself especially to these questionable believers. He turned from his assured disciples to look after those who were more in danger. Their character was a curious combination—full of peril, "Jews

who believed him." You that are familiar with the New Testament Scriptures will think the phrase more suggestive than it at first sight appears. It reminds me of those of you who believe the gospel and still remain worldly, impenitent, prayerless. You fear the Lord, and serve other gods. You are not infidels in name, but you are atheists in life. To you there is urgent need to speak. The Master turned round, and spoke to those who were believers, and yet not believers; holding with Jesus, and yet really opposed to him. Oh, you that halt between two opinions, my Lord looks on you with a pitying hopefulness, and he speaks especially to you at this time! May you have grace to hear and obey his Word!

It is clear that he encourages them, but he does not flatter them. He says, "if." A great "if" hovered over them like a threatening cloud. Wisely does our Lord commence his word to them with "if." "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." Continuance is the sure test of the genuine believer. Our Lord does not say, "Go your way, you are not my disciples"; but he, in effect, says, "I stand in doubt of you. The proof of your discipleship will be your persevering in your faith." If we say that we believe in Jesus, we must prove it by abiding in believing, and by still further believing. The Word of Jesus must be the object of our faith; into that Word we must enter, and in that Word we must continue. Beginning to believe is nothing unless we continue to believe.

Our Lord showed his interest in the weaker sort of believers by helping them on in the safe way, urging them to continue in his Word. You believe," he seems to say, "believe still; believe more; believe all that I say. You have entered into my Word; dive deeper into it, and abide in it. Let my Word surround you: dwell in it; continue in it." Good advice this! and it is the advice I would give in my Master's name to any here who are feeling after Christ and his gospel. As far as you have already come in faith, keep fast hold, and seek for more. You are on the right track in believing Jesus; a track which will lead to the King's highway if fairly followed up. Any kind of faith is better than that deadly doubt which is cried up so much nowadays. By faith comes salvation, but by doubt comes the opposite. Your feeble and imperfect believing has in it much of hopefulness, but it must be continued, or we shall be disappointed. Your home and refuge must be the Word of the Lord Jesus, and in that refuge

you must abide. Believe what Jesus says in his New Testament of love. Whatever you find that he reveals by himself or by his apostles, receive it without question. Hold fast his Word, and let it hold you fast. First, believe him, believe him to be true, believe him to be sent of God for your salvation; and then put yourself into hands. When you have committed yourself to him, continue to do so. Do not run away from your faith because of ridicule. Mind that you so believe in Jesus as to practice what he commands: you cannot continue in his Word except you learn to obey it. The text of faith is obedience. What he bids you, do it. Let your life be affected by the truth he teaches. Let your whole mind, and thought, and desire, and speech, and bearing, and conversation, be coloured and savoured by your full faith in Jesus. Enter into his Word as a man into a stream, and live therein as a fish in the water.

"Continue in my word": get into Christ's Word as a sinking sailor would get into a life-boat, and once there, keep inside the boat: do not throw yourself out into the stormy waves through despair, but continue in the place of hope. This is Christ's gracious counsel to those in whom there seems to be some hopeful sign.

My hearers, we never preach the saving power of temporary, unpractical, unsanctifying faith. If a man says, "I believe in Christ and therefore I shall be saved, his faith will have to be tested by his life. If, sometime after, he has no faith in Christ, that faith which he claimed to have is proved to be good for nothing. The faith of God's elect is an abiding faith; it is precious faith, and like precious metal, it survives the fire. Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three." Thus true faith is classed among the abiding things, it is undying, unquenchable. If you truly believe in Jesus, it is for life. Saving faith is a life-long act. It is the relinquishment of all trust in self, once for all, and the trusting in Jesus for ever. He is and ever shall be our only confidence. That is the faith which saves; but the temporary faith which comes and goes, is nothing worth. The shout of "I believe it" too often ends when the excitement is over. To sing "I do believe, I will believe," is well enough; but unless that believing appertains to daily life, and changes the inner nature, and abides even till death, it has not saved the man. The measure of faith of which we have been speaking may turn out to be the beginning of saving faith; but it may, on the other hand, turn

out to be a mere deception soon to be dispelled, a morning cloud which disappears, an early dew exhaled by the sun.

I think I have said enough upon my second point. Let it encourage you, that our Lord takes notice even of the lowest kind of faith; but let it also warn you when you see that he receives it with an "if," and goes on carefully to exhort and warn, lest the hopeful thing should die, and its promise should be unfulfilled.

III. But, next, OUR LORD SETS BEFORE THESE PEOPLE INDUCEMENTS TO CONTINUE IN HIS WORD. "Jesus therefore said to those Jews which had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Observe three inducements, each one of them great, and when placed together exceedingly attractive.

The first was certified discipleship: "Then are ye my disciples indeed." That is to say, if they persevered in obeying his Word, they would be disciples, not in name only, but in truth. It is a small thing to be called Christians; but it is a great matter truly to be Christians. Further, they would not be merely superficial learners, but deeply taught, and inwardly instructed disciples of Jesus. They would really and truly know what Jesus taught, and would receive it into their inmost souls: they would be, of untrained beginners in the school of Christ, but pupils of the sixth form, "disciples indeed. Dear friends, it is a great thing to be no longer a probationer, but a disciple indeed. There is more in the expression than I can readily set forth in words. A certain person says he is a disciple of Christ; but you would never know it if he did not tell you. You might live with him for years without hearing an expression or remarking an action which is distinctly Christian: this is not to be a disciple indeed. Another man loves his Lord, and treasures his words; he puts his discipleship of Christ before everything, and you cannot live with him a single day without perceiving a savor of Christ in his words and action. You say of him, "That man is indeed a Christian." In such a case religion is not exhibited by way of pride, as with the Pharisees of old, but it is seen because it is there, and must shine forth. Faith throbs in the man's pulse, it looks out from his eyes, it tunes his voice, and lights up his countenance, it rules his house, and controls his business. The man lives

for Jesus, and if it were necessary he would die for him. How we prize a thorough-bred believer! Your mongrel is a poor animal. Blessed is he who makes his Master's service his pleasure; his Lord's law his delight; his Savior's glory the absorbing occupation of his time; he is a disciple indeed!

To be a disciple indeed creates within the mind a blissful assurance. Some are always asking themselves, "Am I truly a disciple?" It is not wonderful that they do ask the question, for a great question it is. But he that continues in Christ's Word in loving obedience, soon ceases to ask that question: he has the witness in himself, or, better still, as some read it, he has the witness in Christ. He knows that he is Christ's disciple, for he so continually follows his Master. He not only believes, but he knows that he believes. He has continued in the Word so long that he has no doubt about his being in it. How can he, when he is from hour to hour feeding on the Word in which he lives, like a mite feasting upon the cheese in which he dwells. He is a disciple indeed, for his deeds are those of a disciple. Oh, you that believe my Master at times, and up to a certain point, you must go on to believe him more constantly, more thoroughly, more absolutely! May you cheerfully stake your souls upon your Lord's veracity! O my friend, if you would find Jesus to be your Savior, surrender yourself to his wisdom, yield your whole being to his power! So shall you become a disciple indeed, and be able to claim all the love, and care, and comfort, and honor which such a Lord puts on his faithful disciples. May you bring forth much fruit; so shall you be his disciples, and to you shall be the double portion which belongs to those who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

The next blessing which our Lord set before believers was that of sacred knowledge. Observe: "Ye shall know the truth"—not a truth; but the truth; the saving, purifying, glorifying truth. Keep on believing, and Jesus will teach you that great truth which is above all other truth—essential, quickening, cleansing, divine. You shall know the truth. You may be charged dogmatism, but you will not flinch from the assurance that you know the truth. You no longer guess at truth, nor hit on a sliding scale of probabilities; but you know it assuredly. You will grow familiar with it; truth will be to you a well-known friend. You will discriminate so as to

know the truth when you see it, and detect it at once from the deceptive falsehood. You will know the truth, and you will not be led away by the flattering voice of error. You will have the touchstone with you, and will not be deceived by base metals. You will so know the truth as to be influenced by it, actuated by it, filled by it, strengthened by it, comforted by it, and by its power you will yourself be made true. Surely this is a good reason for abiding Christ's Words!

The third benefit was spiritual liberty; "the truth shall make you free." Our Savior further on explains that he means free from sin. He that lives in sin is the slave of sin. Sincere belief in the Word of Christ leads to emancipation from the tyrannical power of the evil which dwells in our members, and from the dominating power of the sin which rules in the customs of the world. "The truth shall make you free." You shall be free from your own prejudices, prides, and lusts. You shall so free from the fear of man. If you have sunk so low as almost to ask of the great ones leave to breathe, you shall break that irksome fetter. The truth known within your spirit shall make a free man of you. Hitherto you have been the bondsman of self. You have enquired, "What will this thing profit me?" and thus the desire of self-aggrandizement has ruled everything; but when Jesus is your Lord you shall be free from this sordid motive. "The truth shall make you free"; this is a noble saying. Oh, the liberty that comes into the soul through believing on Jesus, who is the truth! It makes life to be life indeed when this freedom is enjoyed. In laying hold on the truth as it is in Jesus, the soul lays hold on the Charter of her liberties, and she enters on her citizenship in heaven.

Dear brethren, I hope many here enjoy these three privileges; disciples indeed, you believe anything that is taught to you in God's Word, be it what it may; the truth has so entered into you that you now know it and are sure; and this believed-truth has made you so free that you defy the fetters which men would cast around you. Your Lord has caused you to believe in him, and you have now found the element wherein your soul may abide in life, light, and liberty. Thus our Lord dealt with those in whom he saw some hopeful signs: he set choice blessings before them to induce them to proceed further.

IV. But now, fourthly, OUR LORD THUS TESTED THEM BY THE MOST

EFFECTUAL MEANS. The test was very sharp in its action, and sudden in its results. He said to them, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free": and what follows? "They answered him"—answered him rather than believed him. How did they answer? Did they say, "Yes, Lord, we believe; teach us thy truth, and make us free"? No, no. They cried, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free"? These supposed believers stumbled at the Lord's word—stumbled at a privilege. Jesus said, "The truth shall make you free," and that offended them! To make freedom a stumbling-block is folly. On another occasion our Lord spoke to his disciples concerning eating his flesh and drinking his blood; and then we read, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." The privilege of feeding upon his sacrifice, which binds many of us to him with bands of love, drove others away from him with cords of hate. Sad fact this! But it is so in many ways. I believe that God chose his people from before the foundation of the world, I rejoice in the glorious doctrine of election; but a great many refuse to believe, because of this heavenly privilege. The privileges of the gospel are the stumbling-blocks of legalists. It is too large a gospel for narrow souls; for—it is too glorious a gospel for grovelling intellects. Men refuse the gift of God because it is so excellent. If we would cut it down, till there was nothing left but a more cheese-paring of grace, I suppose they would accept it; but the very glory of the gospel which should fascinate and attract them, repels and disheartens them.

The reason why these Jews became so angry with our Lord was that he touched their pride. "Make us free indeed!" they cried. "We always were free; we were never slaves. We enjoy the largest rights through our father Abraham; we have never come under the dominion of any false prophet or idol god. Make us free indeed! How sayest thou this!" Thus the wild thinker claims that he is free, and needs no liberty from Christ. The sinner who is in bondage to his passions and scorns the idea of being set at liberty, as if he were a bondman. The more a slave a man is to his own conceit or his own lust, the more he talks about his freedom. We should not know that he was free if he did not call himself so. Unbelief calls itself "Honest doubt," and not without cause; for we should not have known it to be honest if it had not labelled itself so. When a man puts up in his

shop window, "No cheating practiced here," I should trade next door. "He doth protest too much." Your free love, free thought, free life, and so forth, are the empty mockery of freedom. Oh, that men knew their state, and then freedom would be prized. For lack of self-knowledge, the blessings of the gospel prove an offense when they should have hearty welcome.

The prejudices of the Jews which believed him were wounded. Oh, how often do we find men who will hear the gospel just so far, and no farther! They have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; they have not entered into his Word so as to be prepared to believe all that he teaches; and, consequently, when some doctrine is heard which grates upon their feelings, or jars on their judgments, or conflicts with their original conceptions, straightway they grow angry with their Savior. After all, it would seem, from the criticisms which you offer, that you know better than the Son of God. Your judgment would seem to be clearer than his; for you sit in judgment upon his Word. What is Christ to you? Why, he comes before you like the prisoner who stood before Pilate. You question him, as the Roman Governor did when he asked, "What is truth?" You believe what you choose to believe, and disbelieve what you choose to disbelieve. In such a case, who is the greater, the disciple or his Master? Surely, you presume too much when you act as judge of him who is to be the Judge of all the earth. You are no disciple of his; you can never know the truth, and the truth can never make you free; indeed, no blessing can come to you, since you put yourself out of its way. You may talk about believing; but you have not believed, and you cannot be saved by Jesus until you yield your judgment to his infallibility, your heart to his rule, your every faculty to his grace. Welcome him as undisputed Lord of your bosom, and crown him Lord of all within your soul: such loyal faith he claims; and this he must have, or you will fall short of his salvation.

These people soon showed their true character; for very soon afterwards they said, "Now we know that thou hast a devil", and they took up stones to cast at him. Oh, that we may be delivered from having a faith which will end in open rejection of the Lord!

V. I close with a fifth point: OUR LORD DESERVES OF US THE HIGHEST FORM OF FAITH—ay, the highest degree of faith which is possible. Would you mind looking in your Bibles into the next chapter, which fitly follows the present one? It contains the story of the man blind from his birth, to whom the Savior gave sight. Let me read a description of the kind of faith which I desire for you all. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus aid unto him, Thou hast both seen him and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." That is the faith which saves, the faith which learns of Jesus from Jesus; hears and believes, and takes Jesus to be its God. The faith which bows at the feet of Jesus, and worships him as divine, is the faith which saves. Men will not do this till their eyes have been opened. While they say, "We see," their sin remains, and their blindness too. Only he who can say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see," will worship Jesus with all his heart. The gracious Lord has come and touched my sightless eyeballs, and given me heavenly sight, and therefore I trust him. I, that could see nothing at all, have seen him! I, that had no idea of what light was, for I was born blind, I have seen the light through him, and I both believe and adore! Oh, for a worshipping faith, faith on its knees in the presence of the Son of God; faith beholding Jesus, with the eye which he has opened!

Alas!" says one, "I wish I had that faith." Listen, then, that you may find it. Faith cometh by hearing. When I meet with persons converted, I like them to tell me what text was blessed to them, for then my mind runs on that text. I have sometimes asked a convert, "What part of the sermon was it that God blessed to you? because I should like to repeat that passage more than once or twice, I should like to "tell it o'er and o'er again." Perhaps the Lord would bless it to another, and another. Think, then, what part of our Lord's sermon was it that brought faith to those many who believed on him? I think it was the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses.

In verse 28 the Lord spoke of his death, and all that went with it, and all that came out of it: "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye

know that I am he." How did they lift him up? They lifted him up on the cross; it alludes to his crucifixion. But they did not know that in another sense they lifted him up; it was through his death that there was a possibility of his resurrection; and when he rove again and ascended up on high, the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the church, and he entered into heaven to make intercession for us; and all this was emphatically a lifting up.

The cross and its surroundings remain to this day the great arguments for our holy faith. The things that should lead men to believe on Jesus Christ are found at his cross. He was the Son of God, but he died the death of the cross for love of men. Being dead and buried, his Father raised him from the dead, and thus gave evidence of his mission and of his acceptance with God. There is no question about his resurrection: it is proved beyond all doubt that Jesus rose again from the dead on the third day. His disciples saw him for the space of forty days, and ate and drank with him, and then they beheld him go up into heaven till a cloud received him out of their sight. They waited at Jerusalem, and the Holy Ghost came upon them in cloven tongues, the divine testimony to his ascended power. By the preaching of his Word in the power of the Holy Ghost the nations were made to hear concerning Jesus, the Savior, and bowed before his cross. Now, the more you think of this unique occurrence—this fact which could not have been a piece of imagination, this fact which was attested by honest men, who bled and died for it—the more you think of this, I say, the more you will feel faith stealing over your spirit. Christ on the cross is thought to be hard to believe in, but it is not so; for the more you know of a crucified Christ, the more easy will faith become. Christ raised to the crown by his cross is the great breeder of faith. Christ rising from the dead is a marvel; yet it is the keystone of the arch of faith. Believe it! Christ gone into glory, the Son of God bearing his manhood into the highest place of supreme sovereignty, and pleading there for guilty men—think much of this truth, and you will find faith come to you; for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Especially is faith begotten and nourished by that part of God's Word which treats of the cross and the crown—the double lifting up of Jesus.

Also, once more, and I have done: you will find faith much helped by

looking to the life of Jesus, set forth in the gospels. Read the verse: "he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him." What a perfect life is that of Jesus! Could it have been invented? He who could have sketched it from his imagination must himself have been perfect. But, then, no perfect man could have been guilty of a forgery. Jesus was obedient to the Father in all things, and yet he put no force upon himself in so doing: it was natural to him to be holy. It was his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. And the God of heaven by his miracles was with him, and bore witness to him. There is no superfluous miracle recorded in the gospels; they are all needful evidence, such as was called for in that court wherein the perfection, the Messiahship, the Deity of our Lord were tried. If you read his whole life through till you come to his death, and even study that death in which the Father hid his face from him as to the enjoyment of his smile, you can see that God was ever with his Son Jesus, working out his divine purposes by him, and bearing witness to him. God is in accord with Jesus: that is clear. He is with him even now. Nobody can doubt that there are such things as conversions, for they are common phenomena in every living church of God; and conversions are God's testimony to the Word of Jesus, and the proofs that the Father and the Holy Spirit are working with the Son. Think of this, and then yield up to the Son of God, since God bears witness of him to you. Come along with you, you that have had other notions; come, and take Jesus to be your light and life! You that have had other confidences, leave them all and believe on him, for he is worthy of your utmost confidence. You that have been hesitating, believe in Jesus once for all. You that have been procrastinating, come this very day, and hearken to that voice which shall at once set you free. Oh, that you would now trust Jesus, my Lord and my God! May the good Spirit help you now to believe on the Crucified One, and may this be another of those occasions concerning which it shall be written in the Book of Record, "Many believed on him"! God grant it, for our Lord Jesus' sake! Amen.

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The Betrayal

"And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"—Luke 22:47, 48.

When Satan had been entirely worsted in his conflict with Christ in the garden, the man-devil Judas came upon the scene. As the Parthian in his flight turns round to shoot the fatal arrow, so the arch-enemy aimed another shaft at the Redeemer, by employing the traitor into whom he had entered. Judas became the devil's deputy, and a most trusty and serviceable tool he was. The Evil One had taken entire possession of the apostate's heart, and, like the swine possessed of devils, he ran violently downwards towards destruction. Well had infernal malice selected the Savior's trusted friend to be his treacherous betrayer, for thus he stabbed at the very center of his broken and bleeding heart. But, beloved, as in all things God is wiser than Satan, and the Lord of goodness outwitteth the Prince of Evil, so, in this dastardly betrayal of Christ, prophecy was fulfilled, and Christ was the more surely declared to be the promised Messiah. Was not Joseph a type? and, lo! like that envied youth, Jesus was sold by his own brethren. Was he not to be another Samson, by whose strength the gates of hell should be torn from their posts? lo! like Samson, he is bound by his countrymen, and delivered to the adversary. Know ye not that he was the anti-type of David? and was not David deserted by Ahithophel, his own familiar friend and counsellor? Nay, brethren, do not the words of the Psalmist receive a literal fulfillment in our Master's betrayal? What prophecy can be more exactly true than the language of the forty-first and fifty-fifth Psalms? In the first we read, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me;" and in the fifty-fifth the Psalmist is yet more clear; "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We

took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." Even an obscure passage in one of the lesser prophets, must have a literal fulfillment, and for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a base slave, must the Savior be betrayed by his choice friend. Ah! thou foul fiend, thou shalt find at the last that thy wisdom is but intensified folly; as for the deep plots and plans of thy craft, the Lord shall laugh them to scorn; after all, thou art but the unconscious drudge of him whom thou abhorrest; in all the black work thou doest so greedily, thou art no better than a mean scullion in the royal kitchen of the King of kings.

Without further preface, let us advance to the subject of our Lord's betrayal. First, concentrate your thoughts upon Jesus, the betrayed one; and when ye have lingered awhile there, solemnly gaze into the villanous countenance of Judas, the betrayer—he may prove a beacon to warn us against the sin which gendereth apostacy.

I. LET US TARRY AWHILE, AND SEE OUR LORD UNGRATEFULLY AND DASTARDLY BETRAYED.

It is appointed that he must die, but how shall he fall into the hands of his adversaries? Shall they capture him in conflict? It must not be, lest he appear an unwilling victim. Shall he flee before his foes until he can hide no longer? It is not meet that a sacrifice should be hunted to death. Shall he offer himself to the foe? That were to excuse his murderers, or be a party to their crime. Shall he be taken accidentally or unawares? That would withdraw from his cup the necessary bitterness which made it wormwood mingled with gall. No; he must be betrayed by his friend, that he may bear the utmost depths of suffering, and that in every separate circumstance there may be a well of grief. One reason for the appointment of the betrayal, lay in the fact that it was ordained that man's sin should reach its culminating point in his death. God, the great owner of the vineyard, had sent many servants, and the husbandmen had stoned one and cast out another; last of all, he said, "I will send my Son; surely they will reverence my Son." When they slew the heir to win the

inheritance, their rebellion had reached its height. The murder of our blessed Lord was the extreme of human guilt; it developed the deadly hatred against God which lurks in the heart of man. When man became a deicide, sin had reached its fullness; and in the black deed of the man by whom the Lord was betrayed, that fullness was all displayed. If it had not been for a Judas, we had not known how black, how foul, human nature may become. I scorn the men who try to apologize for the treachery of this devil in human form, this son of perdition, this foul apostate. I should think myself a villain if I tried to screen him, and I shudder for the men who dare extenuate his crimes. My brethren, we should feel a deep detestation of this master of infamy; he has gone to his own place, and the anathema of David, part of which was quoted by Peter, has come upon him, "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office." Surely, as the devil was allowed unusually to torment the bodies of men, even so was he let loose to get possession of Judas as he has seldom gained possession of any other man, that we might see how foul, how desperately evil is the human heart. Beyond a doubt, however, the main reason for this was that Christ might offer a perfect atonement for sin. We may usually read the sin in the punishment. Man betrayed his God. Man had the custody of the royal garden, and should have kept its green avenues sacred for communion with his God; but he betrayed the trust; the sentinel was false; he admitted evil into his own heart, and so into the paradise of God. He was false to the good name of the Creator, tolerating the insinuation which he should have repelled with scorn. Therefore must Jesus find man a traitor to him. There must be the counterpart of the sin in the suffering which he endured. You and I have often betrayed Christ. We have, when tempted, chosen the evil and forsaken the good; we have taken the bribes of hell, and have not followed closely with Jesus. It seemed most fitting, then, that he who bore the chastisement of sin should be reminded of its ingratitude and treachery by the things which he suffered. Besides, brethren, that cup must be bitter to the last degree which is to be the equivalent for the wrath of God. There must be nothing consolatory in it; pains must be taken to pour into it all that even Divine wisdom can invent of awful and unheard of woe, and this one point—"He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me," was absolutely necessary to intensify the bitterness. Moreover, we feel

persuaded that by thus suffering at the hand of a traitor the Lord became a faithful High Priest, able to sympathize with us when we fall under the like affliction. Since slander and ingratitude are common calamities, we can come to Jesus with full assurance of faith; he knows these sore temptations, for he has felt them in their very worst degree. We may cast every care, and every sorrow upon him, for he careth for us, having suffered with us. Thus, then, in our Lord's betrayal, Scripture was fulfilled, sin was developed, atonement was completed, and the great all-suffering High Priest became able to sympathize with us in every point.

Now let us look at the treason itself. You perceive how black it was. Judas was Christ's servant, what if I call him his confidential servant. He was a partaker in apostolic ministry and the honor of miraculous gifts. He had been most kindly and indulgently treated. He was a sharer in all the goods of his Master, in fact he fared far better than his Lord, for the Man of Sorrows always took the lion's share of all the pains of poverty and the reproach of slander. He had food and raiment given him out of the common stock, and the Master seems to have indulged him very greatly. The old tradition is, that next to the apostle Peter he was the one with whom the Savior most commonly associated. We think there must be a mistake there, for surely John was the Savior's greatest friend; but Judas, as a servant had been treated with the utmost confidence. Ye know, brethren, how sore is that blow which comes from a servant in whom we have put unlimited trust. But Judas was more than this: he was a friend, a trusted friend. That little bag into which generous women cast their small contributions had been put into his hands, and very wisely too, for he had the financial vein. His main virtue was economy, a very needful quality in a treasurer. As exercising a prudent foresight for the little company, and watching the expenses carefully, he was, as far as men could judge, the right man in the right place. He had been thoroughly trusted. I read not that there was any annual audit of his accounts; I do not discover that the Master took him to task as to the expenditure of his privy purse. Everything was given to him, and he gave, at the Master's direction, to the poor, but no account was asked. This is vile indeed, to be chosen to such a position, to be installed purse-bearer to the Ring of kings, Chancellor of God's exchequer, and then to turn aside and sell the Savior; this is treason in its uttermost degree. Remember that the world looked upon

Judas as colleague and partner with our Lord. To a great extent the name of Judas was associated with that of Christ. When Peter, James, or John had done anything amiss, reproachful tongues threw it all on their Master. The twelve were part and parcel of Jesus of Nazareth. One old commentator says of Judas—"He was Christ's alter ego"—to the people at large there was an identification of each apostle with the leader of the band. And oh! when such associations have been established, and then there is treachery, it is as though our arm should commit treason against our head, or as if our foot should desert the body. This was a stab indeed! Perhaps, dear brethren, our Lord saw in the person of Judas a representative man, the portraiture of the many thousands who in after ages imitated his crime. Did Jesus see in Iscariot all the Judases who betray truth, virtue, and the cross? Did he perceive the multitudes of whom we may say, that they were, spiritually, in the loins of Judas? Hymeneus, Alexander, Hermogenes, Philetus, Demas, and others of that tribe, were all before him as he saw the man, his equal, his acquaintance, bartering him away for thirty pieces of silver.

Dear friends, the position of Judas must have tended greatly to aggravate his treason. Even the heathens have taught us that ingratitude is the worst of vices. When Caesar was stabbed by his friend Brutus, the world's poet writes—

"This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitor's arms,
Quite vanquish'd him; then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statua,
_____ great Caesar fell."

Many ancient stories, both Greek and Roman, we might quote to show the abhorrence which the heathens entertain towards ingratitude and treachery. Certain, also, of their own poets, such, for instance, as Sophocles, have poured out burning words upon deceitful friends; but we have no time to prove what you will all admit, that nothing can be more cruel, nothing more full of anguish, than to be sold to destruction by one's bosom friend. The closer the foeman comes the deeper will be the stab he

gives; if we admit him to our heart, and give him our closest intimacy, then can he wound us in the most vital part.

Let us notice, dear friends, while we look at the breaking heart of our agonizing Savior, the manner in which he met this affliction. He had been much in prayer; prayer had overcome his dreadful agitation; he was very calm; and we need to be very calm when we are forsaken by a friend. Observe his gentleness. The first word he spake to Judas, when the traitor had polluted his cheek with a kiss, was this—"FRIEND!" FRIEND!! Note that! Not "Thou hateful miscreant," but "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" not "Wretch, wherefore dost thou dare to stain my cheek with thy foul and lying lips?" no, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Ah! if there had been anything good left in Judas, this would have brought it out. If he had not been an unmitigated, incorrigible, thrice-dyed traitor, his avarice must have lost its power at that instant, and he would have cried—"My master! I came to betray thee, but that generous word has won my soul; here, if thou must be bound, I will be bound with thee; I make a full confession of my infamy!" Our Lord added these words—there is reproof in them, but notice how kind they are still, how much too good for such a caitiff—"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" I can conceive that the tears gushed from his eyes, and that his voice faltered, when he thus addressed his own familiar friend and acquaintance—"Betrayest thou," my Judas, my treasurer, "betrayest thou the Son of Man," thy suffering, sorrowing friend, whom thou hast seen naked and poor, and without a place whereon to lay his head. Betrayest thou the Son of Man—and dost thou prostitute the fondest of all endearing signs—a kiss—that which should be a symbol of loyalty to the King, shall it be the badge of thy treachery—that which was reserved for affection as her best symbol—dost thou make it the instrument of my destruction? Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Oh! if he had not been given up to hardness of heart, if the Holy Ghost had not utterly left him, surely this son of perdition would have fallen prostrate yet again, and weeping out his very soul, would have cried—"No, I cannot betray thee, thou suffering Son of man; forgive, forgive; spare thyself; escape from this bloodthirsty crew, and pardon thy treacherous disciple!" But no, no word of compunction, while the silver is at stake! Afterwards came the sorrow that worketh death, which drove him, like Ahithophel, his prototype, to court the

gallows to escape remorse. This, also, must have aggravated the woe of our beloved Lord, when he saw the final impenitence of the traitor, and read the tearful doom of that man of whom he had once said, it would be better for him that he had never been born.

Beloved, I would have you fix your eyes on your Lord in your quiet meditations as being thus despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and gird up the loins of your minds, counting it no strange thing if this fiery trial should come upon you, but being determined that though your Lord should be betrayed by his most eminent disciples, yet, through his grace you will cling to him in shame and in suffering, and will follow him, if needs be, even unto death. God give us grace to see the vision of his nailed hands and feet, and remembering that all this came from the treachery of a friend, let us be very jealous of ourselves, lest we crucify the Lord afresh and put him to an open shame by betraying him in our conduct, or in our words, or in our thoughts.

II. Grant me your attention while we make an estimate of the man by whom the Son of man was betrayed—JUDAS THE BETRAYER.

I would call your attention, dear friends, to his position and public character. Judas was a preacher; nay, he was a foremost preacher, "he obtained part of this ministry," said the Apostle Peter. He was not simply one of the seventy; he had been selected by the Lord himself as one of the twelve, an honorable member of the college of the apostles. Doubtless he had preached the gospel so that many had been gladdened by his voice, and miraculous powers had been vouchsafed to him, so that at his word the sick had been healed, deaf ears had been opened; and the blind had been made to see; nay, there is no doubt that he who could not keep the devil out of himself, had cast devils out of others. Yet how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! He that was as a prophet in the midst of the people, and spake with the tongue of the learned, whose word and wonders proved that he had been with Jesus and had learned of him—he betrays his Master. Understand, my brethren, that no gifts can ensure grace, and that no position of honor or usefulness in the Church will necessarily prove our being true to our Lord and Master. Doubtless there are bishops in hell, and crowds of those who once occupied the

pulpit are now condemned for ever to bewail their hypocrisy. You that are Church-officers, do not conclude that because you enjoy the confidence of the Church, that therefore of an absolute certainty the grace of God is in you. Perhaps it is the most dangerous of all positions for a man to become well known and much respected by the religious world, and yet to be rotten at the core. To be where others can observe our faults is a healthy thing though painful; but to live with beloved friends who would not believe it possible for us to do wrong, and who if they saw us err would make excuses for us—this is to be where it is next to impossible for us ever to be aroused if our hearts be not right with God. To have a fair reputation and a false heart is to stand upon the brink of hell.

Judas took a very high degree officially. He had the distinguished honor of being entrusted with the Master's financial concerns, and this, after all, was no small degree to which to attain. The Lord, who knows how to use all sorts of gifts, perceived what gift the man had. He knew that Peter's unthinking impetuosity would soon empty the bag and leave the company in great straits, and if he had entrusted it to John, his loving spirit might have been cajoled into unwise benevolence towards beggars of unctious tongue; he might even have spent the little moneys in buying alabaster boxes whose precious ointments should anoint the Master's head. He gave the bag to Judas, and it was discreetly, prudently, and properly used; there is no doubt he was the most judicious person, and fitted to occupy the post. But oh! dear friends, if the Master shall choose any of us who are ministers or Church-officers, and give us a very distinguished position; if our place in the ranks shall be that of commanding officers, so that even our brother ministers look up with esteem, and our fellow-elders or deacons regard us as being fathers in Israel—oh! if we turn, if we prove false, how damnable shall be our end at the last! What a blow shall we give to the heart of the Church, and what derision will be made in hell!

You will observe that the character of Judas was openly an admirable one. I find not that he committed himself in any way. Not the slightest speck defiled his moral character so far as others could perceive. He was no boaster, like Peter; he was free enough from the rashness which cries, "Though all men should forsake thee yet will not I." He asks no place on the right hand of the throne, his ambition is of another sort. He does not

ask idle questions. The Judas who asks questions is "not Iscariot." Thomas and Philip are often prying into deep matters, but not Judas. He receives truth as it is taught him, and when others are offended and walk no more with Jesus, he faithfully adheres to him, having golden reasons for so doing. He does not indulge in the lusts of the flesh or in the pride of life. None of the disciples suspected him of hypocrisy; they said at the table, "Lord, is it I?" They never said, "Lord, is it Judas?" It was true he had been filching for months, but then he did it by littles, and covered his defalcations so well by financial manipulations that he ran no risk of detection from the honest unsuspecting fishermen with whom he associated. Like some merchants and traders we have heard of—invaluable gentlemen as chairmen of speculating companies and general managers of swindling banks—he could abstract a decent percentage and yet make the accounts exactly tally. The gentlemen who have learned of Judas, manage to cook the accounts most admirably for the shareholders, so as to get a rich joint for their own table; over which they, no doubt, entreat the divine blessing. Judas was, in his known life, a most admirable person. He would have been an alderman ere long there is no doubt, and being very pious and richly-gifted, his advent at churches or chapels would have created intense satisfaction. "What a discreet and influential person;" say the deacons. "Yes," replies the minister; "what an acquisition to our councils; if we could elect him to office he would be of eminent service to the Church." I believe that the Easter chose him as apostle on purpose that we might not be at all surprised if we find such a man a minister in the pulpit, or a colleague of the minister, working as an officer in Christ's Church. These are solemn things, my brethren; let us take them to heart, and if any of us wear a good character among men and stand high in office, let this question come home close to us—"Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?" Perhaps he who shall last ask the question is just the man who ought to have asked it first.

But, secondly, I call your attention to his real nature and sin. Judas was a man with a conscience. He could not afford to do without it. He was no Sadducee who could fling religion overboard; he had strong religious tendencies. He was no debauched person; he never spent a two-pence in vice on his life, not that he loved vice less, but that he loved the two-pence more. Occasionally he was generous, but then it was with other people's

money. Well did he watch his lovely charge, the bag. He had a conscience, I say, and a ferocious conscience it was when it once broke the chain, for it was his conscience which made him hang himself. But then it was a conscience that did not sit regularly on the throne; it reigned by fits and starts. Conscience was not the leading element. Avarice predominated over conscience. He would get money, if honestly, he liked that best, but if he could not get it conscientiously, then anyhow in the world. He was but a small trader; his gains were no great things, or else he would not have sold Christ for so small a sum as that—ten pounds at the outside, of our money at its present value—some three or four pounds, as it was in those days. It was a poor price to take for the Master; but then a little money was a great thing to him. He had been poor; he had joined Christ with the idea that he would soon be proclaimed King of the Jews, and that then he should become a nobleman, and be rich. Finding Christ a long while in coming to his kingdom, he had taken little by little, enough to lay by in store; and now, fearing that he was to be disappointed in all his dreams, and never having had any care for Christ, but only for himself, he gets out of what he thinks to have been a gross mistake in the best way he can, and makes money by his treason against his Lord. Brethren, I do solemnly believe, that of all hypocrites, those are the persons of whom there is the least hope whose God is their money. You may reclaim a drunkard; thank God, we have seen many instances of that; and even a fallen Christian, who has given way to vice, may loathe his lust, and return from it; but I fear me that the cases in which a man who is cankered with covetousness has ever been saved, are so few, that they might be written on your finger-nail. This is a sin which the world does not rebuke; the most faithful minister can scarce smit its forehead. God knoweth what thunders I have launched out against men who are all for this world, and yet pretend to be Christ's followers; but yet they always say, "It is not for me." What I should call stark naked covetousness, they call prudence, discretion, economy, and so on; and actions which I would scorn to spit upon, they will do, and think their hands quite clean after they have done them, and still sit as God's people sit, and hear as God's people hear, and think that after they have sold Christ for paltry gain, they will go to heaven. O souls, souls, souls, beware, beware, beware, most of all of greed! It is not money, nor the lack of money, but the love of money which is the root of all evil. It is not getting it; it is not

even keeping it; it is loving it; it is making it your god; it is looking at that as the main chance, and not considering the cause of Christ, nor the truth of Christ, nor the holy life of Christ, but being ready to sacrifice everything for gains' sake. Oh! such men make giants in sin; they shall be set up for ever as butts for infernal laughter; their damnation shall be sure and just.

The third point is, the warning which Judas received, and the way in which he persevered. Just think—the night before he sold his Master what do you think the Master did? Why, he washed his feet! And yet he sold him! Such condescension! Such love! Such familiarity! He took a towel, and girded himself, and washed Judas's feet! And yet those very feet brought Judas as a guide to them that took Jesus! And you remember what he said when he had washed his feet—"Now ye are clean, but not all;" and he turned a tearful eye on Judas. What a warning for him! What could be more explicit? Then when the Supper came, and they began to eat and drink together, the Lord said—"One of you shall betray me." That was plain enough; and a little farther on he said explicitly—"He that dippeth with me in the dish the same is he." What opportunities for repentance! He cannot say he had not a faithful preacher. What could have been more personal? If he does not repent now, what is to be done? Moreover, Judas saw that which was enough to make a heart of adamant bleed; he saw Christ with agony on his face, for it was just after Christ had said "Now is my soul troubled," that Judas left the feast and went out to sell his Master. That face, so full of grief, ought to have turned him, must have turned him, if he had not been, given up and left alone, to deliver over his soul unto his own devices. What language could have been more thundering than the words of Jesus Christ, when he said, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; it had been good for that man if he had not been born." He had said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Now, if while these thunders rolled over his head, and the lightningflashes pointed at his person, if, then, this man was not aroused, what a hell of infernal pertinacity and guilt must have been within his soul! Oh! but if any of you, if any of you shall sell Christ for the sake of keeping the shop open on Sunday, if you shall sell Christ for the extra wages you may earn for falsehood—oh! if you shall sell Christ for the sake of the hundred pounds that you may lay hold of by a villanous

contract—if you do that, you do not perish unwarned. I come into this pulpit to please no man among you. God knoweth if I knew more of your follies you should have them pointed out yet more plainly; if I knew more of the tricks of business, I would not flinch to speak of them! But, O sirs, I do conjure you by the blood of Judas, who hanged himself at last, turn you—if such there be—turn you from this evil, if haply your sin may be blotted out!

Let us for one minute notice the act itself. He sought out his own temptation. He did not wait for the devil to come to him; he went after the devil. He went to the chief priests and said, "What will ye give me?" One of the old Puritan divines says, "This is not the way people generally trade; they tell their own price." Judas says "What will ye give me? Anything you like. The Lord of life and glory sold at the buyer's own price. What will ye give me?" And another very prettily puts it, "What could they give him? What did the man want? He did not want food and raiment; he fared as well as his Master and the other disciples; he had enough; he had all that his needs could crave, and yet he said, What will ye give me? What will ye give me? What will ye give ne?" Alas! some people's religion is grounded on that one question—"What will you give me?" Yes, they would go to church if there are any charities given away there, but if there were more to be got by not going they would do that. "What will you give me?" Some of these people are not even so wise as Judas. Ah! there is a man over yonder who would sell the Lord for a crown, much more for ten pounds, as Judas did! Why, there are some who will sell Christ for the smallest piece of silver in our currency. They are tempted to deny their Lord, tempted to act in an unhallowed way, though the gains are so paltry that a year's worth of them would not come to much. No subject could be more dreadful than this, if we really would but look at it carefully. This temptation happeneth to each of us. Do not deny it. We all like to gain; it is but natural that we should; the propensity to acquire is in every mind, and under lawful restrictions it is not an improper propensity; but when it comes into conflict with our allegiance to our Master, and in a world like this it often will, we must overcome it or perish. There will arise occasions with some of you many times in a week in which it is "God—or gain;" "Christ, or the thirty pieces of silver;" and therefore I am the more urgent in pressing this on you. Do not,

though the world should bid its highest, though it should heap its comforts upon one another, and add fame, and honour, and respect, do not, I pray you, forsake your Master. There have been such cases; cases of persons who used to come here, but they found they did not get on, because Sunday was the best day's trade in the week; they had some good feelings, some good impressions once, but they have lost them now. We have known others who have said, "Well, you see, I did once think I loved the Lord, but my business went so badly when I came up to the house of God, that I left it; I renounced my profession." Ah, Judas! ah, Judas! ah, Judas! let me call thee by thy name, for such thou art! This is the sin of the apostate over again; God help thee to repent of it, and go, not to any priest, but to Christ and make confession, if haply thou mayest be saved. You perceive that in the act of selling Christ, Judas was faithful to his master. "Faithful to his master?" you say. Yes, his master was the devil, and having made an agreement with him he carried it out honestly. Some people are always very honest with the devil. If they say they will do a wrong thing they say they ought to do it because they said they would; as if any oath could be binding on a man if it be an oath to do wrong? "I will never go into that house again," some have said, and they have said afterwards, "Well, I wish I had not said it." Was it a wrong thing? What is your oath then? It was an oath given to the devil. What was that foolish promise but a promise to Satan, and will you be faithful to him? Ah! would God that you were faithful to Christ! Would that any of us were as true to Christ as Satan's servants are to their master!

Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss. That is how most apostates do it; it is always with a kiss. Did you ever read an infidel book in your life which did not begin with profound respect for truth? I never have. Even modern ones, when bishops write them, always begin like that. They betray the Son of man with a kiss. Did you ever read a bank of bitter controversy which did not begin with such a sickly lot of humility, such sugar, such butter, such treacle, such everything sweet and soft, that you said, "Ah! there is sure to be something bad here, for when people begin so softly and sweetly, so humbly and so smoothly, depend upon it they have rank hatred in their hearts." The most devout looking people are often the most hypocritical in the world.

We conclude with the repentance of Judas. He did repent; he did repent, but it was the repentance that worketh death. He did make a confession, but there was no respect to the deed itself, but only to its consequences. He was very sorry that Christ was condemned. Some latent love that he had once had to a kind Master, came up when he saw that he was condemned. He did not think, perhaps, it would come to that; he may have had a hope that he would escape out of their hands, and then he would keep his thirty pieces of silver and perhaps sell him over again. Perhaps he thought that he would rid himself from their hands by some miraculous display of power, or would proclaim the kingdom, and so he himself would only be hastening on that very blessed consummation. Friends, the man who repents of consequences does not repent. The ruffian repents of the gallows but not of the murder, and that is no repentance at all. Human law of course must measure sin by consequences, but God's law does not. There is a pointsman on a railway who neglects his duty; there is a collision on the line, and people are killed; well, it is manslaughter to this man through his carelessness. But that pointsman, perhaps, many times before had neglected his duty, but no accident came of it, and then he walked home and said, "Well, I have done no wrong." Now the wrong, mark you, is never to be measured by the accident, but by the thing itself, and if you have committed an offense and you have escaped undetected it is just as vile in God's eye; if you have done wrong and Providence has prevented the natural result of the wrong, the honor of that is with God, but you are as guilty as if your sin had been carried out to its fullest consequences, and the whole world set ablaze. Never measure sin by consequences, but repent of them as they are in themselves.

Though being sorry for consequences, since these are unalterable, this man was led to remorse. He sought a tree, adjusted the rope, and hanged himself, but in his haste he hanged himself so badly that the rope broke, he fell over a precipice, and there we read his bowels gushed out; he lay a mangled mass at the bottom of the cliff, the horror of every one who passed. Now you that make a gain of godliness—if there be such here—you may not come to a suicide's end, but take the lesson home. Mr. Keach, my venerable predecessor, gives at the end of one of his volumes of sermons, the death of a Mr. John Child. John Child had been a

Dissenting minister, and for the sake of gain, to get a living, he joined the Episcopalians against his conscience; he sprinkled infants; and practiced all the other paraphernalia of the Church against his conscience. At last, at last, he was arrested with such terrors for having done what he had, that he renounced his living, took to a sick bed, and his dying oaths, and blasphemies, and curses, were something so dreadful, that his case was the wonder of that age. Mr. Keach wrote a full account of it, and many went to try what they could do to comfort the man, but he would say, "Get ye hence; get ye hence; it is of no use; I have sold Christ." You know, also, the wonderful death of Francis Spira. In all literature, there is nothing so awful as the death of Spira. The man had known the truth; he stood well among reformers; he was an honored, and to a certain extent apparently a faithful man; but he went back to the Church of Rome; he apostatized; and then when conscience was aroused he did not fly to Christ, but he looked at the consequences instead of at the sin, and so, feeling that the consequences could not be altered, he forgot that the sin might be pardoned, and perished in agonies extreme. May it never be the unhappy lot of any of us to stand by such a death-bed; but the Lord have mercy upon us now, and make us search our hearts. Those of you who say, "We do not want that sermon," are probably the persons who need it most. He who shall say, "Well, we have no Judas amongst us," is probably a Judas himself. Oh! search yourselves; turn out every cranny; look in every corner of your soul, to see whether your religion be for Christ's sake, and for truth's sake, and for God's sake, or whether it be a profession which you take up because it is a respectable thing, a profession which you keep up because it keeps you up. The Lord search us and try us, and bring us to know our ways.

And now, in conclusion—there is a Savior, and that Savior is willing to receive us now. If I am not a saint, yet I am a sinner. Would it not be best for all of us to go again to the fountain, and wash and be clean. Let each of us go anew, and say, "Master, thou knowest what I am; I know not myself; but, if I be wrong, make me right; if I be right, keep me so. My trust is in thee. Keep me now, for thine own sake, Jesus." Amen.

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The Bible

I have written to him the great things of my law; but they were counted as a strange thing. - Hosea 8:12

This is God's complaint against Ephraim. It is no mean proof of his goodness, that he stoops to rebuke his erring creatures; it is a great argument of his gracious disposition, that he bows his head to notice terrestrial affairs. He might, if he pleased, wrap himself with might as with a garment; he might put the stars around his wrist for bracelets, and bind the suns around his brow for a coronet; he might dwell alone, far, far above this world, up in the seventh heaven, and look down with calm and silent indifference upon all the doings of his creatures; he might do as the heathens supposed their Jove did, sit in perpetual silence, sometimes nodding his awful head to make the fates move as he pleased, but never taking thought of the little things of earth, disposing of them as beneath his notice, engrossed with his own being, swallowed up within himself, living alone and retired; and I, as one of his creatures, might stand by night upon a mountain-top, and look upon the silent stars and say, "Ye are the eyes of God, but ye look not down on me; your light is the gift of his omnipotence, but your rays are not smiles of love to me. God, the mighty Creator, has forgotten me; I am a despicable drop in the ocean of creation, a sear leaf in the forest of beings, an atom in the mountain of existence. He knows me not; I am alone, alone, alone." But it is not so, beloved. Our God is of another order. He notices every one of us; there is not a sparrow or a worm but is found in his decrees. There is not a person upon whom his eye is not fixed. Our most secret acts are known to him. Whatsoever we do, or bear, or suffer, the eye of God still rests upon us, and we are beneath his smile - for we are his people; or beneath his frown - for we have erred from him.

Oh! how ten-thousand-fold merciful is God, that, looking down upon the race of man, he does not smite it out of existence. We see from our text that God looks upon man; for he says of Ephraim, "I have written to him

the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." But see how, when he observes the sin of man, he does not dash him away and spurn him with his foot; he does not shake him by the neck over the gulf of hell, until his brain doth reel and then drop him forever; but rather, he comes down from heaven to plead with his creatures; he argues with them; he puts himself, as it were, upon a level with the sinner - states his grievances and pleads his claim. O Ephraim, I have written unto thee the great things of my law, but they have been unto thee as a strange thing! I come here to-night in God's stead, my friends, to plead with you as God's ambassador, to charge many of you with a sin; to lay it to your hearts by the power of the Spirit, so that you may be convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come. The crime I charge you with is the sin of the text. God has written to you the great things of his law, but they have been unto you as a strange thing. It is concerning this blessed book, the Bible, that I mean to speak tonight. Here lies my text - this Word of God. Here is the theme of my discourse, a theme which demands more eloquence than I possess; a subject upon which a thousand orators might speak at once; a mighty, vast, and comprehensive theme, which might engross all eloquence throughout eternity, and still it would remain unexhausted.

Concerning the Bible, I have three things to say to-night, and they are all in my text. First, its author, "I have written;" secondly, its subjects - the great things of God's law; and thirdly, its common treatment - it has been accounted by most men a strange thing.

I. First, then, concerning this book: Who is the author? The text says that it is God. "I have written to him the great things of my law." Here lies my Bible - who wrote it? I open it, and find it consists of a series of tracts. The first five tracts were written by a man called Moses; I turn on, and I find others. Sometimes I see David is the penman, at other times Solomon. Here I read Micah, then Amos, then Hosea. As I turn further on, to the more luminous pages of the New Testament, I see Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Paul, Peter, James, and others; but when I shut up the book; I ask myself, who is the author of it? Do these men jointly claim the authorship? Are they the composers of this massive volume? Do they between themselves divide the honor? Our holy religion answers,

No! This volume is the writing of the living God; each letter was penned with an Almighty finger; each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips; each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit. Albeit, that Moses was employed to write his histories with his fiery pen, God guided that pen. It may be that David touched his harp, and let sweet Psalms of melody drop from his fingers; but God moved his hands over the living strings of his golden harp. It may be that Solomon sang canticles of love, or gave forth words of consummate wisdom, but God directed his lips, and made the preacher eloquent. If I follow the thundering Nahum, when his horses plough the waters, or Habakkuk, when he sees the tents of Cushan in affliction; if I read Malachi, when the earth is burning like an oven; if I turn to the smooth page of John, who tells of love, or the rugged, fiery chapters of Peter, who speaks of fire devouring God's enemies; if I turn to Jude, who launches forth anathemas upon the foes of God, everywhere I find God speaking; it is God's voice, not man's; the words are God's words, the words of the Eternal, the Invisible, the Almighty, the Jehovah of this earth. This Bible is God's Bible, and when I see it, I seem to hear a voice springing up from it, saying, "I am the book of God; man, read me. I am God's writing; open my leaf, for I was penned by God; read it, for he is my author, and you will see him visible and manifest everywhere." "I have written to him the great things of my law."

How do you know that God wrote the book? That is just what I shall not try to prove to you. I could if I pleased, demonstrate it, for there are arguments enough, there are reasons enough, did I care to occupy your time to-night in bringing them before you; but I shall do no such thing. I might tell you, if I pleased, that the grandeur of the style is above that of an mortal writing, and that all the poets who have ever existed could not, with all their works united, give us such sublime poetry and such mighty language as is to be found in the Scriptures. I might insist upon it, that the subjects of which it treats are beyond the human intellect; that man could never have invented the grand doctrines of a Trinity in the Godhead; man could not have told us anything of the creation of the universe; he could never have been the author of the majestic idea of Providence - that all things are ordered according to the will of one great Supreme Being, and work together for good. I might enlarge upon its honesty, since it tells the faults of its writers; its unity, since it never

believes itself; its master simplicity, that he who runs may read it; and I might mention a hundred more things, which would all prove, to a demonstration, that the book is of God. But I come not here to prove it. I am a Christian minister, and you are Christians, or profess to be so; and there is never any necessity for Christian ministers to make a point of bringing forward infidel arguments in order to answer them. It is the greatest folly in the world. Infidels, poor creatures, do not know their own arguments till we tell them, and then they glean their blunted shafts to shoot them at the shield of truth again. It is follow to bring forward these firebrands of hell, even if we are well prepared to quench them. Let men of the world learn error of themselves; do not let us be propagators of their falsehoods. True, there are some preachers who are short of stock, and want to fill them up; but God's own chosen men need not do that; they are taught of God, and God supplies them with matter, with language, with power. There may be some one here to-night who has come without faith, a man of reason, a freethinker. With him I have no argument at all. I profess not to stand here as a controversialist, but as a preacher of things that I know and feel. But I too, have been like him. There was an evil hour when I once shipped the anchor of my faith; I cut the cable of my belief; I no longer moored myself hard by the coasts of Revelation; I allowed my vessel to drift before the wind; I said to reason, "Be thou my captain;" I said to my own brain, "Be thou my rudder;" and I started on my mad voyage. Thank God, it is all over now; but I will tell you its brief history. It was one hurried sailing over the tempestuous ocean of free thought. I went on, and as I went, the skies began to darken; but to make up for that deficiency, the waters were brilliant with coruscations of brilliancy. I saw sparks flying upward that pleased me, and I thought, "If this be free thought, it is a happy thing." My thoughts seemed gems, and I scattered stars with both my hands; but anon, instead of these coruscations of glory, I saw grim fiends, fierce and horrible, start up from the waters, and as I dashed on, they gnashed their teeth, and grinned upon me; they seized the prow of my ship and dragged me on, while, in part, gloried at the rapidity of my motion, but yet shuddered at the terrific rate with which I passed the old landmarks of my faith. As I hurried forward, with an awful speed, I began to doubt my very existence; I doubted if there were a world, I doubted if there was such a thing as myself. I went to the very verge of the dreary realms of unbelief. I went to

the very bottom of the sea of Infidelity. I doubted everything. But here the devil foiled himself: for the very extravagance of the doubt, proved its absurdity. Just when I saw the bottom of that sea, there came a voice which said, "And can this doubt be true?" At this very thought I awoke. I started from that deathdream, which, God knows might have damned my soul, and ruined this, my body, if I had not awoke. When I arose, faith took the helm; from that moment I doubted not. Faith steered me back; faith cried, "Away, away!" I cast my anchor on Calvary; I lifted my eye to God; and here I am, "alive, and out of hell." Therefore, I speak what I do know. I have sailed that perilous voyage; I have come safe to land. Ask me again to be an infidel! No; I have tried it; it was sweet at first, but bitter afterwards. Now, lashed to God's gospel more firmly than ever, standing as on a rock of adamant, I defy the arguments of hell to move me; for "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." But I shall neither plead nor argue this night. You profess to be Christian men, or else you would not be here. Your professions may be lies; what you say you are, may be the very contrary to what you really are; but still I suppose you all admit that this is the Word of God. A thought or two then upon it. "I have written to him the great things of my law."

First, my friends, stand over this volume, and admire its authority. This is no common book. It is not the sayings of the sages of Greece; here are not the utterances of philosophers of past ages. If these words were written by a man, we might reject them; but O let me think the solemn thought, that this book is God's handwriting - that these words are God's! Let me look at its date; it is dated from the hills of heaven. Let me look at its letters; they flash glory on my eye. Let me read the chapters; they are big with meaning and mysteries unknown. Let me turn over the prophecies; they are pregnant with unthought-of wonders. Oh, book of books! And wast thou written by my God? Then will I bow before thee. Thou book of vast authority! thou art a proclamation from the Emperor of Heaven; far be it from me to exercise my reason in contradicting thee. Reason, thy place is to stand and find out what this volume means, not to tell what this book ought to say. Come thou, my reason, my intellect, sit thou down and listen, for these words are the words of God. I do not know how to enlarge on this thought. Oh! if you could ever remember that this Bible

was actually and really written by God. Oh! if ye had been let into the secret chambers of heaven, if ye had beheld God grasping his pen and writing down these letters - then surely ye would respect them; but they are just as much God's handwriting as if you had seen God write them. This Bible is a book of authority; it is an authorized book, for God has written it. Oh! tremble, lest any of you despise it; mark its authority, for it is the Word of God.

Then, since God wrote it, mark its truthfulness. If I had written it, there would be worms of critics who would at once swarm upon it, and would cover it with their evil spawn; Had I written it, there would be men who would pull it to pieces at once, and perhaps quite right too. But this is the Word of God; come, search, ye critics, and find a flaw; examine it, from its Genesis to its Revelation, and find an error. This is a vein of pure gold, unalloyed by quartz, or any earthly substance. This is a star without a speck; a sun without a blot; a light without darkness; a moon without its paleness; a glory without a dimness. O Bible! it cannot be said of any other book, that it is perfect and pure; but of thee we can declare all wisdom is gathered up in thee, without a particle of folly. This is the judge that ends the strife, where wit and reason fail. This is the book untainted by any error; but is pure, unalloyed, perfect truth. Why? Because God wrote it. Ah! charge God with error if ye please; tell him that his book is not what it ought to be. I have heard men, with prudish and mock-modesty, who would like to alter the Bible; and (I almost blush to say it) I have heard ministers alter God's Bible, because they were afraid of it. Have you never heard a man say, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not" - what does the Bible say? - "Shall be damned." But that does not happen to be polite enough, so they say, "Shall be condemned." Gentlemen, pull the velvet out of your mouths; speak God's word; we want none of your alterations. I have heard men in prayer instead of saying, "Make your calling and election sure," say "Make your calling and salvation sure." Pity they were not born when God lived far - far back that they might have taught God how to write. Oh, impudence beyond all bounds! Oh full-blown self-conceit! To attempt to dictate to the All-wise - to teach the Omniscient and instruct the Eternal. Strange that there should be men so vile as to use the penknife of Jehoiakim to cut passages out of the word, because they are unpalatable.

O ye who dislike certain portions of Holy Writ, rest assured that your taste is corrupt, and that God will not stay for you little opinion. Your dislike is the very reason why God wrote it, because you out not to be suited; you have no right to be pleased. God wrote what you do not like; he wrote the truth. Oh! let us bend in reverence before it, for God inspired it. It is pure truth. Here from this fountain gushes aqua vitae - the water of life - without a single particle of earth; here from this sun cometh forth rays of radiance, without the mixture of darkness. Blessed Bible! thou art all truth.

Yet once more, before we leave this point, let us stop and consider the merciful nature of God, in having written us a Bible at all. Ah! he might have left us without it, to grope our dark way, as blind men seek the wall; he might have suffered us to wander on with the star of reason as our only guide. I recollect a story of Mr. Hume, who so constantly affirmed that the light of reason is abundantly sufficient. Being at a good minister's house one evening, he had been discussing the question, and declaring his firm belief in the sufficiency of the light of nature. On leaving, the minister offered to hold him a candle to light him down the steps. He said "No; the light of nature would be enough; the moon would do." It so happened that the moon was covered with a cloud, and he fell down the steps. "Ah!" said the minister, "you had better have had a little light from above, after all, Mr. Hume." So, supposing the light of nature to be sufficient, we had better have a little light from above too, and then we shall be sure to be right. Better have two lights than only one. The light of creation is a bright light. God may be seen in the stars; his name is written in gilt letters on the brow of night; you may discover his glory in the ocean waves, yea, in the trees of the field; but it is better to read it in two books than in one. You will find it here more clearly revealed; for he has written this book himself, and he has given you the key to understand it, if you have the Holy Spirit. Ah, beloved, let us thank God for this Bible; let us love it; let us count it more precious than much fine gold.

But let me say one thing, before I pass on to the second point. If this be the Word of God, what will become of some of you who have not read it for the last month? "Month, sir! I have not read it for this year." Ay, there are some of you who have not read it at all. Most people treat the Bible

very politely . They have a small pocket volume, neatly bound; they put a white pocket-handkerchief round it and carry it to their places of worship; when they get home, they lay it up in a drawer till next Sunday morning; then it comes out again for a little bit of a treat, and goes to chapel; that is all the poor Bible gets in the way of an airing. That is your style of entertaining this heavenly messenger. There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write "damnation" with your fingers. There are some of you who have not turned over your Bibles for a long, long while, and what think you? I tell you blunt words, but true words. What will God say at last? When you shall come before him, he shall say, "Did you read my Bible?" "No." "I wrote you a letter of mercy; did you read it?" "No." "Rebel! I have sent thee a letter inviting thee to me; didst thou ever read it?" "Lord, I never broke the seal; I kept it shut up." "Wretch!" says God, "then, thou deservest hell, if I sent thee a loving epistle, and thou wouldst not even break the seal; what shall I do unto thee?" Oh, let it not be so with you. Be Bible-readers; be Bible

II. Our second point is: The subjects on which the Bible treats. The words of the text are these: "I have written to him the great things of my law." The Bible treats of great things, and of great things only. there is nothing in this Bible which is unimportant. Every verse in it has a solemn meaning; and if we have not found it out yet, we hope yet to do it. You have seen mummies, wrapped round and round with folds of linen. Well, God's Bible is like that; it is a vast roll of white linen, woven in the loom of truth; so you will have to continue unwinding it, roll after roll, before you get the real meaning of it from the very depth; and when you have found, as you think, a part of the meaning, you will still need to keep on unwinding, unwinding, and all eternity you will be unwinding the words of this great volume. Yet there is nothing in the Bible but great things. Let me divide, so as to be more brief. First, all things in this Bible are great; but, secondly, some things are the greatest of all.

All things in the Bible are great. Some people think it does not matter what doctrines you believe; that it is immaterial what church you attend; that all denominations are alike. Well, I dislike Mrs. Bigotry above almost all people in the world, and I never give her any compliment or praise; but there is another woman I hate equally as much, and that is Mrs.

Latitudinarianism - a well-known character, who has made the discovery that all of us are alike. Now, I believe that a man may be saved in any church. Some have been saved in the Church of Rome - a few blessed men whose names I could mention here. I know, blessed be God, what multitudes are saved in the Church of England; she has a host of pious, praying men in her midst. I think that all sections of Protestant Christians have a remnant according to the election of grace; and they had need to have, some of them, a little salt, for otherwise they would go to corruption. But when I say that, do you imagine that I think them all on a level? Are they all alike truthful? One sect says infant baptism is right; another says it is wrong; yet you say they are both right. I cannot see that. One teaches we are saved by free grace; another say us that we are not, but are saved by free will; and yet you believe they are both right. I do not understand that. One says that God loves his people, and never leaves off loving them; another says that he did not love his people before they loved him - that he often loves them, and then ceases to love them, and turns them away. They may both be right in the main; but can they both be right when one says "Yes," and the other says "No?" I must have a pair of spectacles, to enable me to look backwards and forwards at the same time, before I can see that. It cannot be, sirs, that they are both right. But some say they differ upon non-essentials. This text says, "I have written to him the great things of my law." There is nothing in God's Bible which is not great. Did ever any of you sit down to see which was the purest religion? "Oh," say you, "we never took the trouble. We went just where our father and mother went." Ah! that is a profound reason indeed. You went where you father and mother did. I thought you were sensible people; I didn't think you went where other people pulled you, but went of your own selves. I love my parents above all that breathe, and the very thought that they believe a thing to be true, helps me to think it is correct; but I have not followed them; I belong to a different denomination, and I thank God that I do. I can receive them as Christian brethren and sisters; but I never thought that, because they happened to be one thing, I was to be the same. No such thing. God gave me brains, and I will use them; and if you have any intellect, use it too. Never say it doesn't matter. Whatever God has put here is of eminent importance; he would not have written a thing that was indifferent. Whatever is here is of some value; therefore, search all questions, try all by the Word of God. I am not afraid to have

what I preach tried by this book. Only give me a fair field and no favor, and this book; if I say anything contrary to it, I will withdraw it the next Sabbath-day. By this I stand, by this I fall. Search and see; but don't say, "it does not matter." If God says a thing, it always must be of importance.

But, while all things in God's word are important, all are not equally important. There are certain fundamental and vital truths which must be believed, or otherwise no man would be saved. If you want to know what you must believe, if ye would be saved, you will find the great things of God's law between these two covers; they are all contained here. As a sort of digest or summary of the great things of law, I remember an old friend of mine once saying, "Ah! you preach the three R's, and God will always bless you." I said, "What are the three R's?" and he answered, "Ruin, redemption, and regeneration." They contain the sum and substance of divinity. R for ruin. We were all ruined in the fall; we were lost when Adam sinned, and we were all ruined by our own transgressions; we are all ruined by our own evil hearts, and our own wicked wills; and we all shall be ruined, unless grace saves us. Then there is a second R for redemption. We are ransomed by the blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish and without spot; we are rescued by his power; we are ransomed by his merits; we are redeemed by his strength. then there is R for regeneration. If we would be pardoned, we must also be regenerated; for no man can partake of redemption unless he is regenerate. Let him be as good as he pleases; let him serve God, as he imagines, as much as he likes; unless he is regenerate, and has a new heart, a new birth, he will still be in the first R, that is ruin. These things contain an epitome of the gospel. I believe there is a better epitome in the five points of Calvinism; - Election according to the foreknowledge of God; the natural depravity and sinfulness of man; particular redemption by the blood of Christ; effectual calling by the power of the Spirit; and ultimate perseverance by the efforts of God's might. I think all those need to be believed, in order to salvation; but I should not like to write a creed like the Athanasian, beginning with "Whosoever shall be saved, before all things it is necessary that he should hold the Catholic faith, which faith is this," - when I got so far, I should stop, because I should not know what to write. I hold the Catholic faith of the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. It is not for me to draw up creeds; but I ask you to search the

Scriptures, for this is the word of life.

God says, "I have written to him the great things of my law." Do you doubt their greatness? Do ye think they are not worth your attention? Reflect a moment, man. Where art thou standing now?

"Lo on a narrow neck of land,
'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand;
An inch of time, a moment's space,
May lodge me in yon heavenly place,
Or shut me up in hell."

I recollect standing on a seashore once, upon a narrow neck of land, thoughtless that the tide might come up. The tide kept continually washing up on either side, and, wrapped in thoughts, I stood there, until at last there was the greatest difficulty in getting on shore. You and I stand each day on a narrow neck, and there is one wave coming up there; see, how near it is to your foot; and lo! another follows at every tick of the clock; "Our hearts, like muffled drums, are beating funeral marches to the tomb." We are always tending downwards to the grave each moment that we live. This book tells me that if I am converted, when I die, there is a heaven of joy and love to receive me; it tells me that angels' pinions shall be stretched, and I, borne by strong cherubic wings, shall out-soar the lightning, and mount beyond the stars, up to the throne of God, to dwell forever.

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."

Oh! it makes the hot tear start from my eye, it makes my heart too big for this my body, and my brain whirls at the thought of

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me."

Oh! that sweet scene beyond the clouds; sweet fields arrayed in living green, and rivers of delight. Are not these great things? But then, poor

unregenerate soul, the Bible says if thou art lost, thou art lost forever; it tells thee that if thou diest without Christ, without God, there is no hope for thee; that there is no place without a gleam of hope, where thou shalt read, in burning letters, "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not;" it tells you, that ye shall be driven from his presence with a "depart, ye cursed." Are these not great things? Yes, sirs, as heaven is desirable, as hell is terrible, as time is short, as eternity is infinite, as the soul is precious, as pain is to be shunned, as heaven is to be sought, as God is eternal, and as his words are sure, these are great things, things ye ought to listen to.

III. Our last point is: The treatment which the poor Bible receives in this world; it is accounted a strange thing. What does that mean - the Bible accounted a strange thing? In the first place, it means that it is very strange to some people, because they never read it. I remember reading, on one occasion, the sacred story of David and Goliath, and there was a person present, positively grown up to years of maturity, who said to me, "Dear me! what an interesting story; what book is that in?" And I recollect a person once coming to me in private; I spoke to her about her soul, she told me how deeply she felt, how she had a desire to serve God, but she found another law in her members. I turned to a passage in Romans, and read to her, "The good that I would I do not; and the evil which I would not that I do!" She said, "Is that in the Bible? I did not know it." I did not blame her, because she had no interest in the Bible till then; but I did not wonder that there could be found persons who knew nothing about such a passage. Ah! you know more about your ledgers than your Bible; you know more about your day-books than what God has written; many of you will read a novel from beginning to end, and what have you got? A mouthful of froth when you have done. But you cannot read the Bible; that solid, lasting, substantial, and satisfying food goes uneaten, locked up in the cupboard of neglect; while anything that man writes, a catch of the day, is greedily devoured. "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." Ye have never read it. I bring the broad charge against you. Perhaps, ye say, I ought not to charge you with any such thing. I always think it better to have a worse opinion of you than too good an one. I charge you with this: you do not read your Bibles. Some of you have never read it through. I know I speak what your heart must say is honest truth. You are not Bible

readers. You say you have the Bible in your houses; do I think you are such heathens as not to have a Bible? But when did you read it last? How do you know that your spectacles, which you have lost, have not been there for the last three years? Many people have not turned over its pages for a long time, and God might say unto them, "I have written unto you the great things of my law, but they have been accounted unto you a strange thing."

Others there be who read the Bible; but when they read it, they say it is so horribly dry. That young man over there says it is a "bore;" that is the words he uses. He says, "My mother says to me, when you go up to town, read a chapter every day. Well, I thought I would please her, and I said I would. I am sure I wish I had not. I did not read a chapter yesterday, or the day before. We were so busy, I could not help it." You do not love the Bible, do you? "No, there is nothing in it which is interesting." Ah, I thought so. But a little while ago I could not see anything in it. Do you know why? Blind men cannot see, can they? But when the Spirit touches the scales of the eyes, they fall off; and when he puts eye-salves on, the Bible becomes precious. I remember a minister who went to see an old lady, and he thought he would give her some precious promises out of the word of God. Turning to one, he saw written in the margin "P.," and he asked, "What does this mean?" "That means precious, sir." Further down, he saw "T. and P.," and he asked what the letters meant. "That," she said, "means tried and proved, for I have tried and proved it." If you have tried God's word and proved it - if it is precious to your soul. then you are Christians; but those persons who despise the Bible, have "neither part nor lot in the matter." If it is dry to you, you will be dry at last in hell. If you do not esteem it as better than your necessary food, there is no hope for you; for you lack the greatest evidence of your Christianity.

Alas! alas! the worst case is to come. There are some people who hate the Bible, as well as despise it. Is there such an one stepped in here? Some of you said, "Let us go and hear what the young preacher has to say to us." This is what he has to say to you: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish." This is what he hath to say to you: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all that forget God." And this, again he has to say to you: "Behold, there shall come in the last days, mockers, like yourselves,

walking after your own lusts." But more: he tells you to-night that if you are saved, you must find salvation here. Therefore, despise not the Bible; but search it, read it, and come unto it. Rest thee will assured, O scorner, that thy laughs cannot alter truth, thy jests cannot avert thine inevitable doom. Though in thy hardihood thou shouldst make a league with death, and sign a covenant with hell - yet swift justice shall o'ertake thee, and strong vengeance strike the low. In vain dost thou jeer and mock, for eternal verities are mightier than thy sophistries, nor can thy smart sayings alter the divine truth of a single word of this volume of Revelation. Oh! why dost thou quarrel with thy best friend, and ill-treat thy only refuge? There yet remains hope, even for the scorner. Hope in a Saviour's veins. Hope in the Father's mercy. Hope in the Holy Spirit's omnipotent agency.

I have done when I have said one word. My friend, the philosopher, says it may be very well for me to urge people to read the Bible; but he thinks there are a great many sciences far more interesting and useful than theology. Extremely obliged to you for your opinion, sir. What science do you mean? The science of dissecting beetles and arranging butterflies? "No," you say, "certainly not." The science, then, of arranging stones, and telling us of the strata of the earth? "No, not exactly that." Which science, then? "Oh, all sciences," say you, "are better than the science of the Bible." Ah! sir, that is your opinion; and it is because you are far from God, that you say so. But the science of Jesus Christ is the most excellent of sciences. Let no one turn away from the Bible because it is not a book of learning and wisdom. It is. Would ye know astronomy? It is here: it tells you of the Sun of Righteousness and the Star of Bethlehem. Would you know of botany? It is here: it tells you of the plant of renown - the Lily of the Valley, and the rose of Sharon. Would you know geology and mineralogy? You shall learn it here: for you may read of the Rock of Ages, and the White Stone with the name engraven thereon, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. Would ye study history? Here is the most ancient of all the records of the history of the human race. Whate'er your science is, come and bend o'er this book; your science is here. Come and drink out of this fair fount of knowledge and wisdom, and ye shall find yourselves made wise unto salvation. Wise and foolish, babes and men, gray-headed sires, youths and maidens - I speak to you, I plead with

you, I beg of you respect your Bibles, and search them out, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of Christ.

I have done. Let us go home and practice what we have heard. I have heard of a woman, who, when she was asked what she remembered of the minister's sermon, said, "I don't recollect anything of it. It was about short weights and bad measures, and I didn't recollect anything but to go home and burn the bushel." So, if you will remember to go home and burn the bushel, if you will recollect to go home and read your Bibles, I shall have said enough. And may God, in his infinite mercy, when you read your Bibles, pour into your souls the illuminating rays of the Sun of Righteousness, by the agency of the ever-adorable Spirit; then you will read to your profit and to your soul's salvation.

We may say of THE BIBLE:

"God's cabinet of revealed counsel 't is!
Where weal and woe, are ordered so
That every man may know which shall be his;
Unless his own mistake, false application make.

"It is the index to eternity.
He cannot miss of endless bliss.
That takes this chart to steer by,
Nor can he be mistook that speaketh by this book.

"It is the book of God. What if I should
Say, God of books, let him that looks
Angry at that expression, as too bold,
His thoughts in silence smother, till he find such another."

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Search the Scriptures

"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."—Isaiah 8:20.

When men will not learn of God, how huge their folly grows! If they despise the wisdom that is from above, how grievously does God allow them to prove their own ignorance! When a man will not bow down before God the Most High, immediately he buildeth for himself an idol; he maketh an image of wood or stone, and he degradeth himself by bowing before the work of his own hands. When men will not receive the Scripture testimony concerning God's creation, straightway they begin to form theories that are a thousand times more ridiculous than they have ever endeavoured to make the Bible account of it, for God leaveth them, if they will not accept his solution of the problem, to grope for another, and their own solution is so absurd, that all the world except themselves hath sense enough to laugh at it. And when men leave the Sacred Book of Revelation, ah! my friends, where do they go? We find that in Isaiah's time they went to strange places; for he says in the 19th verse, that they sought unto familiar spirits, unto wizards that did peep and mutter; yea, they sought for things concerning the living, amongst the dead, and became the dupes of necromancers. It is marvellous that the men who most of all rail at faith are remarkable for credulity. One of the greatest unbelievers in the world, who has called himself a free-thinker from his birth, is to be found now tottering into his tomb, believing the veriest absurdity that a child might confute. Not caring to have God in their hearts, forsaking the living foundation, they have hewn out to themselves cisterns which are broken, and hold no water. Oh! that we may each of us be more wise, that we may not forsake the good old path, nor leave the way that God hath prepared for us. What wonder we should travel amongst thorns and briars, and rend our own flesh, or worse than that, fall among dark mountains, and be lost amongst the chasms thereof, if we despise the guidance of an unerring Father. Seek ye in the word of God,

and read, Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they that testify of Jesus Christ.

I feel at this particular crisis of religious affairs, it is imperative upon the Christian minister to urge his people to hold fast the doctrines of the truth—the words of God. This seems likely to become the age of preaching, rather than the age of praying. We now see everywhere large congregations assembling in halls and abbeys to listen to the Word preached; and it is an ominous sign of the times, that these preachings are not only espoused by the orthodox, but even by those whom we have considered to be at least somewhat heretical from the old faith of the Protestant Church. It becomes, therefore, a serious thing; for it is most probable—and may not every wise man see it?—that whosoever may now arise who hath some powers of oratory and some graces of eloquence, will be likely to attract the multitude, preach he what he may, though the word that he should utter be as false as God's Word is true, and as contrary to the gospel as hell is opposed to heaven. Doth it not seem probable that in this age he would attract a multitude of followers? and is it not also very likely that through that spurious charity which is now growing upon us, which would gag the mouths of honest reprovers, we shall find it hard to rebuke the impostor when he arises, and difficult to expose the falsehood, even though it may be apparent unto us. We are now happily so well commingled together, the Dissenter and the Churchman have now become so friendly with each other, that we have less to dread the effects of bigotry, than the effects of latitudinarianism. We have some reason now to be upon the watchtower, lest haply some should arise in our midst, the spurious offspring of these happy times of evangelical alliance, who will claim our charity, whilst they are preaching that which we in our hearts do totally condemn. And what better advice can the minister give in such times as these? To what book shall he commend his hearers? How shall he keep them fast? Where is the anchor which he shall give them to cast into the rocks? or where the rocks into which they should cast their anchor? Our text is a solution to that question. We are here furnished with a great answer to the inquiry—"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

First, I shall endeavour this morning to urge you to bring certain things, to which we are afraid a superstitious importance may be attached, "to the law and to the testimony." Secondly, I shall try to show the good effects that will follow, if each of you rigidly bring everything you hear and believe, "to the law and to the testimony." And, thirdly, I shall give you some powerful reasons why you should subject everything to this sacred touchstone; and close by offering you some little advice how you may do this truly and profitably.

I. Permit me to urge upon you the bringing CERTAIN THINGS "to the law and to the testimony."

1. First, I would have you bring the ideas engendered in you by your early training, to the test of the Book of God. It is very much the custom of people to say, "Was I not born in the Church of England? Ought I not therefore to continue in it?" Or, on the other hand, "Was not my grandmother an Immersionist? Ought not I, therefore, to continue in the Baptist denomination?" God forbid that I should say aught against your venerable and pious relatives; or that you should pay any disrespect to their teaching! We always respect their advice, even when we cannot receive it, for the sake of the person who offers it to us; knowing that their training, even should it have been mistaken, was nevertheless well meant. But we claim for ourselves, as men, that we should not be fed with doctrines as we were fed in our helpless infancy, with food chosen for us: we claim that we should have the right of judging whether the things which we have received and heard, are according to this Sacred Book; and if we find that in aught our training has been erroneous, we do not consider that we are violating any principle of affection, if we dare to come forth from our families, and join a denomination holding tenets far different from those which our parents had espoused. Let us each recollect that as God has given every man a head on his shoulders, every man is bound to use his own head, and not his father's. God gave your father judgment. Well and good: he judged for himself. He has given you a judgment: judge for yourself too. Say, concerning all that you have received in your early childhood, "Well, I will not lightly part with this, for it may be sterling gold; but at the same time, I will not blindly hoard it, for it may be counterfeit coin. I will sit down to the study of the Sacred

Book, and I will endeavour, as far as I can, to unprejudice myself. I will read the Bible, just as if I had never heard any preacher, or had never been taught by a parent; and I will there endeavour to find out what God saith, and what God saith, be it what it may, I will believe and espouse, hoping that by his grace I may also feel the power of it in my own soul.

2. Remember, also, to bring the preachers of the gospel to this standard. A great many of you know but very little about what gospel is. The general notion of the mass is, that we are everyone of us right; that though to-day I may contradict some one else, and some one else may contradict me, yet we are all right; and though it is treason to common sense to believe such a thing, yet this is a common idea. Some men always believe like the last speaker. Should they hear the most hyper of hyper-Calvinists, they believe with him the fulness of the doctrine of reprobation; should they hear on the morrow the lowest of Arminians, they believe with him the most universal of redemptions and the most powerful of free-wills. Should they then hear the genuine Calvinist, who preaches that man hath destroyed himself, but in God is his help found, perhaps then they think the man contradicts himself, and for once they rebel against their teachers. But it is probable that should they hear such a person again, they will be easily reconciled to seeming contradictions; for to them it is just the man's appearance, just the man's way of saying the thing, that they like, and not the thing that he says. Just as I have heard of holy Mr. Durham, the writer of that sweet book on Solomon's Song. If I had lived in his time, I should never, I think, have wanted to hear any other preacher; I would have sat, both by night and day, to receive the sweet droppings of his honied lips. But in his time there was a young preacher, whose name is totally forgotten, whose church was crowded to the door, and Mr. Durham's meeting-house hard by forsaken. The reason of that is, because the mass of people do not lay hold upon what is said, but upon how it is said: and if it is said smartly, said prettily, and said forcibly, that is enough for them, though it be a lie; but if the truth be spoken, that they will not receive, unless it be attended by some graces of oratory and eloquence. Now, the Christian that has got above his babyhood, does not care about how the man says it; it is the thing that is said that he cares about. All he asks is, "Did he speak the truth?" He just gets hold of the corn. To him the straw is nothing, and the chaff less. He cares not for the

trimming of the feast, nor for the exquisite workmanship of the dish; he only cares for that which is solid food for himself.

Now, my dear friends, I claim for myself, when I enter this pulpit, the right of being heard; but I do not claim the right of being believed, unless the words that I speak shall be in accordance with this Sacred Book. I desire you to serve me as I would have you serve everybody else—bring us each "to the law and to the testimony." I thank God, of my Bible I have no need to be ashamed. I sometimes am ashamed of this translation of it, when I see how, in some important points, it is not true to God's Word; but of God's own Word I can say, it is the man of my right hand, my meditation both day and night; and if there be aught I preach that is contrary to this Word, trample it in the mire, spit upon it, and despise it. The truth lieth here. It is not what I say, but what my God saith, that you are demanded to receive. Put myself and put all my brethren into the sieve; cast us each into the fire; put us into the crucible of truth; and what is not according to God's Word must be consumed like dross.

3. There is another class of men quite contrary to those I have referred to. These men are their own preachers; they believe no one but themselves, and without knowing it, there is every reason for them to hate the Pope, because "two of a trade never agree," they being Popes themselves. These persons, if they hear a truth preached, judge of it not by the Bible, but by what they think the truth ought to be. I have heard a person, for instance, say, when he has heard the doctrine of Election, or of particular Redemption, "Well, now the doctrine does not please me, I do not like it." And then he begins to urge some objection which he has forged upon his own anvil, yet never trying to quote a Scripture text to refute it, if he can; never turning to some old saying of the Prophets, and endeavouring to find out that the doctrine was an error, but only judging of it by his own opinion, by his wishes as to what the truth ought to be. What would you think of a man who should say to an astronomer, "Now, it is of no use your telling me that the constellation of Scorpio of such-and-such a shape; I tell you, I do not like the look of it. My dear fellow, I don't think that the constellation of Scorpio ought to have been made that shape; and I think this star ought to have been put just here, instead of there: and then all would be well." The astronomer would simply smile at him, and

say, "Your opinion does not signify, because it does not alter facts. If you think I am wrong, your right way to disprove me is not to say where you think the stars ought to be, but just come and take a look through my telescope and see where the stars are." now, it is just the same with the truth. People say, "I do not like such a truth." That is no refutation of it. The question is,—Is it in the Bible? Because if it is there, like it or not like it, it is a fact, and all the minister has to do is to report the facts that he finds there. Why, the astronomer cannot put the stars in a row, like a row of gas lights, to please you; and the minister cannot put the doctrines into a shape in which you would wish to have them cast. All the astronomer does is to map them out, and say, "That is how they are in the sky:" you must then look at the sky, and see whether it is so. All I have to do is to tell you what I find in the Bible; if you do not like it, remember, that is no refutation of it, nor do I care for your liking it or not liking it; the only thing is, Is it in the Bible? If it is there I shall not stop to prove it. I do not come here to prove a doctrine at all. If it is in the Bible, it is true: there it is; I tell it out; reject it, and you do so to your own condemnation; for you yourself believe the Bible to be true, and I prove it to be there, and therefore it must be true.

Should it be according to thy mind? Wouldst thou like to have a Bible made for the devices of thine own heart? If it were, it would be a worthless thing. Wouldst thou desire to have a Gospel according to thy wishes? Then with some of you it would be a Gospel that allowed lasciviousness. Wouldst thou wish to have a revelation made that should pamper thee in thy lusts, and indulge thee in thy pride? If so, this know, God will never stoop to feed thy haughtiness or wantonness. The Bible is a God-like book; he demands thy faith in it; and though thou kickest against it, this stone can never be broken; but, mark thee, thou mayest be broken upon it, yea, it may fall upon thee and bruise thee to powder. Bring, then, I beseech thee, your own thoughts and your own sentiments to the touchstone of the truth; for "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

4. And just do the same with all books that you read. This is the age of book-making and book-writing. Now-a-days, what with periodical literature and the books upon our shelves, our Bibles do not get much

read. I will tell you a truthful story as it was told to me yesterday. There was a young man, who is now a student for the ministry, so extraordinarily ignorant was he of his own Bible, that upon hearing a young minister mention the story of Nebuchadnezzar's being driven out from men, until his nails did grow like birds' claws, and his hair like eagles' feathers, he said to the minister at the close of the sermon, "Well, that was a queer story you told the people, certainly: where did you fish that up?" "Why," said the minister, "have you never read your Bible? Can you not find it in the Book of Daniel?" The young man had read a great many other things, but never read his Bible through, and yet was going to be a teacher of it! Now, I fear that the same ignorance is very current in many persons. They do not know what is in the Bible: they could tell you what is in the Churchman's Penny, or the Christian's Penny, or the Churchman's Magazine, or the Wesleyan Magazine, or the Baptist Magazine, or the Evangelical Magazine, and all that; but there is one old magazine, a magazine of arms, a magazine of wealth, that they forget to read—that old-fashioned book called the Bible. "Ah!" said one, when he came to die, who had been a great classic, "I would to God I had spent as much time in reading my Bible as I have spent in reading Livy! Would to God I had been exact in my criticisms of Holy Scripture as I was in criticisms upon Horace!" Oh! that we were wise, to give the Bible the largest share of our time, and ever to continue reading it, both by day and night, that we might be as trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season! Let us remember, as ministers of the Gospel, what M'Cheyne beautifully said; "Depend upon it," said he, "it is God's Word, not man's comment upon God's Word, that saves souls;" and I have marked, that if ever we have a conversion at any time, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the conversion is rather traceable to the text, or to some Scripture quoted in the sermon, than to any trite or original by the preacher. It is God's Word that breaks the fetters and sets the prisoner free; it is God's Word instrumentally that saves souls; and therefore let us bring everything to the touchstone. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

II. Now I pass to my second point. Brethren, let me show you some of the GOOD EFFECTS that you will derive from a minute and careful study of

the law and testimony of God.

1. First, remember, that unless you study the Word of God, you will not be competent to detect error. A man may in your hearing preach downright falsehood, but you will not be qualified to judge concerning that falsehood unless you have studied the Word of God. You and I would not be fit to sit on the judgment bench of some of the superior courts of our land, because we are not acquainted with the intricacies of the law. We could not quote precedents, for we have not been learned therein. And so no man is able to judge concerning the thing that he hears, unless he is able to quote Scripture—unless he understands the Word of God, and is able to perceive and to know what it means.

But I hear some one say, that the Bible is so difficult a book that he is sure he never could understand it. Mark thee, man, the Bible is so plain a book that he that is willing to understand it may do so; it is so plain that he that runs may read, and read while he runs; yea, it is so plain, that the simpler a man is, the more easily he can understand it. All the learning that man ever received is rather a hindrance than a benefit when he comes for the first time to read the Word. Learning may untie many a knot afterwards; it may unravel many a mystery in after times; but we have heard deep-minded critics say, that at first they would have given all the world, if they could have thrown their learning aside, just to read the Bible as the humble cottager reads it, and believe it as God's Word, without any quibbles of criticism. You know how Mrs. Beecher Stowe represents Uncle Tom reading it. He could not read it fast; so he just spelt it over letter by letter, and word by word; and the Bible is one of the books, she says, that always gains by that way of reading. You recollect how he read it. "Let—not—your—hearts—be—;" and then he stopped at the long word; and he fumbled it out at last, and it was, "troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Why, it gets sweeter from your being a long time reading it; and so far from your want of learning disqualifying you from understanding the Bible, the mass of it is all the more understandable from the simplicity of your heart. Come ye, and search the Scriptures; they are no such mysterious fables or learned volumes of hard words as some men say. This is no closed book, as the priest would tell us; it is a volume which the Sunday School child may understand, if the Spirit of

God rests upon his heart. It is a book which the horny-handed workman may comprehend as well as the learned divine, and many such have become exceedingly wise therein. I say again, read your Bibles, that you may be qualified to detect error.

2. But again: I do not like a man who is always looking out for error. That man has got some error in his own heart, depend on it. They say, "Set a thief to catch a thief;" and it is very likely that there is some love of error in your heart, or else you would not be so ready to suspect it in other people. But let me give you another reason. Search your Bibles; for then, when you are in a matter of dispute you will be able to speak very confidently. There is nothing gives a man so much power amongst his fellows as confidence. If in conversation I am contradicted as to any sentiment that I propound, if I have got Scripture at my fingers' ends, why I laugh at my opponent, and though he be never so wise and has read ten times more books than I have ever seen, I just smile at him, if I can quote Scripture; for then I am confident—I am sure—I am certain about the matter—for "thus saith the Lord," is an argument that no man can answer. It makes a man seem very foolish when he has to speak in a diffident manner. I always think that certain elegant ministers, who are afraid of being called dogmatical, and who therefore propound the gospel as if they did not hardly like to say they were sure it was true—as if they thought so, they nearly thought so—still they did not think so quite enough to say they knew, but leave it to their hearers. I always think they show the littleness of their minds in so doing. It may be a great thing to doubt, but it is a great thing to hold your tongue while you are doubting, and not to open your mouth till you believe, and then, when you do open your mouth, to say the thing you know is true, and stick to it, not as an opinion, but as an incontrovertible fact. No man will ever do much amongst his fellows till he can speak confidently what he knows to be revealed.

Now, Bible readers, you can attain this confidence, but you can get it nowhere else but at the foot of Scripture. Hear ministers alone, and ye shall be led to doubt, for one of them shall confound what his brought sought to prove; but read your Bibles, and when ye get the Word legible by its own light, impressed upon your own hearts by the Holy Spirit, then

"Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault your faith with treacherous art,
You'll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to your heart."

3. Furthermore, search the Scriptures, and bring everything you hear to this great test, because in so doing you will get a rich harvest of blessing to your own soul. I suppose there is scarce a text in Holy that has not been the instrument of the salvation of a soul. Now, "he that walketh among wise men will be wise;" and he that walks amongst the wise men that wrote Holy Scripture stands at least the highest probability of being made wise unto salvation. If I desired to put myself into the most likely place for the Lord to meet with me, I should prefer the house of prayer, for it is in preaching, that the Word is most blessed; but still I think I should equally desire the reading of the Scriptures; for I might pause over every verse, and say, "Such a verse was blessed to so many souls; then, why not to me? I am at least in the pool of Bethesda; I am walking amongst its porches, and who can tell but that the angel will stir the pool of the Word, whilst I lie helplessly by the side of it, waiting for the blessing?" Yea, the truth is so great, that God has blessed every word of Scripture, that I remember a striking anecdote of the conversion of a man by a passage of Scripture that did not seem adapted for any such purpose. You know that chapter in Genesis, that very dull chapter, where we read, "and Methusaleh lived 969 years, and he died," and such a one lived so many years and he died? We have heard of its being read once in public; and a man who stood there, when he heard the words often repeated, "and he died," thought, "Ah! and I shall die!" And it was the first note of warning that had ever struck his seared conscience, and was the means under God of bringing him to Jesus. Now, read the Scriptures for this reason. If you desire salvation, and if you are panting after mercy, if you feel your sin and want salvation, come ye to this sea of love, to this treasury of light, to this wardrobe of rich clothing, to this fountain of bliss; come ye, and have your wants supplied out of the fulness of the riches of Jesus, who is "evidently set forth" in this Word, "crucified among you."

III. And now let me endeavour as briefly as I can, to urge upon you yet

again the constant and perpetual reading of the Word of God, not only for the reasons that I have now propounded, but for others more important. Many false prophets have gone forth into the world: I beseech you, then, if ye would not be led astray, be diligent in the study of the Word of God. In certain parts of Dr. Livingstone's travels, he tells us, that his guides were either so ignorant or so determined to deceive him, that he could have done far better without them than with them; and he had constantly to refer to his compass, lest he should be led astray. Now, I would not say a hard thing if I did not believe it true; but I do solemnly think that there are some professed teachers of the Word, who are either so ignorant of spiritual things in their own hearts, or else so determined to preach anything but Christ, that you might do better without them than with them; and hence you have an absolute necessity to turn perpetually to this great compass by which alone you can steer your way. I scorn a charity that after all is not charity. I must tell you what I believe. Some would have me now stand here and say, "All that are eminent preachers are most certainly truthful preachers." now, I cannot say it. If at any time I hear a man preach the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, through the merits of Christ, I give him my hand, and call him my brother, because he is right in the main thing; but when I do that I am long way from endorsing many other of his sentiments. It may be that he denies the effectual power of the Spirit in conversion; it may be he does not hold the doctrine of the entire depravity of the human race—does not insist upon free sovereign grace—does not hold forth and teach the doctrine of substitution and satisfaction through Christ. Now, I will not so befool myself as to tell you that wherein that man differs from the Word of God he is true. No doubt that man may be blessed for your salvation; but there may he a curse upon his ministry notwithstanding; so that while you may be saved by it, you may be all your lifetime subject to bondage through it, and you may go groaning, where you ought to have gone singing—crying, where you might have had a sacred burst of joy. You sit under such-and-such a man who has been made the means of your conversion; but he tells you that your salvation depends upon yourself, and not upon the power of Christ. He insists upon it that you may, after all, fall from grace and be a cast-away; he tells you that although you are saved, God did no more love you than he loved Judas; that there is no such thing as special love, no such thing, in fact, as Election. He tells you that others might

have come to Christ, as well as yourself—that there was no extraordinary power put out in your case, more than in any others. Well, if he does not lead you to glory in man, to magnify the flesh, and sometimes to trust in yourself, or else lead you to distress yourself where there is no need for distress, I should marvel indeed, inasmuch as his doctrine is false, and must mislead you. It may be the means of your salvation, and yet it may fail in many points to minister to your edification and comfort. Therefore, if ye would not be thus misled, search ye the Scriptures.

But ah! there is a solemn danger of being absolutely misled. Ye may hear all that the minister says, but he may forget to tell you the vital part of the truth; he may be one who delights in ceremonies, but does not insist upon the grace therein; he may hold forth to you the rubric and sacrament, and tell you there is efficacy in obedience to the one, and attention to the other, and he may forget to tell you that "Except a man be born again of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now, under such a ministry you may not only be misled, but alas! you may be destroyed altogether. He may be one who insists much upon morality of life; he may tell you to be honest, just, and sober; but mayhap he may forget to tell you that there is a deeper work required than mere morality; he may film the surface over, and never send the lancet into the deep ulcer of your heart's corruption. He may give you some palliating dose, some medicine that may still your conscience; he may never say to you, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" he may be one of those that prophesy smooth things, that does not like to disturb you. And oh! remember that your minister may be the instrument in the hands of Satan of blindfolding your eyes and leading you to hell, while all the while you thought you were going to heaven. Ah! and hear me yet: I do not exclude myself from my own censure. It may be possible—I pray God it may not be so—that I myself may have mistaken the reading of the Holy Scripture, that I may have preached to you "another gospel which is not another;" and therefore I demand of you that my own teaching, and the teaching of every other man, whether by pen or lip, should be always brought "to the law and to the testimony," lest we should deceive you and lead you astray. Ah! my hearers, it would be an awful thing, if I should be the means of leading any of you into the gulf. Although in some measure your blood must be upon my head, if I deceive you, yet I beseech you, remember that

I am not further responsible for your souls than my power can carry me. If you are misled by me, after this solemn declaration of mine, you shall be as verily guilty as if I had not misguided you; for I charge you, as ye love your own souls, as ye would make sure work for eternity, put no more trust in me than you would in any other man, only so far as I can prove, by infallible testimony of God's Word, that what I have said is true. Stand ye always to this. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." I heard a story once that I remember to have told before, of some young person going out of the place, and saying, "Well, I don't like Mr. Spurgeon at all; he is so high in doctrine; he said so-and-so." And then the young body quoted a text out of the Bible as a very wicked thing that I had said—something about the potter having power over the clay. So the friend who was with her said, "It was Paul said that, not Mr. Spurgeon." "Ah!" said she, "and I think the Apostle Paul was a great deal too high too." Well, we are very glad to incur censure of that sort, and will not at all object to go with Paul wherever he may go; but we do beseech you never at any time to take our bare saying for a thing, but always to turn to your Bible and see whether it is so. That is a good habit some Christian fathers have; when the boys and girls come home, they say, "Well, now, what was the text?" And then the father wants them to tell over what the minister has said; and even the small boy knows something, and tells something or other that the minister said from the pulpit. Then the fathers turns to his Bible to see whether these things are so. Then he endeavours to explain the hard things; so that they become like those noble Bereans, who were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they searched the Scriptures, whether those things were so.

And now I may just hint at one or two peculiarities in that which I have ever preached to you, which peculiarities I desire you most anxiously to inquire into. Now, take nothing at second hand from me, but try all of it by the written Word. I believe, and I teach that all men by nature are lost by Adam's fall. See whether that be true or not. I hold that men have so gone astray that no man either will or can come to Christ except the Father draw him. If I be wrong, find me out. I believe that God, before all worlds, chose to himself a people, whom no man can number, for whom the Saviour died, to whom the Holy Spirit is given, and who will infallibly

be saved. You may dislike that doctrine; I do not care: see if it is not in the Bible. See if it does not there declare that we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," and so on. I believe that every elect child of God must assuredly be brought by converting grace from the ruins of the fall, and must assuredly be "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation," beyond the hazard of ever totally falling away. If I be wrong there, get your Bibles out, and refute me in your own houses. I hold it to be a fact that every man who is converted will lead a holy life, and yet at the same time will put no dependence on his holy life, but trust only in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. And I hold, that every man that believes, is in duty bound to be immersed. I hold the baptism of infants to be a lie and a heresy; but I claim for that great ordinance of God, Believer's Baptism, that it should have the examination of Scripture. I hold, that to none but believers may immersion be given, and that all believers are in duty bound to be immersed. If I am wrong, well and good; do not believe me; but if I am right, obey the Word with reverence. I will have no error, even upon a point which some men think to be unimportant; for a grain of truth is a diamond, and a grain of error may be of serious consequence to us, to our injury and hurt. I hold then, that none but believers have any right to the Lord's Supper; that it is wrong to give the Lord's Supper indiscriminately to all, and that none but Christians have a right either to the doctrines, the benefits, or the ordinances of God's house. If these things be not so, condemn me as you please; but if the Bible is with me, your condemnation is of no avail.

And now I charge you that are now present to read your Bibles, for one thing. Read your Bibles to know what the Bible says about you; and some of you when you turn the leaves over, will find the Bible says, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." If that startles you, turn over another page, and read this verse—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and when you have read that, turn to another and read, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." I pray you, put not away your Bibles till their dust condemns you; but take them out, bend your knees, seek for the Spirit of divine teaching, and turn ye these pages with diligent search, and see if ye can find there the salvation of your souls, through our Lord Jesus Christ. May the blessing of God rest upon

you in so doing, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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How to Read the Bible

"Have ye not read?...Have ye not read?...If ye had known what this meaneth."—Matthew 12:3-7.

The Scribes and Pharisees were great readers of the law. They studied the sacred books continually, poring over each word and letter. They made notes of very little importance, but still very curious notes—as to which was the middle verse of the entire old Testament, which verse was halfway to the middle, and how many times such a word occurred, and even how many times a letter occurred, and the size of the letter, and its peculiar position. They have left us a mass of wonderful notes upon the mere words of Holy Scripture. They might have done the same thing upon another book for that matter, and the information would have been about as important as the facts which they have so industriously collected concerning the letter of the old Testament. They were, however, intense readers of the law. They picked a quarrel with the Saviour upon a matter touching this law, for they carried it at their fingers' ends, and were ready to use it as a bird of prey does its talons to tear and rend. Our Lord's disciples had plucked some ears of corn, and rubbed them between their hands. According to Pharisaic interpretation, to rub an ear of corn is a kind of threshing, and, as it is very wrong to thresh on the Sabbath day, therefore it must be very wrong to rub out an ear or two of wheat when you are hungry on the Sabbath morning. That was their argument, and they came to the Saviour with it, and with their version of the Sabbath law. The Saviour generally carried the war into the enemy's camp, and he did so on this occasion. He met them on their own ground, and he said to them, "Have ye not read?"—a cutting question to the scribes and Pharisees, though there is nothing apparently sharp about it. It was very a fair and proper question to put to them; but only think of putting it to them. "Have ye not read?" "Read!" they could have said, "Why, we have read the book through very many times. We are always reading it. No passage escapes our critical eyes." Yet our Lord proceeds to put the question a second time—"Have ye not read?" as if they had not read after all, though they were the greatest readers of the law then living. He

insinuates that they have not read at all; and then he gives them, incidentally, the reason why he had asked them whether they had read. He says, "If ye had known what this meaneth," as much as to say, "Ye have not read, because ye have not understood." Your eyes have gone over the words, and you have counted the letters, and you have marked the position of each verse and word, and you have said learned things about all the books, and yet you are not even readers of the sacred volume, for you have not acquired the true art of reading; you do not understand, and therefore you do not truly read it. You are mere skimmers and glancers at the Word: you have not read it, for you do not understand it.

I. That is the subject of our present discourse, or, at least the first point of it, that **IN ORDER TO THE TRUE READING OF THE SCRIPTURES THERE MUST BE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THEM.**

I scarcely need to preface these remarks by saying that we must read the Scriptures. You know how necessary it is that we should be fed upon the truth of Holy Scripture. Need I suggest the question as to whether you do read your Bibles or not? I am afraid that this is a magazine reading age a newspaper reading age a periodical reading age, but not so much a Bible reading age as it ought to be. In the old Puritanic times men used to have a scant supply of other literature, but they found a library enough in the one Book, the Bible. And how they did read the Bible! How little of Scripture there is in modern sermons compared with the sermons of those masters of theology, the Puritanic divines! Almost every sentence of theirs seems to cast side lights upon a text of Scripture; not only the one they are preaching about, but many others as well are set in a new light as the discourse proceeds. They introduce blended lights from other passages which are parallel or semi-parallel thereunto, and thus they educate their readers to compare spiritual things with spiritual. I would to God that we ministers kept more closely to the grand old Book. We should be instructive preachers if we did so, even if we were ignorant of "modern thought," and were not "abreast of the times." I warrant you we should be leagues ahead of our times if we kept closely to the Word of God. As for you, my brothers and sisters, who have not to preach, the best food for you is the Word of God itself. Sermons and books are well

enough, but streams that run for a long distance above ground gradually gather for themselves somewhat of the soil through which they flow, and they lose the cool freshness with which they started from the spring head. Truth is sweetest where it breaks from the smitten Rock, for at its first gush it has lost none of its heavenliness and vitality. It is always best to drink at the well and not from the tank. You shall find that reading the Word of God for yourselves, reading it rather than notes upon it, is the surest way of growing in grace. Drink of the unadulterated milk of the Word of God, and not of the skim milk, or the milk and water of man's word.

But, now, beloved, our point is that much apparent Bible reading is not Bible reading at all. The verses pass under the eye, and the sentences glide over the mind, but there is no true reading. An old preacher used to say, the Word has mighty free course among many nowadays, for it goes in at one of their ears and out at the other; so it seems to be with some readers—they can read a very great deal, because they do not read anything. The eye glances but the mind never rests. The soul does not light upon the truth and stay there. It flits over the landscape as a bird might do, but it builds no nest there, and finds no rest for the sole of its foot. Such reading is not reading. Understanding the metering is the essence of true reading. Reading has a kernel to it, and the mere shed is little worth. In prayer there is such a thing as praying in prayer—a praying that is in the bowels of the prayer. So in praise there is a praising in song, an inward fire of intense devotion which is the life of the hallelujah. It is so in fasting: there is a fasting which is not fasting, and there is an inward fasting, a fasting of the soul, which is the soul of fasting. It is even so with the reading of the Scriptures. There is an interior reading, a kernel reading—a true and living reading of the Word. This is the soul of reading; and, if it be not there, the reading is a mechanical exercise, and profits nothing. Now, beloved, unless we understand what we read we have not read it; the heart of the reading is absent. We commonly condemn the Romanists for keeping the daily service in the Latin tongue; yet it might as well be in the Latin language as in any other tongue if it be not understood by the people. Some comfort themselves with the idea that they have done a good action when they have read a chapter, into the meaning of which they have not entered at

all; but does not nature herself reject this as a mere superstition? If you had turned the book upside down, and spent the same times in looking at the characters in that direction, you would have gained as much good from it as you will in reading it in the regular way without understanding it. If you had a New Testament in Greek it would be very Greek to some of you, but it would do you as much good to look at that as it does to look at the English New Testament unless you read with understanding heart. It is not the letter which saves the soul; the letter killeth in many senses, and never can it give life. If you harp on the letter alone you may be tempted to use it as a weapon against the truth, as the Pharisees did of old, and your knowledge of the letter may breed pride in you to your destruction. It is the spirit, the real inner meaning, that is sucked into the soul, by which we are blessed and sanctified. We become saturated with the Word of God, like Gideon's fleece, which was wet with the dew of heaven; and this can only come to pass by our receiving it into our minds and hearts, accepting it as God's truth, and so far understanding it as to delight in it. We must understand it, then, or else we have not read it aright.

Certainly, the benefit of reading must come to the soul by the way of the understanding. When the high priest went into the holy place he always lit the golden candlestick before he kindled the incense upon the brazen altar, as if to show that the mind must have illumination before the affections can properly rise towards their divine object. There must be knowledge of God before there can be love to God: there must be a knowledge of divine things, as they are revealed, before there can be an enjoyment of them. We must try to make out, as far as our finite mind can grasp it, what God means by this and what he means by that; otherwise we may kiss the book and have no love to its contents, we may reverence the letter and yet really have no devotion towards the Lord who speaks to us in these words. Beloved, you will never get comfort to your soul out of what you do not understand, nor find guidance for your life out of what you do not comprehend; nor can any practical bearing upon your character come out of that which is not understood by you.

Now, if we are thus to understand what we read or otherwise we read in vain, this shows us that when we come to the study of Holy Scripture we

should try to have our mind well awake to it. We are not always fit, it seems to me, to read the Bible. At times it were well for us to stop before we open the volume. "Put off thy shoe from thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." You have just come in from careful thought and anxiety about your worldly business, and you cannot immediately take that book and enter into its heavenly mysteries. As you ask a blessing over your meat before you fall to, so it would be a good rule for you to ask a blessing on the word before you partake of its heavenly food. Pray the Lord to strengthen your eyes before you dare to look into the eternal light of Scripture. As the priests washed their feet at the laver before they went to their holy work, so it were well to wash the soul's eyes with which you look upon God's word, to wash even the fingers, if I may so speak—the mental fingers with which you will turn from page to page—that with a holy book you may deal after a holy fashion. Say to your soul—"Come, soul, wake up: thou art not now about to read the newspaper; thou art not now perusing the pages of a human poet to be dazzled by his flashing poetry; thou art coming very near to God, who sits in the Word like a crowned monarch in his halls. Wake up, my glory; wake up, all that is within me. Though just now I may not be praising and glorifying God, I am about to consider that which should lead me so to do, and therefore it is an act of devotion. So be on the stir, my soul: be on the stir, and bow not sleepily before the awful throne of the Eternal." Scripture reading is our spiritual meal time. Sound the gong and call in every faculty to the Lord's own table to feast upon the precious meat which is now to be partaken of; or, rather, ring the church-bell as for worship, for the studying of the Holy Scripture ought to be as solemn a deed as when we lift the psalm upon the Sabbath day in the courts of the Lord's house.

If these things be so, you will see at once, dear friends, that, if you are to understand what you read, you will need to meditate upon it. Some passages of Scripture lie clear before us—blessed shallows in which the lambs may wade; but there are deeps in which our mind might rather drown herself than swim with pleasure, if she came there without caution. There are texts of Scripture which are made and constructed on purpose to make us think. By this means, among others, our heavenly Father would educate us for heaven—by making us think our way into divine mysteries. Hence he puts the word in a somewhat involved form to

compel us to meditate upon it before we reach the sweetness of it. He might, you know, have explained it to us so that we might catch the thought in a minute, but he does not please to do so in every case. Many of the veils which are cast over Scripture are not meant to hide the meaning from the diligent but to compel the mind to be active, for oftentimes the diligence of the heart in seeking to know the divine mind does the heart more good than the knowledge itself. Meditation and careful thought exercise us and strengthen the soul for the reception of the yet more lofty truths. I have heard that the mothers in the Balearic Isles, in the old times, who wanted to bring their boys up to be good slingers, would put their dinners up above them where they could not get at them until they threw a stone and fetched them down: our Lord wishes us to be good slingers, and he puts up some precious truth in a lofty place where we cannot get it down except by slinging at it; and, at last, we hit the mark and find food for our souls. Then have we the double benefit of learning the art of meditation and partaking of the sweet truth which it has brought within our reach. We must meditate, brothers. These grapes will yield no wine till we tread upon them. These olives must be put under the wheel, and pressed again and again, that the oil may flow therefrom. In a dish of nuts, you may know which nut has been eaten, because there is a little hole which the insect has punctured through the shell—just a little hole, and then inside there is the living thing eating up the kernel. Well, it is a grand thing to bore through the shell of the letter, and then to live inside feeding upon the kernel. I would wish to be such a little worm as that, living within and upon the word of God, having bored my way through the shell, and having reached the innermost mystery of the blessed gospel. The word of God is always most precious to the man who most lives upon it. As I sat last year under a wide-spreading beech, I was pleased to mark with prying curiosity the singular habits of that most wonderful of trees, which seems to have an intelligence about it which other trees have not. I wondered and admired the beech, but I thought to myself, I do not think half as much of this beech tree as yonder squirrel does. I see him leap from bough to bough, and I feel sure that he dearly values the old beech tree, because he has his home somewhere inside it in a hollow place, these branches are his shelter, and those beech-nuts are his food. He lives upon the tree. It is his world, his playground, his granary, his home; indeed, it is everything to him, and it is not so to me,

for I find my rest and food elsewhere. With God's word it is well for us to be like squirrels, living in it and living on it. Let us exercise our minds by leaping from bough to bough of it, find our rest and food in it, and make it our all in all. We shall be the people that get the profit out of it if we make it to be our food, our medicine, our treasury, our armour, our rest, our delight. May the Holy Ghost lead us to do this and make the Word thus precious to our souls.

Beloved, I would next remind you that for this end we shall be compelled to pray. It is a grand thing to be driven to think, it is a grander thing to be driven to pray through having been made to think. Am I not addressing some of you who do not read the word of God, and am I not speaking to many more who do read it, but do not read it with the strong resolve that they will understand it? I know it must be so. Do you wish to begin to be true readers? Will you henceforth labour to understand? Then you must get to your knees. You must cry to God for direction. Who understands a book best? The author of it. If I want to ascertain the real meaning of a rather twisted sentence, and the author lives near me, and I can call upon him, I shall ring at his door and say, "Would you kindly tell me what you mean by that sentence? I have no doubt whatever that it is very dear, but I am such a simpleton, that I cannot make it out. I have not the knowledge and grasp of the subject which you possess, and therefore your allusions and descriptions are beyond my range of knowledge. It is quite within your range, and commonplace to you, but it is very difficult to me. Would you kindly explain your meaning to me?" A good man would be glad to be thus treated, and would think it no trouble to unravel his meaning to a candid enquirer. Thus I should be sure to get the correct meaning, for I should be going to the fountain head when I consulted the author himself. So, beloved, the Holy Spirit is with us, and when we take his book and begin to read, and want to know what it means, we must ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning. He will not work a miracle, but he will elevate our minds, and he will suggest to us thoughts which will lead us on by their natural relation, the one to the other, till at last we come to the pith and marrow of his divine instruction. Seek then very earnestly the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for if the very soul of reading be the understanding of what we read, then we must in prayer call upon the Holy Ghost to unlock the secret mysteries of the inspired word.

If we thus ask the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit, it will follow, dear friends, that we shall be ready to use all means and helps towards the understanding of the Scriptures. When Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch whether he understood the prophecy of Isaiah he replied, "How can I, unless some man should guide me?" Then Philip went up and opened to him the word of the Lord. Some, under the pretense of being taught of the Spirit of God refuse to be instructed by books or by living men. This is no honouring of the Spirit of God; it is a disrespect to him, for if he gives to some of his servants more light than to others—and it is clear he does—then they are bound to give that light to others, and to use it for the good of the church. But if the other part of the church refuse to receive that light, to what end did the Spirit of God give it? This would imply that there is a mistake somewhere in the economy of gifts and graces, which is managed by the Holy Spirit. It cannot be so. The Lord Jesus Christ pleases to give more knowledge of his word and more insight into it to some of his servants than to others, and it is ours joyfully to accept the knowledge which he gives in such ways as he chooses to give it. It would be most wicked of us to say, "We will not have the heavenly treasure which exists in earthen vessels. If God will give us the heavenly treasure out of his own hand, but not through the earthen vessel, we will have it; but we think we are too wise, too heavenly minded, too spiritual altogether to care for jewels when they are placed in earthen pots. We will not hear anybody, and we will not read anything except the book itself, neither will we accept any light, except that which comes in through a crack in our own roof. We will not see by another man's candle, we would sooner remain in the dark." Brethren, do not let us fall into such folly. Let the light come from God, and though a child shall bring it, we will joyfully accept it. If any one of his servants, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, shall have received light from him, behold, "all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," and therefore accept of the light which God has kindled, and ask for grace that you may turn that light upon the word so that when you read it you may understand it.

I do not wish to say much more about this, but I should like to push it home upon some of you. You have Bibles at home, I know; you would not like to be without Bibles, you would think you were heathens if you had no Bibles. You have them very neatly bound, and they are very fine

looking volumes: not much thumbed, not much worn, and not likely to be so, for they only come out on Sundays for an airing, and they lie in lavender with the clean pocket handkerchiefs all the rest of the week. You do not read the word, you do not search it, and how can you expect to get the divine blessing? If the heavenly gold is not worth digging for you are not likely to discover it. often and often have I told you that the searching of the Scriptures is not the way of salvation. The Lord hath said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But, still, the reading of the word often leads, like the hearing of it, to faith, and faith bringeth salvation; for faith cometh by hearing, and reading is a sort of hearing. While you are seeking to know what the gospel is, it may please God to bless your souls. But what poor reading some of you give to your Bibles. I do not want to say anything which is too severe because it is not strictly true—let your own consciences speak, but still, I make bold to enquire,—Do not many of you read the Bible in a very hurried way—just a little bit, and off you go? Do you not soon forget what you have read, and lose what little effect it seemed to have? How few of you are resolved to get at its soul, its juice, its life, its essence, and to drink in its meaning. Well, if you do not do that, I tell you again your reading is miserable reading, dead reading, unprofitable reading; it is not reading at all, the name would be misapplied. May the blessed Spirit give you repentance touching this thing.

II. But now, secondly, and very briefly, let us notice that IN READING WE OUGHT TO SEEK OUT THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE WORD. I think that is in my text, because our Lord says, "Have ye not read?" Then, again, "Have ye not read?" and then he says, "If ye had known what this meaneth"—and the meaning is something very spiritual. The text he quoted was, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice"—a text out of the prophet Hosea. Now, the scribes and Pharisees were all for the letter—the sacrifice, the killing of the bullock, and so on. They overlooked the spiritual meaning of the passage, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice"—namely, that God prefers that we should care for our fellow-creatures rather than that we should observe any ceremonial of his law, so as to cause hunger or thirst and thereby death, to any of the creatures that his hands have made. They ought to have passed beyond the outward into the spiritual, and all our readings ought to do the same.

Notice, that this should be the case when we read the historical passages. "Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" This was a piece of history, and they ought so to have read it as to have found spiritual instruction in it. I have heard very stupid people say, "Well, I do not care to read the historical parts of Scripture." Beloved friends, you do not know what you are talking about when you say so. I say to you now by experience that I have sometimes found even a greater depth of spirituality in the histories than I have in the Psalms. You will say, "How is that?" I assert that when you reach the inner and spiritual meaning of a history you are often surprised at the wondrous clearness—the realistic force—with which the teaching comes home to your soul. Some of the most marvelous mysteries of revelation are better understood by being set before our eyes in the histories than they are by the verbal declaration of them. When we have the statement to explain the illustration, the illustration expands and vivifies the statement. For instance, when our Lord himself would explain to us what faith was, he sent us to the history of the brazen serpent; and who that has ever read the story of the brazen serpent has not felt that he has had a better idea of faith through the picture of the dying snake-bitten persons looking to the serpent of brass and living, than from any description which even Paul has given us, wondrously as he defines and describes. Never, I pray you, depreciate the historical portions of God's word, but when you cannot get good out of them, say, "That is my foolish head and my slow heart. o Lord, be pleased to clear by brain and cleanse my soul." When he answers that prayer you will feel that every portion of God's word is given by inspiration, and is and must be profitable to you. Cry, "open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Just the same thing is true with regard to all the ceremonial precepts, because the Saviour goes on to say, "Have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?" There is not a single precept in the old law but has an inner sense and meaning; therefore do not turn away from Leviticus, or say, "I cannot read these chapters in the books of Exodus and Numbers.

They are all about the tribes and their standards, the stations in the wilderness and the halts of the march, the tabernacle and furniture, or about golden knops and bowls, and boards, and sockets, and precious stones, and blue and scarlet and fine linen." No, but look for the inner meaning. Make thorough search; for as in a king's treasure that which is the most closely locked up and the hardest to come at is the choicest jewel of the treasure, so is it with the Holy Scriptures. Did you ever go to the British Museum Library? There are many books of reference there which the reader is allowed to take down when he pleases. There are other books for which he must write a ticket, and he cannot get them without the ticket; but they have certain choice books which you will not see without a special order, and then there is an unlocking of doors, and an opening of cases, and there is a watcher with you while you make your inspection. You are scarcely allowed to put your eye on the manuscript, for fear you should blot a letter out by glancing at it; it is such a precious treasure; there is not another copy of it in all the world, and so you cannot get at it easily. Just so, there are choice and precious doctrines of God's word which are locked up in such cases as Leviticus or Solomon's Song, and you cannot get at them without a deal of unlocking of doors and the Holy Spirit himself must be with you, or else you will never come at the priceless treasure. The higher truths are as choicely hidden away as the precious regalia of princes; therefore search as well as read. Do not be satisfied with a ceremonial precept till you reach its spiritual meaning, for that is true reading. You have not read till you understand the spirit of the matter.

It is just the same with the doctrinal statements of God's word. I have sorrowfully observed some persons who are very orthodox, and who can repeat their creed very glibly, and yet the principal use that they make of their orthodoxy is to sit and watch the preacher with the view of framing a charge against him. He has uttered a single sentence which is judged to be half a hair's breadth below the standard! "That man is not sound. He said some good things, but he is rotten at the core, I am certain. He used an expression which was not eighteen ounces to the pound." Sixteen ounces to the pound are not enough for these dear brethren of whom I speak, they must have something more and over and above the shekel of the sanctuary. Their knowledge is used as a microscope to magnify

trifling differences. I hesitate not to say that I have come across persons who

"Could a hair divide
Betwixt the west and north-west side,"

in matters of divinity, but who know nothing about the things of God in their real meaning. They have never drank them into their souls, but only sucked them up into their mouths to spit them out on others. The doctrine of election is one thing, but to know that God has predestinated you, and to have the fruit of it in the good works to which you are ordained, is quite another thing. To talk about the love of Christ, to talk about the heaven that is provided for his people, and such things—all this is very well; but this may be done without any personal acquaintance with them. Therefore, beloved, never be satisfied with a sound creed, but desire to have it graven on the tablets of your heart. The doctrines of grace are good, but the grace of the doctrines is better still. See that you have it, and be not content with the idea that you are instructed until you so understand the doctrine that you have felt its spiritual power.

This makes us feel that, in order to come to this, we shall need to feel Jesus present with us whenever we read the word. Mark that fifth verse, which I would now bring before you as part of my text which I have hitherto left out. "Have ye not read in the law, how on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple." Ay, they thought much about the letter of the Word, but they did not know that he was there who is the Sabbath's Master—man's Lord and the Sabbath's Lord, and Lord of everything. oh, when you have got hold of a creed, or of an ordinance, or anything that is outward in the letter, pray the Lord to make you feel that there is something greater than the printed book, and something better than the mere shell of the creed. There is one person greater than they all, and to him we should cry that he may be ever with us. o living Christ, make this a living word to me. Thy word is life, but not without the Holy Spirit. I may know this book of thine from beginning to end, and repeat it all from Genesis to Revelation, and yet it may be a dead book, and I may be a dead soul. But, Lord, be present here; then will I look up from the book to the Lord; from the precept to him who fulfilled

it; from the law to him who honoured it; from the threatening to him who has borne it for me, and from the promise to him in whom it is "Yea and amen." Ah, then we shall read the book so differently. He is here with me in this chamber of mine: I must not trifle. He leans over me, he puts his finger along the lines, I can see his pierced hand: I will read it as in his presence. I will read it, knowing that he is the substance of it,—that he is the proof of this book as well as the writer of it; the sum of this Scripture as well as the author of it. That is the way for true students to become wise! You will get at the soul of Scripture when you can keep Jesus with you while you are reading. Did you never hear a sermon as to which you felt that if Jesus had come into that pulpit while the man was making his oration, he would have said, "Go down, go down; what business have you here? I sent you to preach about me, and you preach about a dozen other things. Go home and learn of me, and then come and talk." That sermon which does not lead to Christ, or of which Jesus Christ is not the top and the bottom, is a sort of sermon that will make the devils in hell to laugh, but might make the angel of God to weep, if they were capable of such emotion. You remember the story I told you of the Welshman who heard a young man preach a very fine sermon—a grand sermon, a highfaluting, spread-eagle sermon; and when he had done, he asked the Welshman what he thought of it. The man replied that he did not think anything of it. "And why not?" "Because there was no Jesus Christ in it." "Well," said he, "but my text did not seem to run that way." "Never mind," said the Welshman, "your sermon ought to run that way." "I do not see that, however," said the young man. "No," said the other, "you do not see how to preach yet. This is the way to preach. From every little village in England—it does not matter where it is—there is sure to be a road to London. Though there may not be a road to certain other places, there is certain to be a road to London. Now, from every text in the Bible there is a road to Jesus Christ, and the way to preach is just to say, 'How can I get from this text to Jesus Christ?' and then go preaching all the way along it." "Well, but," said the young man, "suppose I find a text that has not got a road to Jesus Christ." "I have preached for forty years," said the old man, "and I have never found such a Scripture, but if I ever do find one I will go over hedge and ditch but what I will get to him, for I will never finish without bringing in my Master." Perhaps you will think that I have gone a little over hedge and ditch to-night, but I am persuaded that I have

not for the sixth verse comes in here, and brings our Lord in most sweetly, setting him in the very forefront of you Bible readers, so that you must not think of reading without feeling that he is there who is Lord and Master of everything that you are reading, and who shall make these things precious to you if you realize him in them. If you do not find Jesus in the Scriptures they will be of small service to you, for what did our Lord himself say? "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, but ye will not come unto me that ye might have life"; and therefore your searching comes to nothing; you find no life, and remain dead in your sins. May it not be so with us?

III. Lastly, SUCH A READING OF SCRIPTURE, as implies the understanding of and the entrance into its spiritual meaning, and the discovery of the divine Person who is the spiritual meaning, IS PROFITABLE, for here our Lord says, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. It will save us from making a great many mistakes if we get to understand the word of God, and among other good things we shall not condemn the guiltless.

I have no time to enlarge upon these benefits, but I will just say, putting all together, that the diligent reading of the word of God with the strong resolve to get at its meaning often begets spiritual life. We are begotten by the word of God: it is the instrumental means of regeneration. Therefore love your Bibles. Keep close to your Bibles. You seeking sinners, you who are seeking the Lord, your first business is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; but while you are yet in darkness and in gloom, oh love your Bibles and search them! Take them to bed with you, and when you wake up in the morning, if it is too early to go downstairs and disturb the house, get half-an-hour of reading upstairs. Say, "Lord, guide me to that text which shall bless me. Help me to understand how I, a poor sinner, can be reconciled to thee." I recollect how, when I was seeking the Lord, I went to my Bible and to Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," and to Alleine's "Alarm," and Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," for I said in myself, "I am afraid that I shall be lost but I will know the reason why. I am afraid I never shall find Christ but it shall not be for want of looking for him." That fear used to haunt me, but I said, "I will find him if he is to

be found. I will read. I will think." There was never a soul that did sincerely seek for Jesus in the word but by-and-by he stumbled on the precious truth that Christ was near at hand and did not want any looking for; that he was really there, only they, poor blind creatures, were in such a maze that they could not just then see him. Oh, cling you to Scripture. Scripture is not Christ, but it is the silken clue which will lead you to him. Follow its leadings faithfully.

When you have received regeneration and a new life, keep on reading, because it will comfort you. You will see more of what the Lord has done for you. You will learn that you are redeemed, adopted, saved, sanctified. Half the errors in the world spring from people not reading their Bibles. Would anybody think that the Lord would leave any one of his dear children to perish, if he read such a text as this,—"I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand"? When I read that, I am sure of the final perseverance of the saints. Read, then, the word and it will be much for your comfort.

It will be for your nourishment, too. It is your food as well as your life. Search it and you will grow strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

It will be for your guidance also. I am sure those go rightest who keep closest to the book. Oftentimes when you do not know what to do, you will see a text leaping up out of the book, and saying, "Follow me." I have seen a promise sometimes blaze out before my eyes, just as when an illuminated device flames forth upon a public building. One touch of flame and a sentence or a design flashes out in gas. I have seen a text of Scripture flame forth in that way to my soul; I have known that it was God's word to me, and I have gone on my way rejoicing.

And, oh, you will get a thousand helps out of that wondrous book if you do but read it; for, understanding the words more, you will prize it more, and, as you get older, the book will grow with your growth, and turn out to be a greybeard's manual of devotion just as it was aforetime a child's sweet story book. Yes, it will always be a new book—just as new a Bible as it was printed yesterday, and nobody had ever seen a word of it till now; and yet it will be a deal more precious for all the memories which cluster

round it. As we turn over its pages how sweetly do we recollect passages in our history which will never be forgotten to all eternity, but will stand for ever intertwined with gracious promises. Beloved, the Lord teach us to read his book of life which he has opened before us here below, so that we may read our titles clear in that other book of love which we have not seen as yet, but which will be opened at the last great day. The Lord be with you, and bless you.

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The Talking Book

"When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee"—Proverbs 6:22.

It is a very happy circumstance when the commandment of our father and the law of our mother are also the commandment of God and the law of the Lord. Happy are they who have a double force to draw them to the right—the bonds of nature, and the cords of grace. They sin with a vengeance who sin both against a father on earth and the great Father in heaven, and they exhibit a virulence and a violence of sin who do despite to the tender obligations of childhood, as well as to the demands of conscience and God. Solomon, in the passage before us, evidently speaks of those who find in the parents' law and in God's law the same thing, and he admonishes such to bind the law of God about their heart, and to tie it about their neck; by which he intends inward affection and open avowal. The law of God should be so dear to us, that it should be bound about the most vital organ of our being, braided about our heart. That which a man carries in his hand he may forget and lose, that which he wears upon his person may be torn from him, but that which is bound about his heart will remain there as long as life remains. We are to love the Word of God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; with the full force of our nature we are to embrace it; all our warmest affections are to be bound up with it. When the wise man tells us, also, to wear it about our

necks, he means that we are never to be ashamed of it. No blush is to mantle our cheek when we are called Christians; we are never to speak with bated breath in any company concerning the things of God. Manfully must we take up the cross of Christ; cheerfully must we avow ourselves to belong to those who have respect unto the divine testimonies. Let us count true religion to be our highest ornament; and, as magistrates put upon them their gold chains, and think themselves adorned thereby, so let us tie about our neck the commands and the gospel of the Lord our God.

In order that we may be persuaded so to do, Solomon gives us three telling reasons. He says that God's law, by which I understand the whole run of Scripture, and, especially the gospel of Jesus Christ, will be a guide to us:—"When thou goest, it shall lead thee." It will be a guardian to us: "When thou sleepest"—when thou art defenceless and off thy guard—"it shall keep thee." And it shall also be a dear companion to us: "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." Any one of these three arguments might surely suffice to make us seek a nearer acquaintance with the sacred word. We all need a guide, for "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Left to our own way, we soon excel in folly. There are dilemmas in all lives where a guide is more precious than a wedge of gold. The Word of God, as an infallible director for human life, should be sought unto by us, and it will lead us in the highway of safety. Equally powerful is the second reason: the Word of God will become the guardian of our days; whoso hearkeneth unto it shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil. Unguarded moments there may be; times, inevitable to our imperfection, there will be, when, unless some other power protect us, we shall fall into the hands of the foe. Blessed is he who has God's law so written on his heart, and wears it about his neck as armour of proof, that at all times he is invulnerable, kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

But I prefer, this morning, to keep to the third reason for loving God's word. It is this, that is becomes our sweet companion: "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." The inspired law of God, which David in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm calls God's testimonies, precepts, statutes, and the like, is the friend of the righteous. Its essence and marrow is the gospel of Jesus, the law-fulfiller, and this also is the special

solace of believers. Of the whole sacred volume it may be said, "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." I gather four or five thoughts from this expression, and upon these we will speak.

I. We perceive here that THE WORD IS LIVING. How else could it be said: "It shall talk with thee"? A dead book cannot talk, nor can a dumb book speak. It is clearly a living book, then, and a speaking book: "The word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." How many of us have found this to be most certainly true! A large proportion of human books are long ago dead, and even shrivelled like Egyptian mummies; the mere course of years has rendered them worthless, their teaching is disproved, and they have no life for us. Entomb them in your public libraries if you will, but, henceforth, they will stir no man's pulse and warm no man's heart. But this thrice blessed book of God, though it has been extant among us these many hundreds of years, is immortal in its life, unwithering in its strength: the dew of its youth is still upon it; its speech still drops as the rain fresh from heaven; its truths are overflowing fountains of ever fresh consolation. Never book spake like this book; its voice, like the voice of God, is powerful and full of majesty.

Whence comes it that the word of God is living? Is it not, first, because it is pure truth? Error is death, truth is life. No matter how well established an error may be by philosophy, or by force of arms, or the current of human thought, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all untruth shall be as stubble before the fire. The tooth of time devours all lies. Falsehoods are soon cut down, and they wither as the green herb. Truth never dies, it dates its origin from the immortals. Kindled at the source of light, its fame cannot be quenched; if by persecution it be for a time covered, it shall blaze forth anew to take reprisals upon its adversaries. Many a once venerated system of error now rots in the dead past among the tombs of the forgotten; but the truth as it is in Jesus knows no sepulchre, and fears no funeral; it lives on, and must live while the Eternal fills His throne.

The word of God is living, because it is the utterance of an immutable, self-existing God. God doth not speak to-day what He meant not yesterday, neither will He to-morrow blot out what He records to-day. When I read a promise spoken three thousand years ago, it is as fresh as

though it fell from the eternal lips to-day. There are, indeed, no dates to the Divine promises; they are not of private interpretation, nor to be monopolised by any generation. I say again, as fresh to-day the eternal word drops from the Almighty's lips as when He uttered it to Moses, or to Elias, or spake it by the tongue of Esaias or Jeremiah. The word is always sure, steadfast, and full of power. It is never out of date. Scripture bubbles up evermore with good matters, it is an eternal Geyser, a spiritual Niagara of grace, for ever falling, flashing, and flowing on; it is never stagnant, never brackish or defiled, but always clear, crystal, fresh, and refreshing; so, therefore, ever living.

The word lives, again, because it enshrines the living heart of Christ. The heart of Christ is the most living of all existences. It was once pierced with a spear, but it lives on, and yearns towards sinners, and is as tender and compassionate as in the days of the Redeemer's flesh. Jesus, the Sinner's Friend, walks in the avenues of Scripture as once He traversed the plains and hills of Palestine: you can see Him still, if you have opened eyes, in the ancient prophecies; you can behold Him more clearly in the devout evangelists; He opens and lays bare His inmost soul to you in the epistles, and makes you hear the footsteps of His approaching advent in the symbols of the Apocalypse. The living Christ is in the book; you behold His face almost in every page; and, consequently, it is a book that can talk. The Christ of the mount of benedictions speaks in it still; the God who said, "Let there be light," gives forth from its pages the same divine fiat; while the incorruptible truth, which saturated every line and syllable of it when first it was penned, abides therein in full force, and preserves it from the finger of decay. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

Over and above all this, the Holy Spirit has a peculiar connection with the word of God. I know that He works in the ministries of all His servants whom He hath ordained to preach; but for the most part, I have remarked that the work of the Spirit of God in men's hearts is rather in connection with the texts we quote than with our explanations of them. "Depend upon it," says a deeply spiritual writer, "it is God's word, not man's comment on it, which saves souls." God does save souls by our comment, by still it is true that the majority of conversions have been

wrought by the agency of a text of Scripture. It is the word of God that is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. There must be life in it, for by it men are born again. As for believers, the Holy Spirit often sets the word on a blaze while they are studying it. The letters were at one time before us as mere letters, but the Holy Ghost suddenly came upon them, and they spake with tongues. The chapter is lowly as the bush at Horeb, but the Spirit descends upon it, and lo! it glows with celestial splendour, God appearing in the words, so that we feel like Moses when he put off his shoes from his feet, because the place whereon he stood was holy ground. It is true, the mass of readers understand not this, and look upon the Bible as a common book; but if they understand it not, at least let them allow the truthfulness of our assertion, when we declare that hundreds of times we have as surely felt the presence of God in the page of Scripture as ever Elijah did when he heard the Lord speaking in a still small voice. The Bible has often appeared to us as a temple God, and the posts of its doors have moved at the voice of Him that cried, whose train also has filled the temple. We have been constrained adoringly to cry, with the seraphim. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts." God the Holy Spirit vivifies the letter with His presence, and then it is to us a living word indeed.

And now, dear brethren, if these things be so—and our experience certifies them—let us take care how we trifle with a book which is so instinct with life. Might not many of you remember your faults this day were we to ask you whether you are habitual students of holy writ? Readers of it I believe you are; but are you searchers; for the promise is not to those who merely read, but to those who delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate therein both day and night. Are you sitting at the feet of Jesus, with His word as your school-book? If not, remember, though you may be saved, you lacked very much of the blessing which otherwise you might enjoy. Have you been backsliding? Refresh your soul by meditating in the divine statutes, and you will say, with David, "Thy word hath quickened me." Are you faint and weary? Go and talk with this living book: it will give you back your energy, and you shall mount again as with the wings of eagles. But are you unconverted altogether? Then I cannot direct you to Bible-reading as being the way of salvation, nor speak of it as though it had any merit in it; but I would, nevertheless, urge upon you

unconverted people great reverence for Scripture, an intimate acquaintance with its contents, and a frequent perusal of its pages, for it has occurred ten thousand times over that when men have been studying the word of life, the word has brought life to them. "The entrance of thy word giveth light." Like Elijah and the dead child, the word has stretched itself upon them, and their dead souls have been made to live. One of the likeliest places in which to find Christ is in the garden of the Scriptures, for there He delights to walk. As of old, the blind men were wont to sit by the wayside begging, so that, if Jesus passed by, they might cry to Him, so would I have you sit down by the wayside of the Holy Scriptures. Hear the promises, listen to their gracious words; they are the footsteps of the Saviour; and, as you hear them, may you be led to cry, "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!" Attend most those ministries which preach God's Word most. Do not select those that are fullest of fine speaking, and that dazzle you with expressions which are ornamental rather than edifying; but get to a ministry that is full of God's own Word, and, above all, learn God's Word itself. Read it with a desire to know its meaning, and I am persuaded that, thereby, many of you who are now far from God will be brought near to him, and led to a saving faith in Jesus, for "the Word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

II. If the text says, "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee," then it is clear **THE WORD IS PERSONAL**. "It shall talk with thee." It is not written, "It shall speak to the air, and thou shalt hear its voice," but, "It shall talk with thee." You know exactly what the expression means. I am not exactly talking with any one of you this morning; there are too many of you, and I am but one; but, when you are on the road home, each one will talk with his fellow: then it is truly talk when man speaks to man. Now, the word of God has the condescending habit of talking to men, speaking personally to them; and, herein, I desire to commend the word of God to your love. Oh! that you might esteem it very precious for this reason!

"It shall talk with thee," that is to say, God's word talks about men, and about modern men; it speaks of ourselves, and of these latter days, as precisely as if it had only appeared this last week. Some go to the word of

God with the idea that they shall find historical information about the ancient ages, and so they will, but that is not the object of the Word. Others look for facts upon geology, and great attempts have been made either to bring geology round to Scripture, or Scripture to geology. We may always rest assured that truth never contradicts itself; but, as nobody knows anything yet about geology—for its theory is a dream and an imagination altogether—we will wait till the philosophers settle their own private matters, being confident that when they find out the truth, it will be quite consistent with what God has revealed. At any rate, we may leave that. The main teachings of Holy Scripture are about men, about the Paradise of unfallen manhood, the fall, the degeneracy of the race, and the means of its redemption. The book speaks of victims and sacrifices, priests and washings, and so points us to the divine plan by which man can be elevated from the fall and be reconciled to God. Read Scripture through, and you shall find that its great subject is that which concerns the race as to their most important interests. It is a book that talks, talks personally, for it deals with things not in the moon, nor in the planet Jupiter, nor in the distant ages long gone by, nor does it say much of the periods yet to come, but it deals with us, with the business of to-day; how sin may be to-day forgiven, and our souls brought at once into union with Christ.

Moreover, this book is so personal, that it speaks to men in all states and conditions before God. How it talks to sinners—talks, I say, for its puts it thus: "Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as snow." It has many very tender expostulations for sinners. It stoops to their condition and position. If they will not stoop to God, it makes, as it were, eternal mercy stoop to them. It talks of feasts of fat things, of fat things full of marrow; and the book, as it talks, reasons with men's hunger, and bids them eat and be satisfied. In all conditions into which the sinner can be cast, there is a word that precisely meets his condition.

And, certainly, when we become the children of God the book talks with us wondrously. In the family of heaven it is the child's own book. We no sooner know our Father than this dear book comes at once as a love letter from the far-off country, signed with our own Father's hand, and

perfumed with our Father's love. If we grow in grace, or if we backslide, in either case Scripture still talks with us. Whatever our position before the eternal God, the book seems to be written on purpose to meet that position. It talks to you as you are, not only as you should be, or as others have been, but with you, with you personally, about your present condition.

Have you never noticed how personal the book is as to all your states of mind, in reference to sadness or to joy? There was a time with some of us when we were very gloomy and sore depressed, and then the book of Job mourned to the same dolorous tune. I have turned over the Lamentations of Jeremiah wrote. It mourns unto us when we lament. On the other hand, when the soul gets up to the exceeding high mountains, to the top of Amana and Lebanon, when we behold visions of glory, and see our Beloved face to face, lo! The word is at our side, and in the delightful language of the Psalms, or in the yet sweeter expressions of the Song of Solomon, it tells us all that is in our heart, and talks to us as a living thing that has been in the deeps, and has been on the heights, that has known the overwhelms of affliction, and has rejoiced in the triumphs of delight. The word of God is to me my own book: I have no doubt, brother, it is the same to you. There could not be a Bible that suited me better: it seems written on purpose for me. Dear sister, have not you often felt as you have put your finger on a promise, "Ah, that is my promise; if there be no other soul whose tearful eyes can bedew that page and say, 'It is mine,' yet I, a poor afflicted one, can do so!" Oh, yes; the book is very personal, for it goes into all the details of our case, let our state be what it may.

And, how very faithful it always is. You never find the word of God keeping back that which is profitable to you. Like Nathan it cries, "Thou art the man." It never allows our sins to go unrebuked, nor our backslidings to escape notice till they grow into overt sin. It gives us timely notice; it cries to us as soon as we begin to go aside, "Awake thou that sleepest," "Watch and pray," "Keep thine heart with all diligence," and a thousand other words of warning does it address personally to each one of us.

Now I would suggest, before I leave this point, a little self-examination as

healthful for each of us. Does the word of God after this fashion speak to my soul? Then it is a gross folly to lose by generalisations that precious thing which can only be realised by a personal grasp. How sayest thou, dear hearer? Dost thou read the book for thyself, and does the book speak to thee? Has it ever condemned thee, and has thou trembled before the word of God? Has it ever pointed thee to Christ, and has thou looked to Jesus the incarnate Saviour? Does the book now seal, as with the witness of the Spirit, the witness of thine own spirit that thou art born of God? Art thou in the habit of going to the book to know thine own condition, to see thine own face as in a glass? Is it thy family medicine? Is it thy test and tell-tale to let thee know thy spiritual condition? Oh, do not treat the book otherwise than this, for if thou dost thus unto it, and takest it to be thy personal friend, happy art thou, since God will dwell with the man that trembles at His word; but, if you treat it as anybody's book rather than your own, then beware, lest you be numbered with the wicked who despise God's statutes.

III. From the text we learn that HOLY SCRIPTURE IS VERY FAMILIAR. "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. To talk signifies fellowship, communion, familiarity. It does not say, "It shall preach to thee." Many persons have a high esteem for the book, but they look upon it as though it were some very elevated teacher speaking to them from a lofty tribunal, while they stand far below. I will not altogether condemn that reverence, but it were far better if they would understand the familiarity of God's word; it does not so much preach to us as talk to us. It is not, "When thou awakest, it shall lecture thee," or, it shall scold thee;" no, no, "it shall talk with thee." We sit at its feet, or rather at the feet of Jesus, in the Word, and it comes down to us; it is familiar with us, as a man talketh to his friend. And here let me remind you of the delightful familiarity of Scripture in this respect that it speaks the language of men. If God had written us a book in His own language, we could not have comprehended it, or what little we understood would have so alarmed us, that we should have besought that those words should not be spoken to us any more; but the Lord, in His Word, often uses language which, though it be infallibly true in its meaning, is not after the knowledge of God, but according to the manner of man. I mean this, that the word uses similes and analogies of which we may say that they speak humanly, and not according to the

absolute truth as God Himself sees it. As men conversing with babes use their broken speech, so doth the condescending word. It is not written in the celestial tongue, but in the patois of this lowland country, condescending to men of low estate. It feeds us on bread broken down to our capacity, "food convenient for us". It speaks of God's arm, His hand, His finger, His wings, and even of His feathers. Now, all this is familiar picturing, to meet our childish capacities; for the Infinite One is not to be conceived of as though such similitudes were literal facts. It is an amazing instance of divine love, that He puts those things so that we may be helped to grasp sublime truths. Let us thank the Lord of the word for this.

How tenderly Scripture comes down to simplicity. Suppose the sacred volume had all been like the book of the prophet Ezekiel, small would have been its service to the generality of mankind. Imagine that the entire volume had been as mysterious as the Book of Revelation: it might have been our duty to study it, but if its benefit depended upon our understanding it, we should have failed to attain it. But how simple are the gospels, how plain these words, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"; how deliciously clear those parables about the lost piece of money, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son. Wherever the word touches upon vital points, it is as bright as a sunbeam. Mysteries there are, and profound doctrines, deeps where Leviathan can swim; but, where it has to do immediately with what concerns us for eternity, it is so plain that the babe in grace may safely wade in its refreshing streams. In the gospel narrative the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err. It is familiar talk; it is God's great mind brought down to our littleness, that it may lift us up.

How familiar the book is too—I speak now as to my own feelings—as to all that concerns us. It talks about my flesh, and my corruptions, and my sins, as only one that knew me could speak. It talks of my trials in the wisest way; some, I dare not tell, it knows all about. It talks about my difficulties; some would sneer at them and laugh, but this book sympathises with them, knows my tremblings, and my fears, and my doubts, and all the storm that rages within the little world of my nature. The book has been through all my experience; somehow or other it maps it all out, and talks with me as if it were a fellow-pilgrim. It does not speak

to me unpractically, and scold me, and look down on me from an awful height of stern perfection, as if it were an angel, and could no sympathise with fallen men; but like the Lord whom it reveals, the book seems as if it were touched with a feeling of my infirmities, and had been tempted in all points like as I am. Have you not often wondered at the human utterances of the divine word: it thunders like God and yet weeps like man. It seems impossible that anything should be too little for the word of God to notice, or too bitter, or even too sinful for that book to overlook. It touches humanity at all points. Everywhere it is a personal, familiar acquaintance, and seems to say to itself, "Shall I hide this thing from Abraham my friend?"

And, how often the book has answered enquiries! I have been amazed in times of difficulties to see how plain the oracle is. You have asked friends, and they could not advise you; but you have gone to your knees, and God has told you. You have questioned, and you have puzzled, and you have tried to elucidate the problem, and lo! In the chapter read at morning prayer, or in a passage of Scripture that lay open before you, the direction has been given. Have we not seen a text, as it were, plume its wings, and fly from the word like a seraph, and touch our lips with a live altar coal? It lay like a slumbering angel amidst the beds of spices of the sacred word, but it received a divine mission, and brought consolation and instruction to your heart.

The word of God, then, talks with us in the sense of being familiar with us. Do we understand this? I will close this point by another word of application. Who, then, that finds God's word so dear and kind a friend would spurn or neglect it? If any of you have despised it, what shall I say to you? If it were a dreary book, written within and without with curses and lamentations, whose every letter flashed with declarations of vengeance, I might see some reason why we should not read it; but, O precious, priceless companion, dear friend of all my sorrows, making my bed in my sickness, the light of my darkness, and the joy of my soul, how can I forget thee—how can I forsake thee? I have heard of one who said that the dust on some men's Bibles lay there so thick and long that you might write "Damnation" on it. I am afraid that such is that case with some of you. Mr. Rogers, of Dedham, on one occasion, after preaching

about the preciousness of the Bible, took it away from the front of the pulpit, and, putting it down behind him, pictured God as saying, "You do not read the book: you do not care about it; I will take it back—you shall not be wearied with it any more." And then he portrayed the grief of wise men's hearts when they found the blessed revelation withdrawn from men; and how they would besiege the throne of grace, day and night, to ask it back. I am sure he spoke the truth. Though we too much neglect it, yet ought we to prize it beyond all price, for, if it were taken from us, we should have lost our kindest comforter in the hour of need. God grant us to love the Scriptures more!

IV. Fourthly, and with brevity, our text evidently shows that THE WORD IS RESPONSIVE. "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee," not to thee. Now, talk with a man is not all on one side. To talk with a man needs answering talk from him. You have both of you something to say when you talk together. It is a conversation to which each one contributes his part. Now, Scripture is a marvellously conversational book; it talks, and makes men talk. It is ever ready to respond to us. Suppose you go to the Scriptures in a certain state of spiritual life: you must have noticed, I think, that the word answer to that state. If you are dark and gloomy, it will appear as though it had put itself in mourning, so that it might lament with you. When you are on the dunghill, there sits Scripture, with dust and ashes on its head, weeping side by side with you, and not upbraiding like Job's miserable comforters. But suppose you come to the book with gleaming eyes of joy, you will hear it laugh; it will sing and play to you as with psaltery and harp, it will bring forth the high-sounding cymbals. Enter its goodly land in a happy state, and you shall go forth with you and be led forth with peace, its mountains and its hills shall break before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. As in water the face is reflected, so in the living stream of revealed truth a man sees his own image.

If you come to Holy Scripture with growth in grace, and with aspirations for yet higher attainments, the book grows with you, grows upon you. It is ever beyond you, and cheerily cries, "Higher yet; Excelsior!" Many books in my library are now behind and beneath me; I read them years ago, with considerable pleasure; I have read them since, with disappointment;

I shall never read them again, for they are of no service to me. They were good in their way once, and so were the clothes I wore when I was ten years old; but I have outgrown them I know more than these books know, and know wherein they are faulty. Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years. It is true, it cannot really grow, for it is perfect; but it does so to our apprehension. The deeper you dig into Scripture, the more you find that it is a great abyss of truth. The beginner learns four or five points of orthodoxy, and says, "I understand the gospel, I have grasped all the Bible." Wait a bit, and when his soul grows and knows more of Christ, he will confess, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad, I have only begun to understand it."

There is one thing about God's word which shows its responsiveness to us, and that is when you reveal your heart to it, it reveals its heart to you. If, as you read the word, you say, "O blessed truth, thou art indeed realised in my experience; come thou still further into my heart. I give up my prejudices, I assign myself, like the wax, to be stamped with thy seal,"—when you do that, and open your heart to Scripture, Scripture will open its heart to you; for it has secrets which it does not tell to the casual reader, it has precious things of the everlasting hills which can only be discovered by miners who know how to dig and open the secret places, and penetrate great veins of everlasting riches. Give thyself up to the Bible, and the Bible will give itself up to thee. Be candid with it, and honest with thy soul, and the Scripture will take down its golden key, and open one door after another, and show to thy astonished gaze ingots of silver which thou couldst not weigh, and heaps of gold which thou couldst not measure. Happy is that man who, in talking with the Bible, tells it all his heart, and learns the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him.

And how, too, if you love the bible and talk out your love to it, the Bible will love you! Its wisdom says, "I love them that love me." Embrace the word of God, and the word of God embraces you at once. When you prize its every letter, then it smiles upon you graciously, greets you with many welcomes, and treats you as an honoured guest. I am always sorry to be on bad terms with the Bible, for then I must be on bad terms with God. Whenever my creed does not square with God's word, I think it is time to

mould my creed into another form. As for God's words, they must not be touched with hammer or axe. Oh, the chiselling, and cutting, and hammering in certain commentaries to make God's Bible orthodox and systematic! How much better to leave it alone! The word is right, and we are wrong, wherein we agree not with it. The teachings of God's word are infallible, and must be revered as such. Now, when you love it so well that you would not touch a single line of it, and prize it so much that you would even die for the defence of one of its truths, then, as it is dear to you, you will be dear to it, and it will grasp you and unfold itself to you as it does not to the world.

Dear brethren and sisters, I must leave this point, but it shall be with this remark—Do you talk to God? Does God talk to you? Does your heart go up to heaven, and does His Word come fresh from heaven to your soul? If not, you do not know the experience of the living child of God, and I can earnestly pray you may. May you this day be brought to see Christ Jesus in the word, to see a crucified Saviour there, and to put your trust in Him, and then, from this day forward, the word will echo to your heart—it will respond to your emotions.

V. Lastly, SCRIPTURE IS INFLUENTIAL. That I gather from the fact that Solomon says, "When thou wakest, it shall talk with thee"; and follows it up with the remark that it keeps man from the strange woman, and from other sins which he goes on to mention. When the word of God talks with us, it influences us. All talk influences more or less. I believe there more done in this world for good or bad by talk than there is by preaching; indeed, the preacher preaches best when he talks; there is no oratory in the world that is equal to simple talk; it is the model of eloquence; and all your rhetorician's action and verbiage are so much rubbish. The most efficient way of preaching is simply talking; the man permitting his heart to run over at his lips into other men's hearts. Now, this book, as it talks with us, influences us, and it does so in many ways.

It soothes our sorrows, and encourages us. Many a warrior has been ready to steal away from God's battle, but the word has laid its hand on him, and said, "Stand on thy feet, be not discouraged, be of good cheer, I will strengthen thee, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Brave saints we have read of, but we little

know how often they would have been arrant cowards only the good word came and strengthened them, and they went back to be stronger than lions and swifter than eagles.

While the book thus soothes and cheers, it has a wonderfully elevating power. How you never felt it put fresh life-blood into you? You have thought, "How can I continue to live at such a dying rate as I have lived, something nobler must I gain?" Read that part of the word which tells of the agonies of your Master, and you will feel—

"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His cross."

Read of the glories of heaven which this book reveals, and you will feel that you can run the race with quickened speed, because a crown so bright is glittering in your view. Nothing can so lift a man above the gross considerations of carnal gain or human applause as to have his soul saturated with the spirit of truth. It elevates as well as cheers.

Then, too, how often it warns and restrains. I had gone to the right or to the left if the law of the Lord had not said, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."

This book's consecrated talk sanctifies and moulds the mind into the image of Christ. You cannot expect to grow in grace if you do not read the Scriptures. If you are not familiar with the word, you cannot expect to become like Him that spake it. Our experience is, as it were, the potter's wheel on which we revolve; and the hand of God is in the Scriptures to mould us after the fashion and image which He intends to bring us to. Oh, be much with the holy word of God, and you will be holy. Be much with the silly novels of the day, and the foolish trifles of the hour, and you will degenerate into vapid wasters of your time; but be much with the solid teaching of God's word, and you will become solid and substantial men and women: drink them in, and feed upon them, and they shall produce in you a Christ-likeness, at which the world shall stand astonished.

Lastly, let the Scripture talk with you, and it will confirm and settle you. We hear every now and then of apostates from the gospel. They must have been little taught in the truth as it is in Jesus. A great outcry is made, every now and then, about our all being perverted to Rome. I was assured the other day by a good man with a great deal of alarm, that all England was going over to Popery. I told him I did not know what kind of God he worshipped, but my God was a good deal bigger than the devil, and did not intend to let the devil have his way after all, and that I was not half as much afraid of the Pope at Rome as of the Ritualists at home. But mark it, there is some truth in these fears. There will be a going over to one form of error or another unless there be in the Christian church a more honest, industrious, and general reading of Holy Scripture. What if I were to say most of you church members do not read your Bibles, should I be slandering you? You hear on Sabbath day a chapter read, and you perhaps read a passage at family prayer, but a very large number never read the Bible privately for themselves, they take their religion out of the monthly magazine, or accept it from the minister's lips. Oh, for the Berean spirit back again, to search the Scriptures whether these things be so. I would like to see a huge pile of all the book, good and bad that were ever written, prayer-books, and sermons, and hymn-books, and all, smoking like Sodom of old, if the reading of those books keeps you away from the reading of the Bible; for a ton weight of human literature is not worth an ounce of Scripture; one single drop of the essential tincture of the word of God is better than a sea full of our commenting and sermonisings, and the like. The word, the simple, pure, infallible word of God, we must live upon if we are to become strong against error, and tenacious of truth. Brethren, may you be established in the faith rooted, grounded, built up; but I know you cannot be except ye search the Scriptures continually.

The time is coming when we shall all fall asleep in death. Oh, how blessed it will be to find when we awake that the word of God will talk with us then, and remember its ancient friendship. Then the promise which we loved before shall be fulfilled; the charming intimations of a blessed future shall be all realised, and the face of Christ, whom we saw as through a glass darkly, shall be all uncovered, and He shall shine upon us as the sun in its strength. God grant us to love the word, and feed

thereon, and the Lord shall have the glory for ever and ever. Amen and amen.

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"Thus Saith The Lord:" Or, The Book of Common Prayer Weighed in the Balances of the Sanctuary

"Thus saith the Lord."—Ezekiel 11:15.

The wise man saith, "Where the word of a king is, there is power." What power must there be where there is the word of the King of kings, who ruleth over all! We are not left to conjecture as to the power of the divine word, for we know that "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Out of nothingness the glorious creation leaped at the bidding of the Most High, and when the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, there was nothing wanted but that solemn voice, "Light be," and straightway light was. God's word was sufficient in itself to build the temple of the universe and to finish it from its foundations to its pinnacles. That same word upholdeth by its power, and ruleth all things by its might. The pillars of heaven stand because the divine word hath fixed them upon their bases, nor shall they be shaken until that same almighty word shall bid them remove; then as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave which bears it and is gone forever, so shall the whole creation melt away. His word, which created, shall also destroy; but until that word be spoken every atom of this world is imperishable. Consider, my brethren, what power is concentrated in him who is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and whose name is "THE WORD OF GOD." With what glorious power our Lord Jesus Christ uplifted the burden of our sins, carried the load up to the tree, and cast it forever into the Red

Sea of his own atoning blood! Ye know how he burst the bars of death, tore away the gates of the grave, overthrew all the hosts of hell, and dragged the mightiest principalities of darkness as captives at his chariot wheels. At this day the government is upon his shoulders, and his name is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. Heaven and earth salute him as the Omnipotent Word. He sustains the spiritual life of all his people by feeding them upon himself; and he shall in due time perfect his saints, and present them without spot before his Father's throne. We ought, therefore, to bow with reverence to that which is truly the word of God, since it contains within itself the highest degree of power, and is ever the way in which divine omnipotence manifests itself.

It is in the word that we must find wisdom and power, "because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." The faintest whisper of Jehovah's voice should fill us with a solemn awe, and command the deepest obedience of our souls. Brethren, how careful should we be that we do not set up in God's temple anything in opposition to his word, that we do not permit the teachings of a creature to usurp the honor due to the Lord alone! "Thus saith antiquity," "thus saith authority," "thus saith learning," "thus saith experience,"—these be but idol-gods, which defile the temple of God; be it yours and mine, as bold iconoclasts, to dash them in pieces without mercy, seeing that they usurp the place of the word of God.

"Thus saith the Lord"—this is the motto of our standard, the war-cry of our spiritual conflict,—the sword with which we hope yet to smite through the loins of the mighty who rise up against God's truth. Nothing shall stand before this weapon in the day when God cometh out of his hiding-place; for even at this hour, when "Thus saith the Lord" sounds from the trumpet of the Lord's ministers, the hosts of Midian begin to tremble; for well they know the might of that terrible watchword in days of yore.

This morning, I shall first endeavor to show, briefly, the value of a "Thus saith the Lord;" and then, secondly, I shall, with as much calmness of spirit as I can command, request a "Thus saith the Lord" for certain things which are received and practiced in the State Establishment of our land, and close with a word of personal application, beseeching you to

seek a "Thus saith the Lord" for any hopes which you may entertain of being partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE VALUE OF A "THUS SAITH THE LORD."

1. Our first observation is that it is the minister's message. If he be God's minister, he does not found his teaching upon his own authority, for then his message would be only that of himself, and not to be esteemed; but he shows the authority of his Master, and none can gainsay him. He claims men's attention on the ground that he utters a "Thus saith the Lord." No matter how aged he may be, he does not proclaim the truth as merely the result of his long investigations or his extraordinary experience, but he grounds it upon "Thus saith the Lord." So spake the hoary-headed Joshua when for many a year he had known the faithfulness of God, and was about to die. He was singing his swan-song, preaching his last sermon; but he did not commence it, "Thus saith my age," "Thus say I upon mine own authority," but "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel." A God-sent minister is the ambassador of the Most High, but he has no right to go beyond his commission; and when he does so, his office cannot yield him support. The prophets of God did not say, "Thus I speak as a prophet," but, "Thus saith the Lord." When the prophet came in Gideon's days and spoke to erring Israel, he opened his mouth with, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel." Turn to the pages of Isaiah, and mark how frequent he quotes the divine authority; study the plaintive words of Jeremiah, and observe how solemnly his prophetic woes are prefaced with, "Thus saith the Lord;" and the soaring Ezekiel, to whom was given, as it were, six wings, that he might take more lofty flights than the eagle knoweth—even he relied not upon the sublimity of his language or the glory of his imagery, but found the sinews of his strength in "Thus saith the Lord God." This is the trowel and this the hammer of God's builders,—this the trumpet of his watchmen and the sword of his warriors. Woe to the man who comes in any other name! If we, or an angel from heaven, shall preach unto you anything but a "Thus saith the Lord," no matter what our character or standing, give no heed to us, but cleave unto the truth as it is in Jesus. To the law and to the testimony, if we speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us. That test which we demand to be exercised upon others we cheerfully consent to be exercised upon

ourselves, praying that we may have grace to forsake our errors as we would have other men forsake theirs.

2. "Thus saith the Lord" is the only authority in God church. When the tabernacle was pitched in the wilderness, what was the authority for its length and breadth? Why was the altar of incense to be placed here, and the brazen laver there? Why so many lambs or bullocks to be offered on a certain day? Why must the Passover be roasted whole and not sodden? Simply and only because God had shown all these things to Moses in the holy mount; and thus had Jehovah spoken, "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount." It is even so in the church at the present day; true servants of God demand to see for all church ordinances and doctrines the express authority of the church's only Teacher and Lord. They remember that the Lord Jesus bade the apostles to teach believers to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them; but he neither gave to them nor to any man power to alter his own commands. The Holy Ghost revealed much of precious truth and holy precept by the apostles, and to his teaching we would give earnest heed; but when men cite the authority of fathers and councils and bishops, we give place for subjection? no, not for an hour. They may quote Irenaeus or Cyprian, Augustine or Chrysostom; they may remind us of the dogmas of Luther or Calvin; they may find authority in Simeon, Wesley, or Gill—we will listen to the opinions of those great men with the respect which they deserve as men; but having so done, we deny that we have anything to do with these men as authorities in the church of God: for there nothing has any authority but "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts." Yea, if you shall bring us the concurrent consent of all tradition—if you shall quote precedents venerable with fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen centuries of antiquity—we burn the whole as so much worthless lumber, unless you put your finger upon the passage of Holy Writ which warrants the matter to be of God. You may further plead, in addition to all this venerable authority, the beauty of the ceremony, and its usefulness to those who partake therein, but this is all foreign to the point; for to the true church of God the only question is this: Is there a "Thus saith the Lord" for it? And if divine authority be not forthcoming, faithful men thrust forth the intruder as the cunning craftiness of men.

3. "Thus saith the Lord" is the most fitting word of rebuke for erring saints. God's people when they err, if they be rebuked, even though it should be in the gentlest manner, are too apt to resent the rebuff; but when we can come to them with "Thus saith the Lord," if there be a spark of spiritual life left, it is sure to catch at this flame. When the man of God came to Eli, how Eli's heart trembled when he began, "Thus saith the Lord," and described to him the doom of his house, because his sons had made themselves vile, and he had not restrained them. David the king might have been moved to anger against Nathan for that personal parable and pungent application; but his anger was stayed, nay, better still, his heart was broken, because the prophet could say, "Thus saith the Lord." My dear brethren in Christ, you and I have often risen in anger at the intrusive proofs of ignorant men; but I hope we have far more often felt the melting power of a "Thus saith the Lord." When the heart is right, the word of God sweetly melts us, as the breath of the south wind melts the frozen rivers.

4. "Thus saith the Lord" is the only solid ground of comfort to God's people. Where can a child of God find true solace apart from that which cometh out of the mouth of the Most High! Truly, "Man doth not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live;" "Thy words were found, and I did eat them;" "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" When Nathan came to tell David of the covenant which the Lord would make with him and his house, David would scarcely have believed so great a mercy to be really his if the prophet had not begun with "Thus saith the Lord." It was not "Thus saith Nathan," or "Thus do the ancients say," but "Thus saith the Lord;" and David's heart was full of holy joy when he saw the covenant to be ordered in all things and sure. When Hezekiah lay sick unto death, he turned his face to the wall and prayed; but there was no comfort to the royal suppliant until the prophet came with "Thus saith the Lord;" and when Sennacherib was about to besiege Jerusalem, and Lachish had fallen, Hezekiah prayed, and the people with him; but oh! they could not think it possible that there should be a hook put into the jaw of the mighty Assyrian, and that he should be turned back by the way in which he came, till the prophet reassured their hearts with a "Thus saith the Lord." Zion's sons and daughters feast upon the

sure word of their faithful God. Brethren, I need not enlarge here, for I hope most of you know the preciousness of a divine promise. There is nothing wanted to stay your soul in your worst troubles but the Word of God applied with power. God may not send you a friend; he may not raise up a deliverer; but if he shall only give you to believe his Word, that shall be enough for you. Martin Luther said: "I have covenanted with my Lord that he should not send me visions, or dreams, or even angels. I am content with this one gift of the Scriptures, which abundantly teaches and supplies all that is necessary, both for this life and that which is to come." O Lord, only feed me on thy Word, and I will not envy kings their delicacies, nor even the angels around thy throne the bread of heaven on which they live.

5. Yet again: "Thus saith the Lord" is that with which we must confront the Lord's enemies. When Moses went in before Pharaoh, the words which he used were not, "The elders of Israel have consulted, and thus have they bidden me say," not "Our Father Abraham once said, and his words have been handed to us by long tradition"—such talk would have been readily resisted; but he confronted the haughty monarch with "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go;" and it was the power of this divine word which rained plagues upon the fields of Zoan, and brought forth the captives, with silver and gold. Pharaoh might boast, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" but ere long he knew that Jehovah's word was mightier than all the horsemen and chariots of Mizraim, and was not to be resisted without terrible defeat. To this day, if we would break sinners' hearts, our hammer must be "Thus saith the Lord;" and if we would woo them to obedience to King Jesus, our reasons must come from his own Word. I have often noticed in conversion, that, though sometimes a particular passage of the sermon may be quoted by the converted person as the means of enlightenment, yet in the majority of cases it is the text, or some passage of Scripture, quoted during the sermon, which is blessed to do the work. McCheyne says, "Depend upon it, it is God's Word, not our comment upon God's Word, that saves souls;" and so it is. Let us use much of Scripture, much of the pure silver of sacred revelation, and no human alloy. "What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?"

6. To close this point. Such an authority has a "Thus saith the Lord," that it is not to be despised without entailing upon the offender the severest penalty. Samuel came to Saul with "Thus saith the Lord," and bade him destroy the Amalekites. He was utterly to cut them off, and not to spare so much as one of them. But Saul saved the best of the cattle and the sheep, and brought home Agag; and what was the result? His kingdom was taken from him and given to a neighbor of his that was better than he; and because he exalted himself beyond measure to do otherwise than according to the letter of God's command, he was put away forever from having dominion over Israel. And mark this word: if any church in Christendom shall continue, after light is given and after plain rebuke is uttered, to walk contrary to the word of God, and to teach that which is inconsistent with Holy Scripture, as Saul was put away from the kingdom, so shall that church be put away from before the Lord of Hosts; and if any man, be he who he may, after receiving light from on high, continues willfully to shut his eyes, he shall not, if an heir of heaven, be rejected from eternal salvation, but he shall be cast off from much of the usefulness and comfort which he might otherwise have enjoyed. He knew his Master's will, and did it not: he shall be beaten with many stripes. He has been as the horse or the mule which have no understanding, and his mouth shall be held in with bit and bridle. Many sorrows shall be to those who dare to dash themselves against the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler by opposing his "Thus saith the Lord." Upon whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder; and whosoever shall fall upon it shall be broken, to his own lasting damage. O my brethren! I would that we trembled and stood more in awe of God's word. I fear me that many treat the things of God as though they were merely matters of opinion, but remember that opinion cannot govern in God's house. God's word, not man's opinion, claims your allegiance. Remember that although our ignorant conscience may not accuse us of error, yet if we walk contrary to God's word, our conscientiousness does not screen us from sin; for conscience is not the sovereign arbiter of right and wrong, but the plain word of God is the rule of equity. I do not sin so foully as if I sinned against my conscience, but I still sin, if, having an unenlightened conscience, I ignorantly transgress. But if I wilfully keep my conscience in darkness, and continue in errors which I might easily know to be such by a little thought and searching of God's word, then my conscience can offer

me no excuse, for I am guilty of blindfolding the guide which I have chosen, and then, knowing him to be blindfolded, I am guilty of the folly of letting him lead me into rebellion against God. O church of God! hear thou the voice of thy great Founder and Lord: "Whosoever, therefore shall one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Oh for a stern integrity, that will hold the word, and will never depart from it, come what may. This much concerning the value of a "Thus saith the Lord."

II. Dear friends, the second part of our subject may be very displeasing to some who have strayed in here, but that I cannot help. I do not remember ever asking any one to come and hear me, and therefore, as you come of your own wills, when I have any truth to speak, I shall not conceal it because you choose to be present. At the present crisis, I feel that it is woe unto me if I do not lift up my voice like a trumpet, and urge with all my might the necessity of reformation in our State Church. I have, moreover, an excellent excuse for the inquiry I am about to make; for as I am publicly charged with ignorance, it is at once my duty and my privilege to seek instruction of those who claim authority to teach. When one is known to be profoundly ignorant, and there are certain fathers in the faith who have the power to instruct, the least thing that can be allowed us is to ask questions, and the smallest boon we can expect is to have them answered by men expressly ordained to instruct the ignorant.

The Rev. W. Goode, the Dean of Ripon, appears to be much better acquainted with the extent of my reading and mental acquirements than I am myself. He speaks with all the positiveness of a personal acquaintance concerning my reputed ignorance, and for my own part I am not at all anxious to question so very reverend an authority. He writes: "As to that young minister who is now raving against the Evangelical clergy on this point, it is to be regretted that so much notice has been taken of his railings. He is to be pitied, because his entire want of acquaintance with theological literature leaves him utterly unfit for the determination of such a question; which is a question, not of more doctrine, but of what

may be called historical theology; and his charges are just a parallel to those which the Romanists would bring against himself as well as others for the interpretation of the words, 'This is my body.' But were he a wiser man than he is, he would know better what his qualifications are for passing Judgment on such a point, and be willing to learn from such facts, among others, as the Gorham Judgment and the cases of Mr. Maskell and Mr. Mozley, what ground there is for his charges against the Evangelical clergy. Let him hold and enforce his own view of doctrine as he pleases; but when he undertakes to determine what is the exclusive meaning of the Book of Common Prayer, and brings a charge of dishonesty against those who take a different view of that meaning from what he does, he only shows the presumptuous self-confidence with which he is prepared to pronounce judgment upon matters of which he is profoundly ignorant. To hold a controversy with him upon the subject would be to as little purpose as to attempt to hold a logically-constructed argument with a child unacquainted with logical terms."

When this paragraph caught my eye, my heart leaped with joy, for I knew that the sinners in Zion were afraid; and I thought I heard a voice crying from the Word, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." My mind flew back to the valley of Elah, and I remembered the words of the old record: "And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." My spirit kindled at these words of the boastful champion of yore, and at their modern reproduction by the vainglorious divine of Ripon, and the answer of David was in my heart as it is even now upon my tongue: "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel,

whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands." Admitting the witness of the venerable dean to be correct, and that "the young minister" is inexpert in logic, I am not therefore ashamed; far otherwise, I will the rather glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me; "for when I am weak, then am I strong." Take, O ye great ones of the earth, every profit that can be made out of your belief in my utter total ignorance, and your own profound and extensive learning, and then go your ways, and learn what this meaneth: "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee: thou shalt not know from whence it riseth.. And now at this hour, having been condemned as intolerably ignorant, I feel I have the liberty to ask just a few explanations of those reverend divines who do know or ought to know the grounds of their faith and practice.

1. I open this little book,—the Prayer-Book, of whose occasional services the more I know the less I approve,—and I find in the Baptismal Service, that when little children are brought to be sprinkled, certain godfathers and godmothers promise for them that they shall renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, etc., and that they shall obediently keep all God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life. To me it seems that they might as well promise that the infants should grow up with Roman noses, auburn hair, and blue eyes; for they are just as able to make them do the one as the other. I shall not however intrude my opinion further, but simply ask whether there is a "Thus saith the Lord" for any man's standing proxy for a babe, and making such promises in its name?—in other words, I ask for apostolical, prophetic, or any other form of scriptural precept, or precedent, for the use of proxies in baptism. True religion is a personal matter—is its first manifestation in regeneration to be connected with the impossible promises of others? Plain proof-texts are requested for godfathers and godmothers; and such important persons deserve to be defended by the clergy, if texts of Scripture can be discovered. As I cannot imagine where the texts will be

found, I must pause till the learned shall produce them. Further, I find that these children enter into a covenant by proxy, of which we are assured that the promise our Lord Jesus will for his part most surely keep and perform; but the children are bound to do their part—that part being something more than the gigantic task of keeping all the commandments of God. Now I ask for a "Thus saith the Lord" for such a covenant as this. I find two covenants in the Word of God: one is the covenant of works, "This do, and thou shalt live;" I find another, the covenant of grace, which runs only in this wise, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." I find it expressly declared that there cannot be a mixture of works and grace; for, says Paul, "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work;" and I ask a "Thus saith the Lord" for this baptismal covenant, which is nominally of grace, but really of works, or at best an unnatural conglomerate of grace and works. I ask those who have searched Scripture through, to find me the form or the command for any baptismal covenant whatever. It is idle to say that such a covenant was allowed among the early Christians; their witness is not earlier enough for us: we want a "Thus saith the Lord," and nothing but this will justify this pretended covenant.

We then find that after this covenant has been made, and the water has been applied in a manner which we think needs also a "Thus saith the Lord" to justify it, it is publicly declared that the babe is regenerated,—"Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren that this child is regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning." And, again, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church," etc. We are told we do not understand the meaning of "regeneration" as it is used in the services of the Anglican Church. The meaning of this passage is historical, hypothetical, ecclesiastical, and we know not what. The words "to be born again" did not formerly seem to us to be so very difficult to understand, nor do they appear so now as they stand in Scripture; for we find in them the one regeneration which has

renewed us in the spirit of our mind, and we cannot consent to use those words in any other sense. Well, whether regeneration be or be not a very equivocal word, we simply ask, Is there a "Thus saith the Lord" for the assertion that a sprinkled infant is therefore regenerate in any sense in the world? Will any person find us a text of Scripture?—he shall have large rewards from clergymen with uneasy consciences! We put our inquiry again in plain terms, Will some one oblige us with a plain "Thus saith the Lord" proving that water baptism in any one instance makes an unconscious babe a member of Christ and a child of God, in any sense which any sane person chooses to attach to those words? Where is the passage—where? Echo answers "where?" But this subject you have been considering for some time, and are well convinced that the process of regenerating babies by occult influences conveyed by water is a pure—no, an impure—invention of priest-craft. There is therefore no necessity that I enlarge upon a point so well understood.

2. I have a second question to ask. There is prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer a peculiar ceremony called confirmation. I do not remember to have read of that in Scripture. I would like to have a "Thus saith the Lord" for that rite. As I am ready to yield as far as possible, suppose we take it for granted that this ceremony is defensible from Holy Writ, I would like to know whether there is any "Thus saith the Lord" allowing a person called a bishop to give to the assembled youths an assurance of divine favor by laying his hands on their heads? The bishop having laid his hands on every head presented to him, whether it be gracious or graceless, talks thus in the Collect, "Almighty and everliving God, who makest us both to will and to do those things that be good and acceptable unto thy divine majesty, we make our humble supplications unto thee for these thy servants upon whom (after the example of thy holy apostles) we have now laid our hands, to certify them (by this sign) of thy favor and gracious goodness towards them." Does this mean that the bishop's hand certifies the person touched thereby of special divine favor? So it seems to teach, as far as I can see. We want, then, a "Thus saith the Lord," authorizing this individual in lawn to exercise the office of an apostle! We then desire scriptural warrant permitting him to certify these kneeling youths of the enjoyment or possession of any particular divine favor by putting his hands on their heads. If this means the

common goodness of God, the bishop's hands are not needed to certify them of that; but as he has already declared in prayer that they were regenerated by water and the Spirit, and had been forgiven all their sins, it is clear that special favor is intended; we inquire, therefore, for his authority for giving these young people a further certificate of special divine favor by the imposition of his hands. Why his hands? Who is he that he can certify these persons of God's favor more than any other man? Where is his scriptural warrant to confer by his hands a certificate of grace upon young people who in innumerable cases are thoughtless and unconverted, if not profane? We want a "Thus saith the Lord" for the whole thing, and then for each item in detail. Endless is the task thus proposed to the honest Churchman.

3. Another matter needs a little clearing up; and, as this Book was set forth by learned divines and bishops, I would like a lucid explanation. The priest visits a sick man, sits down by his bed-side, reads certain prayers, bids the patient remember his baptism, questions him as to his creed, gives him good advice about forgiving his enemies and making his will, moves him to make a special confession of his sin if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, after which confession the Rubric says "the priest shall absolve him" (if he humbly and heartily desire it), after this sort. Here is the absolution, and I humbly and heartily desire a "Thus saith the Lord" for it: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Sir Priest, I want you to give me a plain warrant from God's Word for your absolving my dying neighbor at this rate. Who are you that you should use such words? The season is solemn: it is the hour of death, and the matter is weighty, for it concerns the eternal interests of the dying man, and may—nay, will, if you be found to be acting presumptuously in this matter—involve your own soul in eternal ruin. Whence did you derive your right to forgive that sick man? Might he not raise his withered hands and return the compliment by absolving you? Are you quite sure as to the committal of divine authority to you? Then show me the deed of gift, and let it be clearly of divine origin. The apostles were empowered to do many things;

but who are you? Do you claim to be their successors? Then work miracles similar to theirs; take up serpents, and drink deadly things without being harmed thereby; prove to us that you have seen the Lord, or even that cloven tongues of fire have sat upon each of you. You evangelical clergy, dare you claim to be successors of the apostles, and to have power to forgive sins? Your Puseyite brethren go the whole length of superstitious pretension; but you have too much light to be so superstitious; and yet you do what is quite as wicked,—you solemnly subscribe that this absolution is not contrary to the Word of God when you know it is? Gorham case, say you. I care nothing for your Gorham case: I want a "Thus saith the Lord" warranting you to swear to what you know to be false and dangerous. Mr. Mozley and Mr. Maskell may give you all the comfort which they can afford; but one word of Peter or of Paul would be of more weight in this matter than a thousand words from either of them.

You are aware, perhaps, that it is not every man who is permitted by the Established religion to pronounce this absolution. A person called a "deacon" is, I am informed, allowed to preach and do a great many things, but when he reads the Book of Common Prayer in the daily service he must not grant absolution; there is a supernatural something which the man has not yet received, for he has only once felt the episcopal imposition of hands. We shall see, by-and-by, where absolving power comes from. The deacon has attained to one grade of priestcraft, but the full vigor of mystic influence rests not upon him. Another touch, another subscription, and the keys of St. Peter will swing at his girdle; but his time is not yet. I ask him, whether he calls himself a deacon or a priest, where he gets a "Thus saith the Lord" for this absolution? which, if it be not of God, is a piece of impertinence, superstition, blasphemy, and falsehood.

4. I turn on and find that when the sick dies he is buried in consecrated ground; and though he may have cut his throat while under delirium tremens, if the jury do not return a verdict of suicide, the priest shall say, as he casts earth upon the body, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground,—earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,—in sure and certain hope of the

resurrection to eternal life." And again, "We give thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world." And yet again, "We meekly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother doth." We beg a "Thus saith the Lord" for burying every baptized thief, harlot, rogue, drunkard, and liar who may die in the parish—"in sure and certain hope of the blessed resurrection." "Oh! it is commanded by authority." What authority? We challenge it, and permit none to pass muster but a "Thus saith the Lord." Until clergymen will bring us scriptural warrant for uttering falsehoods over a grave, we dare not cease our testimony against them. How long will the many godly laymen in that Church remain quiet? Why do they not bestir themselves, and demand revision or disruption?

5. Turning a little further on, into a part of the Prayer-Book not much frequented by ordinary readers, we come to the "Ordering of Priests," or the way in which priests are made. Why priests? Is one believer more a priest than another, when all are styled a royal priesthood? Let that pass. Of course, brethren, the priests are made by the bishops, as the bishops are made by Lord Palmerston, or Lord Derby, or any other political leader who may be in office. The Prime Minister of England is the true fountain from whom all bishops flow, and the priests are minor emanations branching off from the mitre rather than the crown. Here is the way of ordering priests. Let heaven and earth hear this and be astonished: "When this prayer is done, the bishop with the priests present shall lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receiveth the order of priesthood; the receivers humbly kneeling upon their knees, and the bishop saying, 'Receive the Holy Ghost.'" Listen to it, now! Think you behold the scene: a man of God, a bishop whom you have been in the habit of considering a most gracious, godly man, and such no doubt he may be, in a sort,—think you see him putting his hands upon the head of some evangelical man whom you will go and hear, or, if you like, upon some young rake fresh from Oxford,—and think you hear him say, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain,

they are retained." We want a "Thus saith the Lord" for that; for that is putting it rather strongly in the popish line, one would think. Is the way of ordering priests in the Church of Rome much worse than this? That the apostles did confer the Holy Ghost, we never thought of denying; but that Oxford, Exeter, or any other occupants of the bench can give the Holy Spirit, needs some proof other than their silk aprons or lawn sleeves can afford us. We ask, moreover, for one instance in which an apostle conferred upon any minister the power to forgive sins, and where it can be found in Scripture that any man other than an apostle ever received authority to absolve sinners. Sirs, let us say the truth; however much yonder priest may pretend at his parishioner's bedside to forgive sin, the man's sins are not forgiven; and the troubled conscience of the sinner often bears witness to the fact, as the day of judgment and the fearful hell of sinners must also bear witness. And what think you, sirs, must be the curse that fills the mouth of damned souls, when in another world they meet the priest who absolved them with this sham absolution! With what reproaches will such deceived ones meet the priest who sent them down to perdition with a lie in their right hands! Will they not say to him, "Thou didst forgive me all my sins by an authority committed unto thee, and yet here am I cast into the pit of hell?" Oh! if I do not clear my Soul upon this infamous business, and if the whole Christian church does not cleanse herself of it, what guilt will lay upon us! This is become a crying evil, and a sin that is not to be spoken of behind the door, nor to be handled in gentle language. I have been severe, it is said, and spoken harshly. I do not believe it possible to be too severe in this matter; but, sirs, if I have been so, let that be set down as my sin if you will; but is there any comparison between my fault and that of men who know this to be contrary to the Word of God, and yet give it their unfeigned assent and consent? or the sin of those who can lie unto the Holy Ghost, by pretending to confer Him who bloweth where he listeth upon men who as likely as not are as graceless as the very heathen? Fresh from the dissipations of college-life, the sinner bows before the man in lawn, and rises a full-blown priest, fully able to remit or retain sins. After this, how can the priests of the Church of England denounce the Roman Catholics? It is so very easy to fume and bluster against Puseyites and Papists; but the moment our charity begins at home, and we give our Evangelical brethren the same benefit which they confer upon the open Romanists,

they are incensed beyond measure. Yet will we tell them to their faces, that they, despite their fair speeches, are as guilty as those whom they denounce; for there is as much Popery in this priest-making as in any passage in the mass-book. Protestant England! wilt thou long tolerate this blasphemy? Land of Wiclif, birthplace of the martyrs of Smithfield, is this long to be borne with? I am clear of this matter before the Most High, or hope to be, ere I sleep in the grave; and having once sounded the trumpet, it hall ring till my lips are dumb. Do you tell me it is no business of mine? Is it not the National Church?—does not its sin rest, therefore, upon every man and woman in the nation, Dissenter and Churchman, who does not shake himself from it by open disavowal? I am not meddling with anybody else's church; but the church that claims me as a parishioner would compel me, if it could, to pay its church rates, and that does take from me my share of tithe every year. I ask the sturdy Protestants of England, and especially the laity of the Church of England, whether they intend forever to foster such abominations? Arise, Britannia! nation of the free, and shake thy garments from the dust of this hoary superstition; and as for thee, O Church of England! may God bless thee with ministers who will sooner come forth to poverty and shame than pervert or assist in perverting the Word of God.

6. I have not quite done: I have another question to ask. Look at the thanksgiving which is offered on the twentieth day of June, on account of Her Majesty's accession: in this thanksgiving we very heartily join, although we decline to pray by book on the twentieth of June or any other day; look at the close that thanksgiving, and you see the name of Lord John Russell as a sort of official authority for the prayer! Is Earl Russell also among the prophets? And on the other side of the page, in order that the Tories may edify the church as well as the Whigs, I see the hand of S. H. Walpole. Is he also a governor in Christ's church? Hath the Lord given these men power to legislate for his church, or sign mandates for her to obey? But what is it all about? "Victoria Regina, our will and pleasure is that these four forms of prayer," etc. Do you see? here is royal supremacy! Further on, in the next page: "Now, therefore, our will and pleasure is," etc. See the Preface to the Articles, "Being by God's Ordinance, according to our just Title, Defender of the Faith, and Supreme Governor of the Church, within these our Dominions;" and again, "We are Supreme

Governor of the Church of England." This is the way in which your Church bows herself before the kingdoms of this world. I demand, earnestly demand, a "Thus saith the Lord" for this royal supremacy. If any king, or queen, or emperor shall say, in any Christian church, "Our will and pleasure is," we reply, "We have another King,—one Jesus." As to the Queen, honored and beloved as she is, she is by her sex incapacitated for ruling in the church. Paul decides that point by his plain precept, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence;" and if a king were in the case, we should say, "We render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's." In civil matters, we cheerfully obey princes and magistrates; but if any king, queen, emperor, or what not, usurps power in the church of God, we reply, "One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren. The crown-rights belong to King Jesus: he alone is King in Zion." But I am met at once with the reply, "Well, but Christ is the Head of the Established Church, as well as the Queen." I remember reading about a three-headed dog which kept the gates of hell, but I never dreamed of a two-headed church till I heard of the Anglican Establishment. A two-headed church is a monster! The Queen the Head of the Church, and King Jesus the Head of the Church, too! Never. Where is a "Thus saith the Lord" for this? No man living who calls himself an Englishman has a word to say of Her Majesty except that which is full of honor and esteem and loyal affection; but the moment we come to talk about the church of Christ, whoever shall say, or think, or believe, that there is any headship to the church of Christ except the person of Christ himself, he knoweth not what he saith nor whereof he affirmeth. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Head over all things to his church, which is his body: the fulness of him filleth all in all. Here stand the two letters "V. R." at the top of certain mandates, and they mean just this: "Our royal authority commands that you shall not believe this, and you shall believe that; you shall not pray this, and you shall pray that; and you shall pray on such a day," and so on. The church which thus bows to authority commits fornication with the kings of the earth, and virtually renounces her allegiance to Christ to gain the filthy lucre of state endowments. He is the freeman whom the truth makes free, and who wears no gilded collar, with a chain hanging therefrom held in a royal hand. Remember how the Chancellor laughed to scorn the whole bench of bishops, and rightly so; for he who voluntarily

makes himself a bondman deserves to feel the lash. May the little finger of our state grow heavier than the loins of James or Elizabeth, until all good men flee from the house of bondage. Servants of God, will ye be servants of man? Ye who profess to follow King Jesus and see him crowned with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, do you take off his diadem to put it upon the head of another? No, it shall never be. Scotland has repelled the royal intrusion right bravely by her sons of the Free Church, who have left all to follow King Jesus. Her bush burned in the olden times, but was not consumed; the covenant was stained with blood, but it was never slain. Let us revive that covenant, and, if need be, seal it with our blood. Let the Church of England have what king she pleases, or what prince she pleases for her head; but this I know, that there is no "Thus saith the Lord" concerning the ecclesiastical supremacy of Victoria Regina, nor the authority of Lord John Russell, or S. H. Walpole, or any of that company, honorable though they be.

7. Now once more: one other question. I am profoundly ignorant, and have not the power to judge of these things (so am I informed), and therefore I would like to ask for a "Thus saith the Lord" for a few of the canons;—no, perhaps I had better not read them; they are too bad,—they are full of all malice and uncharitableness, and everything that cometh of the foul fiend. I will ask whether there can be found any "Thus saith the Lord" for this: Canon 10. "Maintainers of Schismatics in the Church of England to be censured. Whoever shall hereafter affirm that such ministers as refuse to subscribe to the form and manner of God's worship in the Church of England, prescribed in the Communion-Book, and their adherents, may truly take unto them the name of another church not established by law, and dare presume to publish it, that this their pretended church hath of long time groaned under the burden of certain grievances imposed upon it, and upon the members thereof before mentioned, by the Church of England, and the orders and constitutions therein by law established, let them be excommunicated, and not restored until they repent and publicly revoke such their wicked errors." What Scripture warrants one church to excommunicate another merely for being a church, and complaining of undoubted grievances?

Canon 11. "Maintainers of Conventicles censured. Whosoever shall hereafter affirm or maintain that there are within this realm other meetings, assemblies, or congregations of the king's born subjects, than such as by the laws of this land are held and allowed, which may rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful churches, let him be excommunicated, and not restored but by the Archbishop, after his repentance and public revocation of such his wicked errors." Where doth Holy Scripture authorize the excommunication of every good man who is charitable enough to believe that there are other churches beside his own? Search ye out of to book of the Lord, and read!

For very much in this Book of Canons I beg to be informed of a "Thus saith the Lord." For matters which do not concern religion and have only to do with the mere arrangement of service, we neither ask nor expect a divine precept; but upon vital points of doctrine, ceremony, or precept, we cannot do without it. Scarcely can any document be more inconsistent with Scripture than the Book of Canons, and hence it is ever kept in the back ground, because those who know anything about it must be ashamed of it. And yet these are Canons of the Church of England,—canons which are inconsistent, many of them, with even the common rules of our own present enlightened law, let alone the Word of God. We ask a "Thus saith the Lord" for them, and we wait until a "Thus saith the Lord" shall be found to defend them.

Now some will say, why do I thus take this matter up and look into it? I have already told you the reason, dear friends. There is an opportunity for pushing another Reformation given to us just now, of which if we do not avail ourselves we shall be very guilty. Some have said, "Why not go on preaching the gospel to sinners?" I do preach the gospel to sinners, as earnestly as ever I did in my life; and there are as many conversions to God as at any former period. This is God's work: and beware lest any of you lift a finger against it. The hand of the Lord is in this thing, and he that lives shall see it. Let us have our prayers, that good may come of this controversy, even though you may deplore it. As for anything else that you can do, it shall not turn us a hair's-breadth from this testimony to which we feel God has called us, though it bringeth upon us every evil that flesh would shrink from. The words of Dr. Guthrie are well worth

quoting here: "The servant is no better than his master; and I do believe, were we more true to God, more faithful and honest in opposing the world for its good, we should get less smoothly along the path of life, and have less reason to read with apprehension these words of Jesus: 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.' Not less true than shrewd was the remark of a Scotch woman respecting one who, just settled in the ministry, had been borne to his pulpit amid the plaudits of all the people: 'If he is a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will have all the blackguards in the parish on his head before a month is gone.'"

III. Now, to close, let me say to you, my hearers, have any of you a hope of heaven which will not stand the test of "Thus saith the Lord?" What are you resting upon? Are you resting upon something which you felt when excited at a prayer-meeting or under a sermon? Remember you will not have that excitement to bear you up in death, and the religion of excitement will not suffice in the day of judgment. Are you building upon your own works? Are you depending upon your own feelings? Do you rely upon sacraments? Are you placing your trust upon the word of man? If so, remember that when God shakes all things he will shake these false foundations; but oh! build upon the Word of my Lord and Master; trust your soul with Jesus. Hating sin, and clinging to the great sinbearer, you shall find in him a rock of refuge which can never, never fail you; but I do conjure you, as the Lord liveth, search and try yourselves by the Word of God. No doubt there are many among us who are not built upon the Rock of Ages, and we may any of us be deceived by a mere name to live. Do, then, since the test-day must come,—since you must be weighed in the balances,—weigh yourselves now, my hearers; and let none of us go down to the chambers of destruction believing ourselves to be heirs of heaven, being all the while enemies to the Most High God. May the Lord exalt his own Word, and give us a sure inheritance in the blessings which it brings. Amen

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Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?

"And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth."—Acts 8:30-33.

How this negro chamberlain of the Queen of Ethiopia came to be a proselyte we do not know. The book which he was so fond of reading may have been the means of leading him to worship the God of Abraham, certainly it has answered that purpose thousands of times. At any rate, he followed the light he had, and though he had not yet come to the full glory of Christianity, it was more than probable that he would do so, because he was evidently prepared to follow truth wherever her flaming torch should lead the way. Oh, that there were more candor among men in these latter days, and less of the prejudice which puts scales upon the eyes of the mind!

Be true to truth as it comes to you. If God gives you only common candle-light, make good use of it; and he will trim your lamp till it shineth like the sevenfold golden light of his holy place. Those who are willing to see God by the moon of nature shall soon be illuminated by the sun of revelation. Instead of complaining that you have no more light, make good use of what you have. Many groan over their inabilities, and yet they have never gone to the end of their abilities: this is sheer hypocrisy.

Having become a proselyte to the faith of Israel, the eunuch made a long and perilous journey to Jerusalem. After he had enjoyed the solemn feast he returned; and while he traveled along, he read the word of God. The book of the prophet Isaiah was the portion chosen for his meditation. Does it not strike you as being remarkable that he should be reading at that moment the best text that Philip could have selected? He had reached a portion of Scripture from which, without the slightest digression, the evangelist preached unto him Jesus as the slain lamb, the willing sacrifice for guilty men. The like conjunction of providence and the Holy Spirit constantly occurs in conversions. What the man has read

in the book, the preacher is often moved by the Spirit of God to declare from the pulpit, for God has servants everywhere, and his secret directions are given out, so that all these servants, though they are little aware of it, are led to work together for the same predestined end. How often have the talks of young men by the wayside been reproduced by the preacher, and such singular coincidences have struck their attention, and been the means of impressing their hearts! God grant there may be something of that kind to-night—I know there will be. Into this hall years ago there strayed a wild young man; he heard me preach, he believed in Jesus, and he has long been an honored deacon of a suburban church. Are there not other men here to whom the like salvation shall come?

This eminent nobleman is reading. That is a commendable occupation: reading is in itself somewhat of a hopeful sign. In these days we need hardly exhort young men to read. "Give attendance to reading," said the wise apostle Paul, and that was excellent advice for Timothy. Let all Christian men be reading men. But, then, Philips question contains these words, "what thou readest," and that suggests a necessary enquiry. I am afraid much that is read nowadays had far better be left unread. Multitudes of books are fruits of an accursed tree—the tree of evil knowledge, which is watered by the rivers of perdition. The fruits of this upas-tree will yield no benefit to the minds that feed thereon, but much of solemn damage; by perverting the judgment, or polluting the imagination. Souls have been ruined to all eternity by reading a vile book. Count it no trifle to have heard bad language; but count it a more serious evil to have read a bad book which has wounded your soul, and left a scar upon your conscience. The writer of an evil book is a deliberate poisoner, secretly pouring death into the wells from which men drink. The printers and publishers of such works are accomplices in the crime. Young men, you will read—who among us would wish you to do otherwise?—but take heed what you read! As one who has read more greedily than most men all sorts of books, I bear my testimony that the best of reading is the reading of the best of books. The more we read the Bible and volumes that lead up to the understanding of it, the better for us. I do not like to see in a lending-library all the works of fiction needing to be bound two or three times over, while the books of sober fact and solid teaching, and the works that speak of eternal things, have never been read, since they

have not even been cut. I fear that this is the general if not the universal rule. "Understandest thou what thou readest?" is a question I should hardly put until a man has made up his mind that he will not read mere rubbish and falsehood, but will with deep attention read that which is accurate, truthful, devout, and ennobling. Read; take heed what you read; and then seek to understand what you read.

It was a very sharp-pointed question that Philip put to this gentleman. He made honest and earnest use of a rare opportunity for reaching one of the upper ten. We find it tolerably easy to put questions to a man who is poor, but how shall we approach the rich? We have sermons for the working-classes, and it would be a fair and useful thing to have sermons for the House of Peers, and evangelistic addresses for the Commons! Are there any bigger sinners anywhere than you might find in those two chambers? The rich are neither better nor worse than the poor: the various classes have bad and good in each of them, in much the same proportion. I am persuaded that there are noble lords and honorable gentlemen who would be all the better for a little teaching upon the things of the kingdom of God: for instance, it might do many of them good to hear a plain sermon from, "Ye must be born again." Why is it that we are so apt to be plain-spoken with working-men, and not with their employers? I admire Philip for his outspokenness to the royal treasurer. This gentleman keeps a carriage. Look at his retinue and his brave display! He is a very important personage, and yet Philip, who is nobody in particular, only a poor preacher of the Word, runs up to the chariot, and solemnly asks, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Young men, never be irritated by plain questions from a servant of Christ, or else you will not be as noble as this Ethiopian chamberlain: and, young men, when you know the Lord, do not be ashamed yourselves to put important questions to other people. Bold enquiries often give less offense than the more politic and indirect address which timidity suggests. I fear the world can seldom charge the church with being too violent in its appeals. Look at what the ungodly will do to us. Where can you live in a street of London, especially in this part of the town, without having night made hideous with their loud licentious songs and shouts? They force upon us their irreligion: may we not introduce our religion in return? If we go up to a man straight away, and speak to him in the name of Christ, perhaps he will say, "You

intrude." Well, we are not the only people that intrude, for many intrude their filthy tongues upon us as we go down the streets, and force their infidelity upon us in the daily prints. The world sets the fashion, and if we follow its customs it has no right to complain. When the wicked grow so delicate that they are afraid of hurting our feelings by their unbelieving speeches, we may take into consideration how we can go delicately also. Meanwhile, is there anything which a man of God has not a right to say if it be the truth, and if he be earnestly aiming at the salvation of his fellow-men?

This was the question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Ah, my brothers, you and I have need to understand the Bible. I will suppose you read it—let me hope I am not mistaken; but when you read it, do labor, above all things, to understand it. The Book was written to be understood. It is a book which speaks to us about our lives (for the soul is the true life), and about the bliss eternal, and the way to win it. It must be so written as to be understood, since it were a mockery for God to give us a revelation which we could not comprehend. The Bible was meant to be understood, and it benefits us in proportion as we get at the meaning of it. The mere words of Scripture passing over the ear or before the eye, can do us little good. I heard a person say once, concerning a great doctrine which I hold to be very plainly taught in Scripture, that he had read the Bible through—I think he said six times—on his knees, but he could not find that doctrine. I replied, "Brother, that is an awkward position in which to read the Bible. I should have sat upon a chair, and studied the page in a natural and easy posture. Moreover, I should not have galloped through it at the rate at which you must have raced over the chapters. I should rather have read a little at a time, and tried to understand it."

"Understandest thou what thou readest?" that is the question. "I read a chapter every morning," says one. Quite right; keep that up, but "Understandest thou what thou readest?" "Well, I learn the daily text." Yes, but "Understandest thou what thou readest?" That is the main point. The butterflies flit over the garden, and nothing comes of their flitting; but look at the bees, how they dive into the bells of the flowers, and come forth with their thighs laden with the pollen, and their stomachs filled with sweetest honey for their hives. This is the way to read the Bible: get

into the flowers of Scripture, plunge into the inward meaning, and suck out that secret sweetness which the Lord has put there for your spiritual nourishment. A thoughtful book needs and deserves thoughtful reading. If it has taken its author a long time to write it, and he has written it with much consideration, it is due to him that you give his work a careful perusal. If the thoughts of men deserve this, what shall I say of the supreme thoughts of God which he has written for us in this Book? Let us bend ourselves to the Book; let us ask for increased capacity, and let us use what capacity we already possess to reach the inmost soul of the Word of God, that we may understand it, and be fed thereby. The Bible can be understood, I do assure you. I will not say that any man here understands all of it. I do not believe there is any man alive that does. I could not myself believe in it if I could understand it all—for I should imagine that it came from my equal, and not from that supreme Master mind, whose thoughts must be above our thoughts, even as the heavens are above the earth. All that is right, all that is fundamental, all that is essential to our soul's eternal good, can be understood by the help of God if we desire to understand it. Digest the word, I pray you. Be prepared to answer this question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Desiring to press that matter upon you, I am going to speak upon three questions somewhat briefly. The first is, What is most essential to be understood in this Book? secondly, What is the test of a man's understanding it? and, lastly, What can be done to obtain such a desirable understanding?

I. WHAT, THEN, IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO BE UNDERSTOOD IN THIS BOOK?

I do verily believe that it is contained in the passage which the eunuch was reading. It is a very singular passage. A section of the Bible begins at Isaiah 53., and goes onward through several chapters. I will read you a verse or two out of that part which the eunuch would soon have read had he continued to peruse the words of the prophet. Already he had noted the words,—"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." There was something for him, for he had gone astray, and knew his lost estate. Go on to chapter 54., verse 3, and read this, "Thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the

Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." He might have thought, "I am one of the Gentiles, and therefore I am of the nations that shall be possessed by the seed." When he reached the fifty-fifth chapter, how his eyes would sparkle as he began to read, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters"! And this, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Here, too, he would hear the voice of God inviting men to come to his Anointed, and he would mark that promise, "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God." He would rejoice to see that the Ethiopians were included in those who knew not the Christ, but should, nevertheless, run to him.

I beg you to look at the fifty-sixth chapter and the third verse. I fancy the eunuch had aforetime read the portion; it must have been a favourite passage with him, for it runs thus: "Neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus said the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters." Was not that pointedly personal, and full of consolation? I do not wonder that he liked to be found reading near such a choice promise, wherein he saw the tender compassion of the Lord for beings who are usually despised.

The passage from which Philip's text was taken contains the most essential thing for every young man to know. Let him know and understand the sixth verse of the fifty-third of Isaiah; it begins with "all" and ends with "all;" therefore carry it in your memories—"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." What is wanted is that we first understand that we have all gone astray. He who does not know that he has gone astray will not care for the Shepherd who comes to fetch him back again. A humbling, heart-breaking sense of our personal wanderings from the Lord is a main force by which the heavenly Father leads us to the Lord Jesus and his salvation. I want every young man here to know and understand the truth, that salvation is the gift of divine mercy to those who are guilty, and is never the reward of human merit. Christ did not come to save you because you are good, for you are not good; nor

because you have merit, for you have no merit. He would not have come to save you if you had possessed merit. Why should he? There would have been no need. I hear the doctor's brougham rattling down the street at a great pace, and I wonder where he is going. It never occurs to me that he is rushing to call upon a hale and hearty man. I am persuaded that he is hastening to see one who is very ill, perhaps one in dying circumstances, otherwise he would not drive so fast. It is just so with Jesus Christ. When he is hurrying on the wings of the wind to rescue a child of man, I am sure that the soul he visits is sick with the malady of sin, and that the Physician is making haste because the disease is developing into corruption and death. He came not "to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

"Who rightly would his alms dispose
Must give them to the poor;
None but the wounded patient knows
The comforts of a cure."

Jesus will not waste his grace on those who are already good. "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away."

Oh, that you would also understand the second half of Isaiah's verse, "The Lord hath laid, on him the iniquity of us all"! There is more philosophy in that statement than in all the teachings of Aristotle, there is more truth worth knowing in that one sentence than in all the books of the Alexandrian Library. The Lord Jehovah lifted up the sin of man, and deliberately laid it upon his dear Son. His Son, willingly bearing that load as our Substitute, went up to the tree, and there he bore what was due for all that weight of sin, even the penalty of darkness, desertion, and death. By bearing the chastisement he put away sin, and hurled it into his own sepulcher, wherein it is buried for ever. Now, every man who believes in Jesus may know that his sin was laid upon Christ, and borne by Christ, and put away by Christ. A thing cannot be in two places at one time. If my sin was laid on Christ, it is no longer laid on me. God cannot exact two penalties for the same offense: if he accepted Christ Jesus as my substitute, then he cannot punish me. God's justice cannot twice demand the penalty—

"First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

Such an exaction would be a strange confusion and destruction of both love and justice. Such injustice can never be. This is how you are to get rid of your sin. You cannot bear it, but Christ bore it; you are to accept Christ as your Sin-bearer, and then you may know that your sins have gone, that the depths have covered them; that there is not one of them left. I sometimes think if men did but understand this they would be sure to accept the Lord Jesus. I heard of a minister in Edinburgh who went to visit one of his poor people. He heard that she was in deep poverty, and therefore he went to take her help. When he came to her house, he could not make anybody hear, though he knocked loud and long. Seeing her some time after, he said, "Janet, I knocked at your door with help for you, but you did not hear me." "What time did you come, Sir?" said she. "It was about twelve o'clock." "Oh," she said, "I did hear you, Sir, but I thought it was the man calling for the rent." Just so. Men do hear the calls of Christ, but they are wilfully deaf, because they think he wants them to do something. But he does not want anything of you; he wants you to receive what he has already done. He comes laden with mercy, with his hands full of blessing, and he knocks at your door: you have only to open it and he will enter in, and salvation will enter with him. Say, "Come in, thou Traveller unknown! What hast thou in thy hands? I gladly accept what thou dost bring." Will not some young man here, who has thought religion to be a hard exaction, change his mind, now that he understands that it is a bountiful boon? Salvation is a gift—a free gift of God. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Savior lifts sin from men to himself, and then makes an end of that sin once for all by his death upon the cross. Oh, hear you this, ye guilty ones: there is full salvation presented to you in the word of God—salvation from every sort of evil! You shall be helped to overcome every bad passion, to conquer every evil habit, to be masters of your own minds, and lords of your own spirits. The Lord Jesus Christ, if you accept him, will come into your heart, and turn out his enemy and yours, and he will reign in you from this time forth and for ever, until he has made you perfect, and fit to dwell with himself in glory. Oh, that you understood this vital point; "All we like

sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"!

II. WHAT IS THE TEST OF A MAN'S UNDERSTANDING HIS BIBLE, AND OF UNDERSTANDING THIS PASSAGE IN IT?

I answer that the test of a man's understanding this important part of Scripture is that Jesus Christ is everything to him: for Philip, who did understand it, when he explained it, preached unto the eunuch Jesus and nothing else. I try with all my might to preach my Lord Jesus Christ, and I love to meet with people who delight in this theme. Certain critics call upon us to preach something fresh. This also will I do, for I will preach Jesus, and he is always fresh: there is nothing stale in him, he has for ever the dew of his youth.

It may be said, "But new doctrines are brought out continually." Yes, but they grow stale in a month; they are a poor kind of Covent Garden stuff, and need to be carted away quickly, else they decay. I have lived to see a score or more sorts of modern theology; they all come and go, but Jesus Christ remains the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

If you have Jesus Christ, you have everything—top, bottom, and middle as well. Have Christ and nothing else but Christ. You will not be in safety if you rest without having a firm hold of Jesus, the divine Savior. "Well," says one, "but what do you make of Socinians and Unitarians?" I come to the same conclusion about them as did an old Baptist minister, who was greatly grieved to see a Socinian chapel erected opposite his own. One of his deacons said, "This is a dreadful thing—this opposition shop that has been opened on the other side of the road!" "I don't call it opposition at all," said the minister. The deacon exclaimed, "Why, they are Unitarians; they don't preach the Godhead of Christ!" The old man said, "If you kept a baker's shop, and another man were to open an ironmongery business opposite you, that would not be opposition, for he would be in quite another line. Those who do not preach the deity of Christ are in an altogether different business. If you want ironmongery you may go to them, but if you want the bread of heaven you must look to the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Highest." So if you want to understand the Scripture, test yourself by this: Is Jesus Christ everything to you?

"You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of him."

You understand the Scripture if you make everything of the Lord Jesus Christ; if you believe on him with all your heart, and then yield yourselves up to him in his own way.

Every young man, when he believes in Jesus, should give himself to Jesus, heart and soul, for ever. "That's the kind of young man for my money, for he is O and O." So spake a certain person, and when he was asked what that meant, he replied, "Out and out for Jesus Christ." Such a man is precious in these days; yes, precious as the gold of Ophir. Jesus was out and out for us, he loved us, and gave himself for us: there should be no half-heartedness in our dealings with him. If we have read Scripture aright, we have not received the kind of Christianity which sanctifies us on Sunday, but enables us to be dishonest throughout the week. True saints have a religion that has entered into their very blood, changing their nature, and permeating their being, so that it is part and parcel of themselves. Practical Christianity is the only real Christianity. If your religion can be laid aside I would advise you to get rid of it; for a real Christian could no more lay aside his godliness than he could unscrew his head.

I like this eunuch for proposing that he should be baptized. He was not advised to do so, but he proposed it himself, and gave himself up to his Lord and Master to do the Lord's bidding at once, the providence of God having provided water that he might there and then fulfill his Master's command. Young man, whichever way the Scripture bids you dedicate yourself to God, set to work about it, and let it be done at once. Find out what is the scriptural way, and then follow it without delay, surrendering yourself wholly to the Lord: you have not read the Scriptures with understanding unless you do that.

The next thing is, if you have read the Scriptures with a clear understanding, they have made you glad, for this eunuch "went on his way rejoicing." The man who gets up from reading his Bible, and says, "I am a believer in Jesus; what a solemn thing it is!" and then goes forth with a pious resolution that he will make everybody as miserable as he

can all the day long, wants converting again. The faith of the Scriptures leads joy by the hand, and chases away despair. When true religion comes, its tendency is to make us rejoice in the Lord always; and though we are not as happy as we ought to be, that is not the fault of our faith, but of our unbelief. Fair flowers of Paradise spring up where Faith plants her feet; but thistles grow where doubt abides. Our indigestion, or some other malady may depress us; but faith should make our songs abound even while we are travelling through the wilderness. Joys unspeakable may be ours before we

"Reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets."

You have not read your Bible so as to understand it to the full, unless you have learned to be happy by a sweet resting in Jesus.

I think you have not understood the Bible unless it makes you care about the salvation of others; for this Ethiopian nobleman, when he got home, I have no doubt, spread the gospel throughout his native land: he was, probably, the founder of the Abyssinian Church. If any young man reads this Book aright, he becomes large-hearted, he cannot hold his soul within the narrow bound of his ribs, but his great heart looks out to see where it can scatter benefits. If thou canst let another man be damned without an effort, I fear that such will be thine own end: if thou canst be quiet when thou believest thy brother is on the brink of eternal ruin, I fear thou art on the brink of ruin thyself. One of the holiest instincts born in a renewed man is that of longing to save others. Being saved, we wish to co-operate with the Savior in his gracious work. A missionary enthusiasm is the natural result of a clear perception of the true state of matters in reference to the world, which lieth in the wicked one. The heathen die without hope: shall it be always so? Will no young man rescue the perishing? I put it to you from the deeps of my soul, will you not cry, "Here am I, send me!"?

You have read this Book so as to understand it, if your message to others is what the message was to you—Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ. You have nothing else to employ as the means of good, except the salvation of Jesus, and there is nothing else worth telling. I heard of a congregation

the other day that was so very small that hardly any one came to listen to the preacher. Instead of blaming himself, and preaching better, the minister said he thought he was not doing much good by sermons and prayer-meetings, and therefore he would found a club, and if the fellows came in, and played draughts, that might do them good. What a lot of that sort of thing is now being tried! We are going to convert souls on a new system,—are we? Are we also to have a substitute for bread?—and healthier drink than pure water? We cannot save men by faith in Jesus Christ, and so it seems we are going to try new dodges of our own. We shall reap small, scant sheaves from such wretched seed. If you can do good anyhow, do good anyhow; but to hope ever to bring sinners to holiness and heaven by any teaching but that which begins and ends in Jesus Christ is a sheer delusion. None other name is given among men whereby they can be saved. If you have to deal with highly learned and educated people, nothing is so good for them as preaching Jesus Christ; and if the people be ignorant and degraded, nothing is better for them than the preaching of Jesus. A young man said to another the other day, "I am going down to preach at So-and-so, what sort of people are they there? What kind of doctrine will suit them?" Having heard of the question, I gave this advice,—"You preach Jesus Christ, and that will suit them, I am sure, if they are learned people it will suit them; if they are ignorant it will suit them—God blessing it." When the great Biblical critic, Bengel, was dying, he sent for a young theological student, to whom he said, "I am low in spirit; say something good to cheer me." "My dear Sir," said the student, "I am so insignificant a person, what can I say to a great man like yourself?" "But if you are a student of theology," said Bengel, "you ought to have a good word to say to a dying man; pray say it without fear." "Well, Sir," said he, "What can I say to you, but that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin?" Bengel said, "Give me your hand, young man; that is the very word I wanted." A simple gospel text is the word which every man needs who is in fear of divine wrath, and he may be sitting next to you at this moment, or he is in the same house of business with you, and needs that you should tell him about Christ. Do that, and bless his soul. May you all understand the Scriptures in this way, and may God make you a great blessing to those around you.

III. Now in a few words I want to answer the question, WHAT CAN BE

DONE TO OBTAIN SUCH A DESIRABLE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES?

"I read the Bible," says one, "and get a great deal puzzled over it." Let me advise that when you read a passage in the Scriptures which you do not understand, you should read it until you do. "I should have to read often." Well, that would not hurt you. "But suppose I never do understand it?" Keep on reading it all the same. "Can passages of Scripture which we do not understand do us any good when we read them?" Yes; they gradually filter into our souls: by long considering them we get light out of them. Here is a little boy whose father is an artisan, and uses a great many technical terms when talking about his work. The boy is apprenticed to the trade, and wants to know all about it, and therefore he listens to his father, and when the day is over he says to himself, "I heard my father say a great deal, but I do not understand much of it." "But you did understand a little of it?" "Oh, yes." To that little he is faithful, and day by day he adds to his store of information, learning more by the help of that which he already knows. He hears his father talk again the next day, and still he does not understand much; but at last, by hearing the terms often, and by meditating upon them, light breaks in, and at length he can talk like his father, using the same words with understanding. So I have found it. When I do not comprehend a chapter, I say,—This is probably comprehensible, I will therefore hear my great Father speak, even if I do not understand at first what he may say to me, and I will keep on hearing him until at last I grasp his meaning. I fear we do not understand some passages because we have not read them often enough, nor thought upon them with full concentration of mind. Once or twice they pass before the mind and produce no impression; let us observe them yet again, and then their effect will be deep and permanent. Do as the photographer does, when he allows an object to be long before the camera until he obtains a well-defined picture. Let your mind dwell on a passage till at last it has photographed itself upon your soul by the light of God.

The next bit of advice I would give is, always read with a desire to understand: always have the crackers with you to crack the nuts, that you may feed upon their kernels. Some may say, when reading the Bible, "That may be a very blessed passage, but I don't in the least know what it

means." Be not content to leave the text in that condition. Weep much because no man can open the book, and loose its seven seals. Pray over the words, and study them again and again, till at last you come at the essence of the text. Reading with that view, it is wonderful how soon you will obtain the understanding you seek after.

Next, be sure to pray for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. If you want to understand a book, and you find difficulties in it, do as I have done on several occasions with my contemporaries—write and ask them what they mean by their language. I have in this way obtained much valuable information. Can we do that with the Bible? Assuredly we can if we know how to pray. The Author of the Bible is never more pleased than when we go directly to him to ask him what he means. He puts himself at the disposal of every earnest student to open up by means known to himself those Scriptures which he hath himself dictated. "I consulted a learned commentator," says one. Very well; at the same time, to go to a commentator upon a book is not half so certain a mode of procedure as to go to the author of the book. Seek instruction of the blessed Spirit by humble prayer.

Remember that you can also go to the Maker of your mind, and he can open it to receive the truth. Your mind is out of order, and it is no wonder, considering its serious damage by the Fall, and the atmosphere of sin which surrounds it in this present evil world. My mind, I know, is very likely to be in a disorderly state; it has for fifty years been always at work, and I think it must by this time be like an old clock that has grown rusty or dusty. I find my brains want clearing out a bit; and I believe that this is the case with you young men, too. You are either very busy, or else very careless, and the dust of care or neglect spreads over your brain. Who can set the brain right? The Creator who made the brain. The Holy Spirit has a wonderful power in clearing the intellect. You shall study for a month and make no headway; but you shall pray to God about a spiritual truth, and it shall be clear to you in a minute. There are multitudes of instances in which men have turned dark problems over and over again in their minds, and have never solved them by their own mental efforts, but one flash of Divine light has made everything bright as noonday. Wait, then, upon the Author of the Book, and then wait upon

the author of yourself, and say, "Lord, as thou openest the Scriptures, so open my understanding that I may perceive their meaning."

I would earnestly entreat every man who desires to understand the Bible to consider at this moment the vital point of his natural condition, and the way of salvation from it. You are lost, dear friend. If you are an unconverted man you are still lost, and you cannot save yourself; it is impossible that you should. You may have heard the story of that philosopher who was once on the roof of a house, when suddenly behind him came a strong man with a huge whip, and told him to jump down to the ground. Certain death would have been the result. The man was a lunatic. The philosopher perceived that terrible fact in a moment, and so he very wisely said, "Well, you see? any fool can jump down, the grand thing would be to jump up. Let us go down, and jump up." They went down, but they never jumped up, for the gentleman thus escaped. Are there not some here who are jumping down? some young men who are taking a desperate leap to one sin or another? Any fool can jump down; but if any of you are already down, I defy you to jump up again. No, you need a greater power than your own before you can ascend the heights of holiness. If you have tried to jump up, I know, young man, you have fallen back in despair. Easy is the descent to hell, the gravitation of our nature tends that way; but to retrace our steps, this is the work, this is the difficulty. Turn that over in your mind, and say, "If there be salvation to be had, since I cannot work out my own rescue without divine grace, I will trust in Jesus." Oh, that you would seek his grace at once!

I tried to preach the gospel just now; let me again put it simply. A negro worded it thus, "Christ die, me not die," and that is the gospel; Christ dies that you may not die. Only trust him, and you are saved.

When you are about it, dear young friend, I beseech you to trust Christ out and out. A homely parable will illustrate what I mean. A father, it is said, had to go one night along the top of a rugged and very slippery precipice. His two boys were with him, and when he started, one boy said, "Father, I will take hold of your hand." He did so, and it seemed a very wise thing to do. The other boy said, "Father, take hold of my hand," and, as it turned out, that was a much more prudent course; for the first youngster clung to his father's hand until he grew weary, and when they

were in a very frightful place he failed to hold on, and down he went, but the other trudged along right merrily, for he was not dependent upon his hold of his father's hand—all depended upon the father's hold of him. Now come, young man, and begin as you mean to go on. Put yourself right into the hand of the Lord Jesus for him to keep you. When I was a lad I heard a preacher say that Christ gave to his sheep eternal life, and that they should never perish, for he would keep them to the end. This charmed me. I longed to find this sure salvation. I thought within myself, "I know James So-and-so, and Tom So-and-so, who went up to London, and who were about a year older than I, and they, within half-a-dozen years, were as far gone in vice as well could be. They were better boys when they were at school than I was, and yet they went to the bad. I may go and do the same thing as they did unless I get this eternal salvation. I may lose my situation, or be found pilfering, or something of that sort, for I have as bad a heart as they have." I looked upon salvation as a spiritual insurance, which would guarantee my character. So I tried the promise and now, at the age of fifty, I place myself under the care of the Lord Jesus as I did at the age of fifteen; he has kept me to this day, and I believe he will never let me go, however long I may live. Oh, young man, give yourself up to that dear pierced hand wholly and heartily! Let your motto be, "Jesus only." Trust Christ a little, and yourself a little, and, like a man who plants one foot on the rock and the other on the quicksand, you will go down. Trust in him alone, and he will hold you fast. If Jesus does not save me, I shall be lost, for I cannot save myself. It is his business to save me, for both by name and office he is Jesus, the Savior; and I rest quite happily in him.

When we meet in heaven we shall praise the Lord for making us understand what we read. God bless you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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God's Law in Man's Heart

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."—Hebrews 8:10

When God gave to Israel his law,—the law of the first covenant,—it was such a holy law that it ought to have been kept by the people. It was a just and righteous law, concerning which God said, "Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord." The law of the ten commandments is strictly just; it is such a law as a man might make for himself if he studied his own best interests, and had wisdom enough to frame it aright. It is a perfect law, in which the interests of God and man are both studied; it is not a partial law, but impartial, complete, and covering all the circumstances of life. You could not take away one command out of the ten without spoiling both tables of the law, and you could not add another command without being guilty of making a superfluity. The law is holy, and just, and good; it is like the God who made it, it is a perfect law. Then, surely, it ought to have been kept. When men revolt against unjust laws, they are to be commended; but when a law is admitted to be perfect, then disobedience to it is an act of exceeding guilt.

Further, God not only gave a law which ought to have been kept, because of its own intrinsic excellence, but he also gave it in a very wonderful way, which ought to have ensured its observance by the people. The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai in fire, and the mountain was altogether on a smoke, and the smoke thereof ascended "as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount Quaked greatly;" and the sight that was then seen on Sinai, and the sounds that were there heard, and all the pomp and awful grandeur were so terrible that even Moses,—that boldest, calmest, quietest of men said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." The children of Israel, as they heard that law proclaimed, were so amazed and overwhelmed with God's display of his majesty and might, that they were ready enough to promise to keep his commandments. The law of God

could not have been made known to mankind in grander or more sublime style than was displayed in the giving of that covenant on Mount Sinai.

And, dear friends, after the giving of the law, did not God affix to it those terrible penalties which should have prevented men from disobeying his commands? "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." It was the capital sentence that was to be pronounced upon the disobedient; there could be no heavier punishment than that. God had, as it were, drawn his sword against sin; and if man had been a reasonable being, he ought at once to have started back from committing an act which he might be sure would make God his foe.

Moreover, the blessings that were appended to the keeping of the law ought to have induced men to keep it; look again at those words I quoted just now: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord." This did not mean that the man who kept God's law should merely exist; there are some in these degenerate days who seek to make out life to be existence, and death to be annihilation, but there is little likeness between the words, or between what those words mean. "He shall live in them," said the Lord concerning the man who kept his law; and there is a fullness of blessedness couched in that word, "live." If men had kept the covenant of the Lord,—if Adam, for instance, had kept it in the garden of Eden, the rose would have been without a thorn to tear his flesh, and the enjoyment of life would never have been marred by the bitterness of toil or grief.

But, alas! notwithstanding all these solemn sanctions of the ancient covenant, men did not keep it. The promise, "This do, and thou shalt live," never produced any doing that was worthy to be rewarded with life; and the threatening, "Do this, and thou shalt die," never kept any man back from daringly venturing into the wrong road which leadeth unto death. The fact is, that the covenant of works, if it be looked upon as a way of safety, is a total failure. No man ever persevered in it unto the end, and no man ever attained unto life by keeping it. Nor can we, now that we are fallen, ever hope to be better than our unfallen covenant-head, Adam; nor may we, who are already lost and condemned by our sinful works, dream for a moment that we shall be able to save ourselves by our works.

You see, dear friends, the first covenant was in these terms,—“You do right, and God will reward you for it. If you deserve life, God will give it to you.” Now, as you all know right well, that covenant was broken all to pieces; it was unable to stand by reason of the weakness of our flesh and the corruptness of our nature. So God set aside that first covenant, he put it away as an outworn and useless thing; and he brought in a new covenant,—the covenant of grace; and in our text we see what is the tenor of it: “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.” This is one of the most glorious promises that ever fell from the lips of infinite love. God said not, “I will come again, as I came on Sinai, and thunder at them.” No, but, “I will come in gentleness and mercy, and find a way into their hearts.” He said not, “I will take two great tables of stone, and with my finger write out my law before their eyes.” No, but, “I will put my finger upon their hearts, and there will I write my law.” He said not, “I will give promises and threatenings that shall be the safeguard of this new covenant;” but, “I will with my Spirit graciously operate upon their minds and their hearts, and so I will sweetly influence them to serve me,—not for reward, nor from any servile motive, but because they know me, and they love me, and they feel it to be their delight to walk in the way of my commandments.” O dear sirs may you all be shares in the blessings of that new covenant! May God say this of you, and do this to you; and if so, we shall meet in the glory-land, to sing unto the grace of that eternal God who has wrought so wondrously with us, and in us, and for us!

Coming directly to the text, I shall, first of all, speak upon the meaning of this blessing; secondly, upon the means whereby God bestows this blessing upon us, trying to show you with what pencil the Lord writes upon the human heart; and, thirdly, I shall dwell for a few minutes upon the exceeding grace of this blessing.

I. First, then, I am to speak upon **THE MEANING OF THIS BLESSING:** “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.”

It means, first, that when God comes to deal with his own chosen people, really to save them, he makes them to know his law. The law still stands in the Old Testament, and our blessed Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, has condensed it into one word “Love;” and then he has expanded it

throughout the whole of his earthly life to show us how it ought to be kept. So we sing,—

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in thy Word,
But in thy life the law appears
Drawn out in living characters."

But, although we can read that law in the Scriptures, and see it wrought out in the life of Christ, yet it is needful that the Spirit of God should come and enlighten us with regard to it, if we are really to know what it is. Otherwise, a man may hear the ten commandments read every Sabbath day, and go on breaking them without ever knowing that he is breaking them; he may be keeping the letter of the commandments, and yet all the while be violating their spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes to us, he shows us what the law really is. Take, for instance, the command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." "Well!" says one, "I have not broken that commandment." "Stay," says the Spirit of God, "till you know the spiritual meaning of that command, for whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." There is, also, the command, "Thou shalt not kill." "Oh!" says the man, "I never killed anybody, I have not committed murder." "But," says the Spirit of God, "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." When the Lord thus writes his law upon our heart, he makes us to know the far-reaching power and scope of the commandment. He causes us to understand that it touches not only actions and words, but thoughts, ay, and the most transient imaginations, the things that are scarcely born within us, the sights that pass in a moment across the mind, like a stray passenger who passes in front of the camera when a photographer is taking a view. The Spirit of God teaches us that even these momentary impressions are sinful, and that the very thought of foolishness is sin.

Did you, dear friend, ever have truth truly written on your heart? If so, I will tell you how you felt; you abhorred yourself, and you said, "Who can stand before this terrible law? Who can ever hope to keep these commandments?" You looked to the flames that Moses saw on Sinai and you shrank and trembled almost unto despair, and you entreated that these terrible words should not be spoken to you any more. Yet was it

good for you thus to be made to know the law,—not in the letter of it only, but in its cutting crushing, killing spirit for it worketh death to self-righteousness and death to all carnal boastings. When the law comes, sin revives, and we die; that is all that can come of it by itself. Yet is it necessary that there should be such a death as that, and that there should be such a revival of sin that we may know the truth about it, and under the force of that truth may be driven to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." So, then, writing the law in our heart means, first, making us know what the law really is.

If that is done, the Lord is pleased, next, to cause his people to remember that law. When a thing is "learnt by heart," you know the common meaning of that expression, even amongst our children. If they have learnt a thing by heart rather than merely by rote, they have made it their own, and it remains with them. A man with whom God the Holy Spirit deals is one who does not have to go to the 20th of Exodus to know what the law is; he does not need to stop and ask concerning most things, "Is this right?" or, "Is this wrong?" but he carries within him a balance and a scale, a standard and test by which he can try these things for himself. He has the law of his God written upon his heart, so that, almost as soon as he looks at a thing, he begins to perceive whether there is evil in it or whether it is good. There is a sort of sensitiveness in his soul which makes him discern between good and evil. When God the Holy Spirit is dealing with him, there is a true, enlightened conscience within him, so that he no longer puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, or darkness for light and light for darkness; but something within him tells him, "This is right," or, "That is wrong." It is a most blessed thing when this is the case, and it is always the work of the Spirit of God.

I know that there is some sort of a conscience in most men; I am afraid it is a very small rushlight in some, and that it is almost blown out by their evil habits. They can even make themselves think that they are doing right, when they are as wrong as wrong can be; but in a child of God there is a burning and a shining light which reveals the truth concerning sin. There is within him a something that cannot be silenced; this is that principle or power which John Bunyan calls in his Holy War, "Mr.

Conscience the Recorder of Mansoul." You know that, when the city of Mansoul rebelled against the great King Shaddai, and came under the sway of Diabolus, they shut Mr. Recorder Conscience up in a dark room, for they did not want to let him see what was being done. Yet, notwithstanding, when the old gentleman had his fits, he used to sorely trouble the inhabitants of the guilty town, so they kept him under lock and key as much as possible. But when Mr. Recorder Conscience gets full liberty, and lifts his brow into the sunlight, ah! sirs, then are we guided in a very different way from that of ungodly men who follow their own evil course. Then does the Lord say, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." The law is there to censure or to cheer; it is there to let us hear its voice say, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" or it is there to say, "Stay where you are, go no farther;" or, "Return, thou backsliding daughter, and seek mercy of the Lord."

God does more than that for his people. When he writes his law in our heart, he makes us to approve it. An ungodly man wishes to alter God's law. "There," says he, "I do not like that command, 'Thou shalt not steal,' I should like to be a little bit of a trickster." Another says, "I do not like that purity of which the minister spoke just now, I should like to indulge myself a little. Am I to have no pleasure?" But when the law of the Lord is written in his heart, the man says, "The law is right." He would not alter it if he could; there is nothing that he hates more than the lowering of the tone of the law, for he does not want a lax morality. "Oh, no!" says he, "let us have the highest form of righteousness that can be, and may God help me to live up to it!" Paul says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man;" and so is it with every true child of God, he cannot think of the holiness of God without at once saying, "I would not have him other than he is; let him be holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, for as such I can worship him; but if he were less than that, I could not esteem him." If he hears of God's justice he delights even in that stern attribute, for he would not have an unjust God. Is a great thing when God leads a man to approve of all that is right; I do not mean merely to acknowledge that it is right, but to be glad that it is so, and to wish that in his own soul he were conformed to it.

There is a further writing of the law in the heart when the man of God is

made to appropriate that law,—not only to approve of it, but to approve of it for himself. There are many people who approve of laws as far as they keep their fellow-men in check, but they do not want laws for themselves. "Oh!" says such a person, "of course, everybody ought to be honest; my servants ought not to peculate, they ought not to rob me, they ought to give me a good day's work for their wage." When the argument is turned round, and the question is about giving a good day's wage for the work, then they talk about political economy, which means that it is absolutely necessary that men should be dishonest. That is the pith and marrow of that political science, that every man will be selfish, and that there is no hope that people will be otherwise. A man speaks that which is not true, and sees no evil in it; but if another should say anything against his character, that is a very different matter, it is quite unpardonable. He may walk through the earth, and devour men's characters as much as he pleases; that, of course, is mere criticism, such as we ought all to expect: but if he is touched, and there is a word spoken against him, it is cruel and unkind, and ought to be put down at once. When God writes the law in a man's heart, he takes the law more to himself than he applies it to anybody else and his cry is not, "See how my neighbors sin," but, "See how I sin his clamor is not against his brother's, fault, but against his own fault. No longer does he look out for motes in other men's eyes, but he is most concerned about the beam which he is quite is in his own eye, he and prays the Lord to remove it.

But, brethren, the law is not fully written in the heart till a man, approving the law and appropriating it to himself, feels he delights to obey it. "There," says he, "O my God, my highest happiness lies in doing as thou wouldst have me to do. I do not want any excuse or indulgence for sin, I want, above everything else, to be holy. It shall be my greatest pleasure to be pure, it shall be my perfect bliss to be perfectly holy. Thou hast so written thy law in my heart that, every time my heart beats, it seems to beat for holiness. of my new-born nature are towards right, towards truth towards goodness, towards God." This, dear friends, is to have the law of the Lord written in your heart so as to delight in it after the inward man, and to delight to practice it with the outward man, daily striving to make the entire life to be in accordance with the dictates of God's will. O brothers, is it not a wonderful thing that God shall ever

make it as natural for us to be holy as once it was natural for us to be unholy, and that then we shall find it as much a joy to serve him as once we thought it a pleasure not to serve him, when, indeed, to deny ourselves shall cease to be self-denial? It shall enjoyment to us to be nothing it shall be delight to renounce everything of self and to cling close to God, and to walk in his ways. Then will be fulfilled in our experience the promise of our text, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."

There is an old Latin proverb which says that "things that are written remain;" and I quote that proverb here believing that it is intended in the text to teach us that, when God's law is written in our hearts, it is retained there. The lawyer always says, "You had better be careful what you say, but when you go to law, never write anything, hold back from the use of pen and ink, for that which is written remains." When God writes his law in our hearts, he writes that which will never be blotted out. Once let him take the pen in hand. and begin to write. "Holiness unto the Lord" right across a man's heart, and the devil himself can never remove that sacred line. So it is meant, in our text as a part of the covenant, that God will write "holiness" so deeply upon the nature of his chosen people that they may sooner cease to be than cease to be holy. He will so put his law right into their hearts that you must tear their hearts out before you can tear out their conformity to the mind of God. Is not this a wonderful method of writing the law in the heart? This is sanctification indeed. May God work it in each one of you! and he will if you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; for if you trust in Christ, you are in the covenant, and being in the covenant, this is the promise concerning you, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

Thus have I spoken upon the meaning of this blessing.

II. Now, for a few minutes, I am going to speak upon THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS BLESSING IS GIVEN,—the pens that God uses when he writes upon human hearts,—for I want you to notice this interesting process.

First, God writes his law upon his people's hearts with the pen of

gratitude. He tells them that Jesus Christ loves them, and gave himself for them. He gives them a sight of the bleeding Savior, and tells them that their sin is put away by his death. Then, in return, they love the Lord with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, The best way to make a man keep a law is to make him love the law-giver. We thought at one time that God was a cruel tyrant, but we have learned that he is our loving Father. We could not have thought that he would have given his only-begotten Son to die as the Substitute for us; but, now that he has done so, we love him with all our heart. There is one way of writing the law of God in our heart by giving us gratitude as the motive of a new life. The natural man's only motive for being good is, "If I am good, I shall go to heaven; and if I am bad, I shall go to hell." That is the slave's motive; but the child of God is no more a slave, he has been delivered from his former bondage. He says, "I am saved by sovereign grace, therefore I shall go to heaven. I shall never go to hell, that cannot be. I am God's chosen one, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and—

"Now for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross."

"Chosen, not for any goodness of my own, but entirely of the free and sovereign grace of God; tell me now what I can do to show my gratitude to such a gracious God." That is one way in which the law of the Lord gets written in the hearts of his people.

Again, the law is written in the heart by repentance working hatred of sin. Burnt children, you know, are afraid of the fire. Oh, what a horror I have had of sin ever since the day when I felt its power over my soul! It was enough to drive me mad when I felt the guilt of sin; it would have done so, I sometimes think, if I had continued much longer in that terrible condition. O sin, sin, I have had enough of thee! Thou didst never bring me more than a moment's seeming joy, and with it there came a deep and awful bitterness which burns within me to this day! And now, being set free from sin, can I go back to it? Some of you, my brethren and sisters, came to Christ with such difficulty that you were saved, as it were, by the skin of your teeth. You were like Jonah, you had to come up from the

bottom of the mountains, and out of the very belly of hell you cried unto God. Well, that experience has made sin so bitter to you that you will not go back to it. The law has been written in your heart with the steel pen of repentance, and God has made sin to be a horrible evil to you.

Farther than that, and deeper than that God also writes his law upon the heart in regeneration, wherein he creates in man a new and better life. In regeneration, if I understand it at all, there is born in us a new nature. Our old nature is all sin, and it will never be anything else but sin. You may doctor it as you will, but it is a body of sin and death, and it will always remain so; but the new nature, which is born in us at our new birth, cannot sin, because it is born of God. It is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever; and that new heart, that right spirit, from its very birth, from its very origin, from its very nature, has the law and will of God engraved upon it. To the new nature, it is as natural to obey as to the old nature it is natural to disobey. To the new nature, it is as much its element to live in holiness as to the old nature it is its element to live in sin. Thus, by regeneration, the law of the Lord is written in the heart of his people.

Again, God writes his law the more fully in the heart of his people as they increase in knowledge. The more we know of God, of this life, of the life to Come, of heaven and hell, of the person of Christ, of the atonement, and of every other subject that is taught us in the Scriptures, the more we see the evil of sin, and the more we see the delights of holiness. Why, at the very first moment of his conversion, man is afraid of sin because of what he has seen of it; but as he begins to perceive how sin put the Christ to death, how sin digged the pit of hell, how sin brought all the plagues and curses upon the human family, and will continue to curse generations yet unborn, then the man says, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Trained and educated in the school of Christ, the more he knows, the more he delights in the law and the will of God.

And farther than this, dear friends, the law is written in the heart, as God makes the new life in us to grow and increase. Some Christians, I am sorry to say, have but little spiritual life. I spoke yesterday with a man of God who has been preaching the gospel in the New Hebrides, where till lately the people were cannibals; and, by God's grace, he has brought

hundreds, if not thousands, of the former savages to become Christians; and the good brother, when he spoke of his hardships, said, "All, but you do not know in England the joys of those who preach to cannibals!" True, most of the missionaries who first went out were killed and eaten, and our friend escaped by the skin of his teeth; I looked at him again to hear what his special and peculiar joys were. "Oh!" he said, "the joy of converting a cannibal to Christ is a greater bliss than can be known by you, who only bring ordinary people to the Savior; and," he added, "I tell you that there are no Christians that I know of that excel my converted cannibals. If you want to see the Sabbath day sacredly kept, you must come into my place, and see how these people who used to be cannibals keep it. Those who were accustomed to eat their fellow-men, now never rise without prayer, and never sit at the table without asking a blessing. There is not a Christian household but has family prayer in it, morning and evening. These people walk with God," said the missionary, "and live close to Christ; and as I look at them, it seems such a joy to have been the means of bringing these cannibals to Christ." I am afraid there are many nominally Christian people who are not half as good as those converted cannibals. What is the reason? It is because they seem to have God's life poured into them abundantly, and some among us have but little of it. Now, when a man gets the life of God abundantly poured into him, he is sensitive against sin, for he has the law of God written in his heart, and thereby God has made his conscience—

"Quick as the apple of an eye."

He cannot bear to hear an ill word from others, or himself have an evil thought without being grieved and troubled. I have seen men who have professed to be Christians do many questionable things, and yet never feel that they were doing any wrong; but as for the true Christian, who lives near to God, and who has been acting perfectly right as far as other people could judge, when he gets home, he begins blaming himself for something he did not do. As far as you can see, he has said and done the right thing; but he says, "No, I did not say it as earnestly as I ought to have said it; I did not do it as I ought to have done it." As for myself, I know that, when I live nearest to God, I am most conscious of sin; and I

believe that, in proportion as you get away from God, you will begin to think that you are perfect; but if you live in the light of the Lord, sin will be a daily plague to you, and you will be crying for the precious blood to wash you and It is the man who is spiritually blind who talks about his holiness, but it is the one whose eyes have been opened of God, the really holy man whom God has brought near to himself, who still cries out, "Holier! Holier! Higher."

"Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me.
Still all my song shall be.
Nearer, my God, to thee!
Nearer to thee!"

And this is how God writes his law in his people's hearts, by giving them so much light that they become tender and sensitive at the very approach of sin.

And, once more, communing with Christ is the best way of getting the law written in the heart. He who is with Christ from morning to noon, and from noon to dewy eve, and who can say at night,—

"Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Savior's breast,"—

he is the man who will have the law of God written in his heart. How can he sin whose garments smell of the myrrh and aloes and cassia of communion with Christ? How can he come out of the ivory palaces of fellowship with his Lord, and then go and live as others do, and sin against his God?

Thus, you see, dear friends, how it is that the Lord writes his law in the hearts of his people.

III. I have but a minute or two in which to speak upon THE GREAT GRACE WHICH IS CONTAINED IN THIS BLESSING.

I do not know a greater gift than this that even God can bestow,—save the gift of his only-begotten Son: "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."

O you poor sinners, I may exhort you to keep the law; but, without the Spirit of God working within you, nothing will come of it! But if God puts his law into your hearts, then you will keep it. Oh, that he might even now lead you to his dear Son, that you might see his law in the hand of Christ, and then feel that pierced hand dropping it into your heart to abide there for ever!

The great grace of this blessing lies here. First, God does what man would not and could not do. Man would not keep the law, he refused to obey it; so God comes, in the splendor of his grace, and changes his will, renews his heart, alters his affections, so that, what man would not do, God does. Man has also become so fallen that he cannot keep the law. Sooner might the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, than he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well; but what man cannot do, by reason of the perversity of the flesh, God performs within him, working in him to will and to do of his good pleasure. Oh, what amazing grace is this, which while it forgives our want of will, also removes our want of power!

And, dear friends, is it not a wonderful proof of grace that God does this without destroying man in any degree whatever? Man is a creature with a will,—a "free will" as they sometimes call it,—a creature who is responsible for his actions; so God does not come and change our hearts by a physical process, as some seem to dream, but by a spiritual process in which he never mars our nature, but sets our nature right. If a man becomes a child of God, he still has a will. God does not destroy the delicate machinery of our nature, but he puts it into proper gear. We become Christians with our own full assent and consent; and we keep the law of God not by any compulsion except the sweet compulsion of love. We do not keep it because we cannot do otherwise, but we keep it because we would not do otherwise, because we have come to delight therein, and this seems to me the greatest wonder of divine grace.

See, dear friends, how different is the Lord's way of working and ours. If you knock down a man who is living an evil life, and put him in chains, you can make him honest by force; or if you set him free, and hem him round with Acts of Parliament, you may make him sober if he cannot get anything to drink, you may make him wonderfully quiet if you put a gag in his mouth; but that is not God's way of acting. He who put man in the Garden of Eden, and never put any palisades around the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but left man a free agent, does just the same in the operations of his grace. He leaves his people to the influences that are within them, and yet they go right, because they are so changed and renewed by his grace that they delight to do that which once they loathed to do. I admire the grace of God in acting thus. We should have taken the watch to pieces, and broken half the wheels, and made new ones, or something of the kind. But God knows how to leave the man just as much a man as he was before his conversion, and yet to make him so entirely a new man that old things have passed away, and all things have become new.

And this is very beautiful, too, that when God writes his law in his people's hearts, He makes this the way of their preservation. When God's law is written in a man's heart, that heart becomes divinely royal property, for the King's name is there, and the heart in which God has written his name can never perish. Some years ago, my esteemed brother, Mr. John B. Gough, out of his great love for me, sent me a very valuable walking-stick. It must have cost him a large sum of money, for it was made of ebony, and it had a gold head to it, with pieces of Californian quartz curiously worked into the head of the stick. I cannot say that it was of much practical use to me, but still I valued it as a present from Mr. Gough. One night, a thief got into my house, and stole my walking-stick, and the man, of course, broke up the stick, and took off the gold from the head. He brought it down to a pawnbroker's not far from here; he had hammered and battered it as much as he could; but when the pawnbroker looked carefully at it, he saw the letters, "S-p-u-r-g-e-o-n." "Oh!" said he, to the man, "you stop a bit," which, of course, was just what the thief did not do. I got my gold back again because my name was in it; though the man hammered it, there was my name, and the gold was bound to come back to me, and so it did. Now, when the Lord once writes his name in

your heart, he writes his law within you; and though the devil may batter you, God will claim you as his own. Temptation and sin may assail you, but if the law of the Lord is in your heart, you shall not give way to sin, you shall resist it, you shall be preserved, you shall be kept, for you are the Lord's.

This is the only way of salvation that I know of for any of you. First, you must be washed in the fountain filled with blood; and next, you must have the law of God written in your inward parts. Then shall you be safe beyond fear of ruin. "They shall be mine," saith the Lord of hosts, "in that day when I make up my jewels." Oh, blessed plan of salvation! May it be accepted by every man and woman here! And it can only be so by the work of the Spirit of God leading you to a simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust Christ to save you, and he will do it, as surely as he is the Christ of God. God help you to trust him now! Amen.

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Revelation and Conversion

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul."—Psalm 19:7.

When he spoke of "the law of the Lord, David did not merely mean the law as it was given in the ten commandments, although that also is perfect, and is used, to some extent, in the conversion of souls. The term includes the entire doctrine of God,—the whole divine revelation; and though, in David's day, there was not so full and clear a revelation as we have,—for the New Testament was not then given, nor much of the Old Testament, yet the text has lost none of its former force, but has rather gained more; so I shall use it as applicable to the entire Scriptures,—to the law and to the gospel, and to all that God has revealed; and speaking of it in that sense, I may truly say that it is perfect, and that it converts the soul.

A tree is known by its fruit, and a book must be tested by its effects. There are some books which bear their fruit for the hangman and the jail; and such books are very widely spread nowadays. They are frequently embellished with engravings, and put into the hands of boys and girls, and a crop of criminals is constantly the result of their publication and circulation. There have been books written which have spread moral contagion throughout centuries. I need not mention them; but if it were possible to gather them all together in one heap, and burn them as the Ephesians burnt their books of magic, it would be one of the greatest blessings conceivable. Yet, if that were done, I fear that other wicked brains would be set to work to think out similar blasphemies, and that other hands would be found to scatter their vile productions.

The Word of God must be tested, like other books, by the effect which it produces; and I am going to speak upon one of its effects to which many of us here present can bear personal witness. The old proverb says, "Speak as you find;" and I am going to speak of the Bible as I have found it,—to praise the bridge that has carried me over every difficulty until now, and that has carried a great many of you over also. We know that the law of the Lord is good because it converts the soul; and, to our mind, the best proof of its purity and power is that it has converted our soul.

My first object will be to show how the Word of God converts the soul; then to show the excellence of the work of conversion; and, therefore, thirdly, the excellence of that Book which produces conversion.

I. First, then, I am to show HOW THE WORD OF GOD CONVERTS THE SOUL.

Man's face is turned away from his Maker. Ever since the fatal day when our first parents broke the law of God, we have been, all of us, guilty of the same great crime. We stand as men who have their backs to the light, and we are going the downward road, the road which leads to destruction. What we need is to be turned round, for that is the meaning of the word "converted"—turned right about. We need to hear the command, "Right about face," and to march in the opposite direction from any in which we have ever marched before. Our text truly says that the Word of God turns us round. It does not mean that the Word alone

does that apart from the Spirit of God, because a man may read the Bible through fifty times, and, for fifty years, hear sermons that have all come out of the Bible, and yet they will never turn him unless the Spirit of God makes use of the Word of God or the preacher's sermons. But when the Spirit of God goes with the Word, then the Word becomes the instrument of the conversion of the souls of men.

This is how the work of conversion is wrought. First, it is by the Scriptures of truth that men are made to see that they are in error. There are millions upon millions of men, in the world, who are going the wrong way, yet they do not know it; and there are tens of thousands, who believe that they are even doing God service, when they are utterly opposing him. Some who, as far as it is in their power, are even slaying Christ, know not what they are doing. One of the pleas that our Savior used upon the cross was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." To take my own case, I know that, for years, I was not conscious of having committed any great sin. I had been, by God's restraining grace, kept from outward immoralities, and from gross transgressions, and therefore I thought I was all right. Did I not pray? Did I not attend a place of worship, Did I not do what was right towards my fellowmen? Did I not, even as a child, have a tender conscience? It seemed to me, for a time, that all was well; and, perhaps, I am addressing someone else who says, "Well, if I am not right, I wonder who is; and if I have gone wrong, where must my neighbors be going?" Ah, that is often the way we talk! As long as we are blind, we can see no faults in ourselves; but when the Spirit of God comes to us, and reveals to us the law of God, then we perceive that we have broken the whole of the ten commandments in the spirit, if not in the letter of them. Even the chastest of men may well tremble when they remember that searching word of Christ, whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." When you understand that the commandments of God not only forbid wrong actions, but also the desires, and imaginations, and thoughts of the heart, and that, consequently, a man may commit murder while he lies in his bed,—may rob his neighbor without touching a penny of his money or any of his goods,—may blaspheme God though he never uttered an oath, and may break all the commands of the law, from the first to the last, before he has put on his garments in the morning;—when you come to

examine your life in that light, you will see that you are in a very different condition than you thought you were in. Think, for instance, of that solemn declaration of our Lord, "I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." It is by bringing home to the heart such truths as these that the Spirit of God, through the Word, makes a man see that he is in error, and in danger; and this is the beginning of his conversion. You cannot turn a man round as long as he believes he is going in the right way. While he has that idea in his head, he goes straight on, marching, as he supposes, safely; so the very first thing to be done to him is to let him see that there is a terrible precipice right before him, over which he will fall if he goes on as he is going. When he realizes that he stops, and considers his position.

Then the Word of God comes in, in the next place, to take the man off from all attempts to get round by wrong ways. When a man knows that he is going wrong, his instinct should lead him to seek to get right; but, unhappily, many people try to get right by getting wrong in another direction. A good man sent me a volume of his poems, the other day. As soon as I looked into it, I saw that there was one line of the verse that was too short, and the good brother evidently felt that it was, so he tried to set the matter right by making the next line too long, which, as you see at once, made two faults instead of one. In—like manner, you will find that men, who are wrong in one direction with regard to their fellow-men, often become very superstitious, and go a great deal further in other directions than God asks them to go, and so, practically, make a long line towards God in order to make up for the short line towards men, and thus they commit two errors instead of one. Here is a sheep that has gone astray; it has wandered so far to the East that, in order to get right, it tries to go just as far to the West; and if convinced that it is in the wrong road, all it does is to stray just as far to the North; and, by-and-by, to the South. It is wandering all the while in a different way, with the intent to get back to the fold; and, in this respect, sinners are just as silly as the sheep. Now, the Word of God tells a man that, by the works of the law, he cannot be justified; it tells him that his heart is defiled, that he himself is condemned already, that he is shut up under condemnation for having broken God's law, and indicates to him that, whatever he may do, or however much he may struggle, if he does not seek salvation in God's

way, he will only make the bad worse, and be like a drowning man who sinks the faster the more he struggles. When the Word of God shows a man that, and makes him feel though he were hopeless, helpless, shut up in the condemned cell, it has done a great deal towards turning him round.

The next thing the Word of God does is to show the man how he might get right. And, oh, how perfectly it shows him this! It comes to the man, and says to him, "Your sin deserves punishment. God has laid that punishment upon his only-begotten Son; and, therefore, he is ready to forgive you freely for Christ's sake, not because of anything good in you, or anything you ever can do, but Entirely of his free mercy. He bids you trust yourself in the hands of Jesus that he may save you." Come, then, and rely upon what Christ has done, and is still doing for you, and believe in the mercy of God, in Christ Jesus, to all who trust him. Oh, how clearly the Word of God sets Christ before us! It is a sort of mirror in which he is revealed. Christ himself is up in heaven, and a poor sinner, down here on earth, cannot see him however long he looks; but this Word of the Lord is like a huge looking-glass, better even than Solomon's molten sea; and Jesus Christ looks down into this mirror, and then, if you and I come and look into it, we can see the reflection of his face. Blessed be his holy name, it is true, as Dr. Watts Sings,—

"Here I behold my Savior's face
Almost in every page."

There is scarcely one chapter in which Christ is not, more or less clearly, set forth as the Savior of sinners. So the Word of God, you see, shows the man that he is in the wrong, takes him away from wrong ways of trying to get right, and then puts him in the way to get right, namely, by believing in Jesus.

But the Word of the Lord does more than that. In the power of the Holy Spirit, it helps the man to believe; for, at the first, he is quite staggered at the idea of free salvation,—instantaneous pardon,—the blotting out of sin—all for nothing,—pardon for the worst and vilest freely given, and given now. The man says, "Surely, it is too good to be true." He is filled with amazement, for God's thoughts are as high above him, and as far out

of his reach, as the heavens are above the earth. Then the Word comes to him, and says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The Word also says to him, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." The Word says, "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever." "He delighteth in mercy." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." I need not go on repeating the texts with which I hope many of you have long been familiar. There is a great number of them,—precious promises, gracious invitations, and comforting doctrines; and, as the sinner reads them, with trembling gaze, the Spirit of God applies them to his soul, and he says, "I can and I do believe in Jesus. Lord, I do gladly accept thy pardoning mercy. I look unto him who was nailed to the cross, and I find in him the cure for the serpent-bites of sin. I do and I will believe in Jesus, and venture my soul upon him." It is thus that the Word of God converts the soul, by helping the man to believe in Jesus.

And when it has done that, the man is converted; for when a man looks to Christ alone, he has turned his face towards God. Now, he has confidence in God, and out of this grows love to God, and now he desires to please God because God has been so very gracious in providing such a Savior for him. The man is turned right round; from rebelling against God, he has come to feel intense gratitude to his Redeemer, and he seeks to live to God's glory as he would never have thought of doing before.

I ask you, who are the people of God, whether you have not felt, since your conversion, the power of the Word of God in sustaining you in your converted condition. Do you not often feel, as you hear the gospel preached, your heart grow warm within you? Some time ago, when I went away for a week's holiday, I was more than a little troubled about many things. I had been, for a long while, preaching to others, and I thought I should like to feel the power of the Word in hearing it myself. I went to a little chapel in the country, and there I heard a lay brother—I think he must have been an engineer—preach a sermon. There was nothing very grand in it, except that it was full of Christ; and as I listened to it, my tears began to flow. I wish that, sometimes, some of you, my brethren, would preach, and let me take my turn at listening. Well, on that

occasion, my soul was melted as I heard the gospel proclaimed very simply, and I thought, "After all, I do feel its power; I do enjoy its sweetness;" for, while I listened to it, my heart overflowed with joy and delight, and I could only sit still and weep as I heard the simple story of the cross.

And have not you, beloved, often found it so, in your experience, as you have been reading the Word of the Lord? If you ever get dull in the things of God, it is not the Bible that has made you so. If ever your heart grows cold, it is not the promises of God that have made you cold. If ever you cannot sing, and cannot pray, it is not the searching of the Scriptures that has brought you into that condition; and if you ever have the misery of hearing a sermon that deadens your spiritual life, I am quite certain that that sermon is not in harmony with the mind of God, and not according to the teaching of the Word of God. But when you hear the gospel fully and faithfully preached, if your heart is at all capable of feeling its power, it stirs your spirit, it wakes you up, it produces holy emotions,—love to God, love to your fellow-men, heart-searching, deep humiliation, ardent zeal, and all the Christian graces in full exercise. The Word of the Lord is perfect and its effect is continually to restore and revive the soul of the Christian.

This has been to me one of the great evidences of the truth of inspiration. Standing alone at night, and looking up to the starry vault of heaven, I have asked myself, "Is this gospel, which I have believed, which I have reached to others for so many years, really true?" Being absolutely certain that there is a God,—for none but a fool can doubt that,—I have said, "Well, this gospel has made me love God. I know I love him with all my heart and soul. And whenever it exerts its rightful power over me, it makes me try to please him. Whenever I am under its influence, it makes me hate all wrong, and all meanness, and all falseness. Now, it would be a very strange thing if a lie could lead a man to act like that, so it must be true." The moral effect of the Word of God upon one's own nature, from day to day, becomes, in the absence of all other proof,—even if we had no other—the surest and best evidence to a man that "the law of the Lord is perfect," for it converts his soul.

I once heard a charming story of Robert Hall,—that mightiest of our

Baptist orators,—perhaps one of the greatest and most eloquent ministers who ever lived. He was subject to fits of terrible depression of spirits; and, one night, he had been snowed up, on his way to a certain place where he was going to preach. There was such a great depth of snow that he was obliged to stay for the night at the farmhouse where he had stopped. But he must preach, he said, he had got his discourse ready, and he must deliver it; so they fetched in the servants, and the farm people, and he preached the sermon he had prepared,—a very wonderful one to be delivered in a farmhouse parlour; and after the others had all gone, he sat down by the fireside with the good man of the house, and he said to him, —a plain, country farmer, "Now tell me, Mr.-and-so, what do you think is the sure evidence of a man being a child of God, for I sometimes am afraid I am not one?" "Oh!" said the farmer, "my dear Mr. Hall, how can you talk like that?" "Well, what do you think is the best evidence that a man is really a child of God?" "Oh!" replied the farmer, "I feel sure that, if a man loves God, it must be all right with him." "Then," said the farmer, as he told the story, "you should have heard him speak. He said, 'Love God, sir? Love God? If I were damned, I would still love him; he is such a blessed Being,—so holy, so true, so gracious, so kind, so just!' He went on for an hour, praising God, the tears running down his cheeks as he kept on saying, 'Love him! I cannot help loving him; I must love him. Whatever he does to me, I must love him.'" Well, now, I have felt just like that sometimes, and then I have said to myself, "What made me love the Lord thus? Why, this that I have read about him in this blessed Book; and this that I believe that he has done for me, in the person of his dear Son; and that which brings me into such a state that I love him with all my nature, must be a right and a true thing."

The Word of God is perfect, converting the soul. You will find it to be so the longer you live, and the more you test and try it. Whenever you go astray, it is because you get away from the Word of God; and as long as you are kept right, it is because you are drinking in the precious truth concerning Jesus as it is revealed in the Bible. That is the one perfect Book in the world, and it will make you also perfect if you will yield to its gracious influence. Only submit yourself to it, and you will, one day, become perfect, and be taken up to dwell where the perfect God, who wrote the perfect Book, will reveal to you the perfection of bliss for ever

and for evermore. God grant to you, dear brethren and sisters, to know the power of this converting Book! If any of you have backslidden, I pray that this same blessed Book may bring you back. I had a letter, the other day, from the backwoods of America that did my heart, good. It was from a man, who was one of my first converts at New Park Street Chapel. He had been for years a member of the church, but he grew cold, and ceased to attend the means of grace; and, at last, he had to be excommunicated from the church. He went out to America; and there, far away, he began to examine himself, and the Spirit of God brought home to his heart the old texts which he used to hear. He writes that he was brought to his knees, and now he is actively engaged in the service of God, endeavoring to bring other backsliders and sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Word of God that will restore you, backslider; I hope it will do so this very hour, and that, soon, you will come to us, and say, "Take me into the church again, for the Lord has restored me to fellowship with him through his blessed Word."

II. I must be very brief upon the second part of my subject, which is, **THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS WORK OF CONVERSION.** That is a boundless theme, but I must be content just to touch upon a few points of this excellence.

When the Word of God converts a man, it takes away from him his despair, but it does not take from him his repentance. He does not think now that his sin will cast him into hell, but he does not therefore think that his sin is a trifle. He hates the sin as much as if he feared that it would destroy him for ever. That is a grand kind of conversion,—that the man, who had been in despair because of his sin, is made to know that his sin is forgiven, and yet he is not led to trifle or tamper with sin. By faith, he sees the wounds of Jesus, and he knows how Christ bled to set him free from the bondage of sin, and that makes him for ever hate sin. Is not that an excellent conversion?

True conversion also gives a man pardon, but does not make him presumptuous. His past transgression is all forgiven him, but he does not, therefore, say, "I will go, and transgress in the same fashion again. If pardon be so easily obtained, why should I not sin?" If a truly converted man ever talked like that; or, if such a thought ever occurred to him, he

must have said at once, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God." Such talks as that would be diabolical. Shall we sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! "Though the man is pardoned, he hates sin as the burnt child dreads the fire. He is afraid lest, by any inadvertent, step, he should grieve his Lord, who has blotted out the past.

Further, true conversion gives a man perfect rest, but does not stop his progress. He knows that the work that has saved him is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he has not to add even one thread to the robe of righteousness which has been given to him; yet he desireth to grow in grace, to become holier and holier, more like his Lord and Master. While he perfectly rests in Christ, he spreads the wings of his soul that he may fly higher and higher towards his Lord and Master.

Again, true conversion gives a man security, but it does not allow him to leave off being watchful. He knows that he is safe, and that he shall never perish, neither shall any pluck him out of Christ's hands; but he is always on the watch against every enemy,—against the world, the flesh, and the devil. One of our hymn-writers puts this double truth very sweetly,—

"We have no fear that thou shouldst lose
One whom eternal love could choose
But we would ne'er this grace abuse,
Let us not fall. Let us not fall."

True conversion also gives a man strength and holiness, but it never lets him boast. He glories, but he glories only in the Lord. He knows that a great change has been wrought in him, but he still sees so much of his own imperfections that he mourns over them before the Lord. He has no time for boasting because all his time is taken up with repenting for his sins, believing in his Savior, and seeking to live to the praise and glory of God.

True conversion likewise gives a harmony to all the duties of Christian life. It makes a man love his God better, and love his fellow-men better. I

have no opinion of that religion which consists in a so-called profession of religion which makes a young woman leave her father and mother, and all her family, and go and shut herself up in a convent, or become a sister of misery of some sort or other. If my child, when he says that he is converted, leaves off loving his father, I have very grave doubts about his conversion; I think it must be a conversion wrought by the devil, not by God. But wherever there is true love to God, there is sure to be love to our fellow-men also. The same God who wrote on one table certain commands in reference to himself, wrote on the other table the commands with regard to our fellow-men. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," is certainly a divine command; and so is the other, "and thy neighbor as thyself." True conversion balances all duties, emotions, hopes, and enjoyments

True conversion brings a man to live for God. He does everything for the glory of God,—whether he eats, or drinks' or whatsoever he does. True conversion makes a man live before God. He used to try to fancy that God did not see him; but, now, he desires to live as in God's sight at all times, and he is glad to be there,—glad even that God should see his sin, that he may blot it out as soon as ever he beholds it. And such a man now comes to live with God. He has blessed communion with him; he talks with him as a man talks with his friend; and, by-and-by, he shall dwell with God, throughout eternity, in the palace above. This ought to convince you what an excellent thing true and real conversion is

III. I have no need to say much, in the third place, concerning THE CONSEQUENT EXCELLENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD. The law of the Lord, which accomplishes such an excellent work, must be itself excellent. I will, therefore, only make one or two brief remarks, and then close.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, "right away from the beginning of conversion to the end. Whenever we want to have converts, —and I hope that is always,—the best thing for us to do is to "preach the Word." There is nothing better; there can be nothing more; there must be nothing less. I do not wonder that, in some churches and chapels, there are no conversions, because the sermons that are preached there are not adapted to that end. They are like a book I reviewed, the other day, of

which I said, that there was, possibly, one person in the world who understood it, and that was the writer of the book; and that, if he did not read it through every morning, he certainly would not know, the next day, what he meant by it. In some such fashion as that, there are sermons that are so involved, perplexing, metaphysical, and I know not what besides, that I do not see how any souls can ever be converted by them. The people need to have a dictionary in the pew, instead of a Bible; they need never turn to any Biblical references, but they need someone to explain to them the meaning of the hard words which the preacher is so fond of using. Have I not also read sermons, which were very highly polished, and which, I daresay, were preceded by a prayer that God would convert souls by them? But it was morally impossible that the Lord should do anything of the sort, unless he reversed all his usual methods of procedure, for there was nothing in the sermon that could have been made the means of the conversion of a soul. But, my dear brother, if you preach the Word of God, if you lift up the crucified Christ on the pole of the gospel, you need not be very particular about the style of your speech. You need not say, "I must be a first-class speaker; I must be a brained rhetorician." I believe that a great deal of that first-class speaking is simply the means of veiling the cross of Christ, and that fine talk about Jesus Christ is about the last thing that poor sinners need. I sat at a hotel table, in Mentone, one evening at dinner, and I wanted to speak to a friend who was sitting opposite to me, but someone had put a most magnificent bouquet of flowers in a very splendid vase between us. I was grateful that those flowers bloomed in the middle of winter, and I was pleased to see and to smell them; but, by-and-by, I moved them on one side because they stood in the way of my view of my friend's face. So, I admire fine language, nobody enjoys it more than I do in its proper place; I even think that I could manage a little of it myself if I were to try. But whenever it stands between a poor soul and Christ, I should like to say, "Break that vase into a thousand pieces, fling those flowers into the fire; we do not want them there, for we want the poor sinner to see Christ." It is the Word of God that converts the soul; not our pretty figures about the Word; not our fine talk about it, but the Word itself. So, dear teachers, and dear brother-ministers, let us give them the Word. Yes, that is a very handsome scabbard; but, if you are going to fight, you must pull it off; and there is nothing like the naked blade, the sword of the Spirit, the

Word of God, to cut, and hew, and hack, and kill, in a spiritual sense; that same Word will, by God's almighty grace, make men alive again, so we must "preach the Word" if we want to have conversions.

There is another thing that I feel I must say to you. We must not think that, in order to have conversions, it is necessary to leave out any part of the gospel. I am afraid that some people think: that, if you stand and shout, "Believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, believe you will convert any number of people; but it is not so. You must tell your hearers what they have to believe; you must give them the Word of God, the doctrines of the gospel; for the people, who are said to be converted without being taught from the Scriptures, will very soon need to be "converted" again. There must be shot and shell in our guns if any real execution is to be done; blowing off a lot of powder, and making a great noise, may sound very well for a time, but it comes to nothing in the end. Just the same gospel-adapted as to its tone and method, but the same gospel—that I preach in this place, I would preach in a thieves' kitchen, or to the poorest of the poor, and the most illiterate of mankind. It is the gospel, and only the gospel, that will convert the soul.

Now, dear friends, you who are not converted, my closing word is to you. If you really wish for strength, life, salvation, you will get it through hearing the Word of God, or through reading this precious Book. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Eyegate is not usually the way by which Immanuel rides into the city of Mansoul. The lifting up of the host, the pretty decorations on the priest's robe, the crucifix, the stations of the cross, and all that Romish mummery, will save nobody. That is not God's way of salvation; but Christ comes into Mansoul through Eargate. "Incline your ear, and came unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." Whenever the gospel is preached, dear hearer, do really hear it. Remember how our Lord Jesus Christ said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Some people do not hear. I have often been thankful, when I have heard some people talk, that I have two ears, because, though their conversation goes in at one ear, I thank God I can let it go out of the other, and so it does me no hurt. But if you are hearing the gospel, mind that you do not act like that. Then let your two ears be two entrances for the Word. Do not have one for entrance, and the other

for exit; but "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Let it go in at both ears, and remain in your memory until it reaches your heart. I do not believe that anybody is an earnest and attentive hearer, longing to hear to his soul's profit, without his so hearing if the gospel is preached to him. As I have already told you, the promise is, "Hear, and your soul shall live;" and if you come with a willing mind,—willing to judge, and weigh, and then to believe the Word,—the moment you do believe it, you are saved. That Word of God, which leads you to believe has already converted you; so, come out, and confess what God has done for you, and then go on your way rejoicing May God bless every one of you without a single exception, for his name's sake! Amen.

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Thou Art Now the Blessed of the Lord

Thou art now the blessed of the Lord. - Genesis 26:29

These words truly describe the position of many whom I address at this time. There are hundreds here upon whom my eye can rest, and to any one of whom I might point with this finger, or rather, to whom I might extend this hand, to give a hearty shake, and say, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." I need not say it in the same spirit, nor for the same reason, that the Philistines did. They had behaved basely towards Isaac, and now that he had prospered, they urged him to forget the past. They meant, "This is why we trust that you will deal kindly with us, and overlook our hard usage; for, in spite of all, God has so blessed you that you need not be fretful and pettish, and remember what we have done." I am glad that I am under no necessity to strive to make up a quarrel in this way. These many years we have dwelt in peace, and have enjoyed sweet fellowship together. You have borne with my weaknesses often, and bestowed upon me a wealth of affection which I am sure I do not deserve. So, though I use the language of Abimelech and his friends, my motive is a very different one. Yet the truth is the same concerning many a one here: "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

There is, however, much force in the argument which these Philistines used. If God has richly blessed us, notwithstanding all our faults and failures, surely we should learn to forgive many injuries done to ourselves. If the Lord forgives us our debt of ten thousand talents, we must be willing to forgive our fellow-servant his debt of a hundred pence. Child of God, if you are now the blessed of the Lord, you will often turn a blind eye towards the offenses of your fellow-men. You will say, "God has so blessed me, that I can well overlook any wrongs that you have inflicted, any hard words that you have said. I am now blessed of the Lord; so let bygones be bygones." May you have grace given to you to do that now, if any of you have had a little squabble with any other! If there have been any difficulties between any of you, I would hope that, before I really get

into my subject, while with my finger I point you out and say to each one of you, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord," you will immediately say, "As surely as that is true, I do from my very heart forgive all who have offended me, whether Philistine, or Israelites, or Gentiles. How can I do otherwise who myself have received such grace while so unworthy?"

Remember, that this was spoken by the Philistine king as a reason why he wished to have Isaac for a friend. In your choice of friends, choose those who are the friends of God. If you would have a blessing upon your friendship, select a man whom God has blessed. Look out for one who is a disciple of Christ and say, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord; therefore I seek thine acquaintance. Come under my roof; you will bring a blessing with you." Speak to me in the street; your morning word will be a benediction to me." It was the old custom with apostolic men to say, as they entered a house, "Peace be unto this house." We have given up all idea of blessing our fellow-men in that way. But why have you done so? Is it from a want of love, or want of faith in our own prayer that God would make it even so? For my part, I value a good man's blessing. As I drove up a hill, in the country, some time ago, a poor man and his wife were walking down the hill. I had never seen them before; but the woman pulled the husband by his coat; they both stood and looked at me, and at last she said, quite loudly, "It's him, God bless him!" and although her greeting was not quite grammatical, it evidently came from her heart, and I felt happier for it, as I went on my way. I saw her afterwards, and asked her the reason of her words, "Why," she said, "I have read your sermons for many a year, and I could not help saying, 'God bless him!' when I saw you, for you have been a blessing to me." Thus that humble woman, being blessed of the Lord, became a blessing to me; and we all of us, even the most obscure, who know the grace of God, might daily be like a great benediction in the midst of the people. When you think of your minister, say sometimes, "God bless him!" it will do him good to hear it. Say to your friend, "God bless you!" Say to your children, "God bless you, my dear boy! The Lord bless you, my dear girl!" They will be the better for it, if you yourself are the blessed of the Lord. You, grandsires, lay your hands on the children's heads, and bless them; they will not forget it when they grow up. It may be that you have done much more for them than you have thought. Concerning his flock the Lord says, "I will make

them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." God's people are blessed that they may bless; therefore, for the sake of others, as well as for your own, seek that my text may be abundantly true of you. May this be your prayer—

"Lord, I hear of showers of blessing,
Thou art scattering full and free;
Showers, the thirsty land refreshing;
Let some droppings fall on me,
Even me."

It was for this reason that the Philistines sought the friendship of Isaac, because they could truly say to him, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

I want not so much to preach from this text as to ask every believer in Christ to feel that it is personally true. Once you were condemned; but, being in Christ Jesus, "there is therefore now no condemnation." "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Once you were at enmity against God; but now, being reconciled to God by the death of his Son, you are his friend: "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." "Ye were sometimes in darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." How great the change for the man or woman to whom we can say "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord"!

There was a day when I was cursed, and there was a day when I loved sin, and opposed God's will; but now I love sin no longer, and I find my highest delight in doing the will of my Father in heaven. My soul, if this be true, "thou art now the blessed of the Lord"; thou art a miracle of mercy; thou art a prodigy of grace; and truly, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Sit still in your pews, ye people of God, and roll this sweet morsel under your tongue! Once, because you believed not, the wrath of God was resting upon you, but now you can say, "O Lord! I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Surely then "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Thou art poor, perhaps, in this world's goods; but being an heir of

the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," why, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Or, perchance, you are weak and ill, and scarcely able to be in your place; but though thy flesh and strength fail, "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," for by his grace, you will triumph over all. With many a fear and many a care oppressed, still "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," and on him thou canst cast thy care, and from him receive deliverance from all thy fears. Whatever thy distresses, this overwhelms them all as with a flood of joy. You can join with one who, though in a very humble station of life, says,—

"O joy! 'tis mine, this life divine,
Life hid with Christ in God;
Once sin-defiled, now reconciled,
And washed in Jesus' blood.

"Oft far astray from Christ the Way,
I went with wilful feet;
From hopeless track, love brought me back,
With words of welcome sweet."

If thou canst truly sing this sweet song, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Thou art not yet perfect; thou art not yet taken out of the body to be with thy Lord in bliss; thou art not yet risen from the dead to stand before the throne of God in thy body of resurrection glory; but yet thou art now, even now, the blessed of the Lord. Will you let the flavour of this sweet truth be in your mouth, and in your heart, while I seek to open this subject to you?

I. I would remark upon it, first, that in the case of Isaac, THIS WAS THE TESTIMONY OF ENEMIES. It was the Philistines who said, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." There are some of God's people who are so evidently favoured of heaven that even those who despise and oppose them cannot help saying of them, "They are the blessed of the Lord." I wish that we were all such, so distinguished by piety, so marked out by strength of faith and prevalence of prayer, that even our Abimelechs might be forced to say to each of us, "Thou art now the blessed of the

Lord." What caused this heathen king and his companions to use such an expression about Isaac? In seeking the reasons which led them to see the bounty of the Lord in the case of Abraham's son, we may find some signs of the blessing of God upon ourselves and upon our children.

I think, first, that they saw it in his wonderful prosperity. We read in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth verses, "Then Isaac sowed in the land, and received in the same year a hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: for he had possession of flocks and possession of herds, and great store of servants." Prosperity is not always a token of blessing. It may be proof of the lord's favour, and it may not be. God sometimes gives most to those on earth who will have nothing in heaven; as if, seeing that he cannot bless them in eternity, he would let them enjoy the poor sweets of time. I have heard it said, that prosperity was the blessing of the old covenant and adversity the blessing of the new. Nevertheless, it is true that worldly prosperity may be sent, and has been sent, to the children of God, as a token of divine favour. It is not always when we eat the quails that they make us ill; God can send them in such a way that we may enjoy them, and be strengthened by them. He can give riches as well as poverty. That was the Philistines' reason, and it is a Philistine's reason. It is not a very satisfactory one, but it has some force, for the Lord Jesus himself gave the sign of blessing upon the meek, saying, "They shall inherit the earth;" and in the same memorable discourse upon the mount, he uttered the exhortation and promise, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things"—the things which the gentiles seek after—"shall be added unto you." So we may fairly construe the "mercies of God" as a sign of his blessing.

These Philistines had a further reason for thinking that Isaac was blessed of God; they felt it by divine impression. A secret spirit whispered to the king, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." God always has a way of making men feel "how awful goodness is." They may jest and jeer against a Christian, but his life vanquishes them. They cannot help it. They must do homage to the supremacy of grace. The promise is still true, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." God will impress upon the

minds even of unbelievers this fact, that such a man, such a woman, is one whom God has blessed. Do you not know some believers who have such an air of other-worldliness about them, that though they mix freely with the people amongst whom they dwell, men instinctively acknowledge that "they have been with Jesus," and have been blessed by him? I do not care to see pictures of the saints of old with a nimbus of light round their heads, even though they have been painted by the old masters, yet there is a something about one who lives a saintly life, a brightness encircling him, like the symbol of God's presence, which separates him from those around him, and leads us to say to him, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Further, before the Philistines bore this testimony to Isaac, no doubt they remarked his gentleness. I do believe that there is nothing that has such power over ungodly men as meekness of spirit, quietness of behavior, patience of character, and the continual conquest over an evil temper. If you grow angry when people are angry with you, you will have lost your position; but if you can be patient under persecution, if you can smile when they ridicule you, if you can yield your rights, if you can bear and continue to bear, you are greater than the man who has taken a city. Remember the blessing promised to the disciples of Christ who are peacemakers. They are not only the children of God, but "they shall be called the children of God." People will say, "If any man is a true Christian, he is one;" they will have no doubt about it. When longsuffering, gentleness, and meekness are in the life, men begin to say to such a one, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." As the gentleness of the Lord makes us great, the gentleness of the saints brings to God great glory. Anger hath a temporary sovereignty, that melts in the heat of the sun. Quietness of spirit is king over all the land. If thou canst rule thyself, thou canst rule the world. Isaac conquered by his meekness; for when Abimelech saw that he yielded well after well rather than keep up a quarrel, he said to him, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Some of you do not understand this. "What!" you say, "are we not to stick up for ourselves?" That depends upon whose you are; if you are your own, take care of yourselves; but if you are Christ's, let him take care of you. "But," you say, "if you tread on a worm, it will turn." But surely you will not make a worm your pattern? Nay, but let the meek and lowly Christ be

your example, and seek to be a partaker of his Spirit. He prayed even for his murderers, "Father, forgive them," and he ever sought to return good for evil. I pray you to do the same, cultivate a gentle spirit, and even worldlings will say to you, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Now, while these Philistines saw that God blessed Isaac, they nevertheless envied him, as we read in the fourteenth verse. How strange it is that men, who do not care to be blessed of God themselves, envy them who are blessed of him! I heard one say, "It is not just that God should have a chosen people." Sir, do you want to be one of God's people? These blessings which God gives to them, do you want to have them? You may have them, if you will. If you will not have them, I pray you do not quarrel with God because he chooses to give them where he wills. There are two great truths, which from this platform, I have proclaimed for many years. The first is, that salvation is free to every man who will have it; the second is, that God gives salvation to a people whom he has chosen; and these truths are not in conflict with one another in the least degree. If you want the blessing of the Lord, have it even now, for my commission as an ambassador of Christ is to beseech men to be reconciled to God; if you do not want it, do not quarrel with God for giving it to his own chosen. It was so with those Philistines—they wanted not Jehovah's blessing, and yet they envied Isaac, who had it.

But while they envied him, they feared him, and courted his favour. Do I speak to some young believer who has gone into a house of business, or some Christian woman who has been placed in a family where her religion exposes her to opposition? Let me counsel you to go straight on, taking no notice of the hindrances thrown in your way. You will first be envied; after that you will be feared; and after that you will be sought after, and your company will be desired. If you can only keep as firm as Isaac did, never losing your temper, but always being gentle, and meek, and kind, you will conquer; and you who are to-day despised, will yet come to be honoured, even as Isaac was by the very Abimelech who had, just a little while before, asked him to go away.

A man of God, who was bearing testimony for the faith, on one occasion was pushed into a kennel by a person passing by, who said, as he thrust

him in, "There, take that, John Bunyan." He took off his hat, and said, "I will take anything if you give me the name of John Bunyan. I count it such an honour to have that title, that you may do anything that you like with me." To be identified with those who have been blessed of the Lord is worth more than all the favours of the world. We are in good company. If men despise you, it matters little when God has blessed you. If they push you into the gutter for being a Christian, take your hat off, and thank the, for it is worth while to bear any scorn, that you may have the honour to be numbered with the followers of Christ. Rest assured that if you will count it a privilege even to be mocked for your faith, those who persecute you to-day, will acknowledge your high position to-morrow. It is a grand thing when any one of us thus gets the testimony of our enemies, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

II. Now, secondly, not only did his enemies thus bear witness to Isaac, saying, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord;" but **THIS WAS ALSO THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD**. It was because he had the witness of God that he was able so to behave as to secure the favourable verdict of the Philistines. Like Enoch before his translation, Isaac "had this testimony, that he pleased God." And was thus meekly able to bear the displeasure of the world. When they hunted him from one well, he digged another, yet all the time he with joy drew "water out of the wells of salvation." He might almost have sat for the picture which Jeremiah drew of the blessed man, centuries afterwards, when he said, "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when the heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Let us see, then, how Isaac had the testimony of God as to his blessedness.

First, this was the Lord's testimony to him in promises founded upon the covenant which he had made with Abraham his father. God said to Isaac, "I will be with thee, and will bless thee." In the third verse of this chapter, the promise is made doubly sure to Isaac when God says, "I will perform

the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father." And in the twenty-fourth verse of the chapter, where the promise is renewed, it is still on the ground of the covenant: "I am with thee, and I will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake." Now, do you know anything of the covenant relationship between God and his people? The bulk of Christians nowadays are wholly ignorant on this subject. The preachers have forgotten it; yet the covenant is the top and bottom of all theology. He that is the master of the knowledge of the covenants has the key of true divinity. But the doctrine has gone out of date except with a few old-fashioned people, who are supposed to know no better, but who, in spite of all the taunts of their opponents, cling to the doctrines of grace, and find in them the very marrow and fatness of the truth of God. I love the promises of God because they are covenant promises God has engaged to keep his word with his people in the person of his dear Son. He has bound himself, by covenant with Christ, and will not, cannot go back from his word; and Christ has fulfilled the conditions of the covenant, and he who hath "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," will certainly, "make you perfect to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." The promise is a double promise when it is confirmed in Jesus. Though we are poor and worthless creatures, yet can we say with David, "Although my house not be so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." Twice God says by Isaiah, "I have given him for a covenant to the people" thrice happy are they who receive what God hath given, and who, in Christ, enter into that blessed bond. Beloved, if God has laid the promise home to you by the Spirit, and let you see it as a covenant promise, the God has borne this testimony to you: "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Thou art blessed now; thou shalt be blessed all thy life long on earth;

"And when through Jordan's flood,
Thy God shall bid thee go,
His arm shall thee defend,
And vanquish every foe;
And in this covenant thou shalt view
Sufficient strength to bear thee through."

Further, the Lord bore testimony to Isaac in secret manifestation. He came to him in the watches of the night, and spake with him face to face. None but those who are the blessed of the Lord have such communion with him. "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" asked Judas, not Iscariot, at the supper-table, before the Lord's betrayal. Ah, Judas! It is simply because thou art not Iscariot, but a true disciple; else hadst thou never known intimately the presence of Christ. If he manifests himself to us in this choice manner, it is because he has blessed us in a way in which he would not bless the ungodly world. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Do you ever get manifestations of Christ? Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto you? Then thou hast a divine attestation that "thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Isaac also found this testimony, I think, in divine acceptance of his worship. We find that "he builded an altar," and then he, "pitched his tent." Keep up the altar of God in your home, and keep to the right order—the altar first, and the tent second. When God accepts you there, and makes your family altar to be a place of refreshment and delight to you, you will feel that in thus doing he is giving you the sweet assurance that you are now the blessed of the Lord. It is a pity that there are so many houses nowadays without roofs—I mean, houses of Christian people without family prayer. What are some of you at? If your children turn out ungodly, do you wonder at it, seeing that there is no morning and evening prayer, no reading of the Word of God in your home? In every home where the grace of God is known, there should be an altar, from which should rise the incense of praise, and at which the one sacrifice for sin should be pleaded before God day by day. In the midst of such family piety, which I fear is almost dying out in many quarters, you will get the witness, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Isaac had another proof that he was blessed of God in swift chastisement for sin. He told a lie; he said that Rebekah was his sister, whereas she was his wife. Although that might seem to prove that he was not blessed of the Lord, the proof of his blessedness was that he was found out, and became

ashamed of it. Worldly people may do wrong, and very likely get off scot-free; but if a Christian man goes off the straight line, he will have an accident in his roguery, and be found out; while other men may do ten times as badly, and never be suspected. Rascals who know not God, and who despise the ordinary morality of honest men, may speculate on the Stock Exchange with other peoples' money and never be found out; but if you who really love God only do it once, and say, "Well, I feel driven to it," you will be caught as surely as you live. It is one mark of a child of God, that when he does wrong, he gets a whipping. If I were in the street, and saw strange boys breaking windows, I would say, "Go home, or I will find a policeman for you." But if it were my own boy, I would chastise him myself. I would not meddle with the other boys; but with my own I would. So it is with God; who saith, by the mouth of Amos, to his people, "You only have I known for all of the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." It is a mark of God's blessing a man, that if the man does wrong, he cannot do it with impunity. Whenever your sins make you smart, thank God; for it is better to smart than it is to sin, and better that the smart should wean you from sin than that something sweet should come in to make you the slave of that sin forever.

Well, I will not dwell further on this. God testified to Isaac's heart, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." May he testify that to each one of you who know his name, and have received his covenant promises! May the words come to you like a benediction from the throne of God, and send you out to testify of his goodness, and to bless him who hath blessed us, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"!

III. Now, in the third place, I must draw your attention to the fact that, though Isaac was the blessed of the Lord, **THIS DID NOT SECURE HIM FROM TRIAL.** Already I have approached this part of my subject by speaking of the speedy discovery of his sin; but in addition to this, there were other sorrows not directly resulting from his own conduct, but permitted by God in order that he, who was now blessed, should be still further enriched in character and conduct.

Even before Abimelech saw the source of Isaac's grace, he was "the

blessed of the Lord"; yet he still had to move about. He was a pilgrim and a stranger, as was his father, and he lived as an alien in the land. He was without any inheritance in the country, and though his flocks and herds increased, he dwelt but in tents, while others reared for themselves stately houses and palaces. But God had prepared some better thing for him, and "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Thus, this trial became a means of blessing to him, as trials always do when sanctified by the Spirit of God. If these words reach any child of God whose nest on earth has been disturbed, whose house has been broken up, I would seek to cheer you by the thought of the "continuing city" which shall soon be your portion. If you have, through Christ, an assurance of an abundance entrance there, though you never have a house of your own on earth, and roam from place to place a stranger, seeming to be very often in the way of other people, yet remember that "thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Daily he doth load thee with benefits, and thou canst even now have thy home in his love.

"He loves, he knows, he cares,
Nothing that truth can dim;
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to him."

In spite of the position of blessedness in which Isaac was placed, he had enemies to meet. It is true that, at length, his foes became his friends; but the blessing of the Lord did not begin with their friendship; they then discovered and confessed the fact; but Isaac had been "the blessed of the Lord" all along. When Abimelech sent him away, and when "the herdsmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdsmen," he was not shut out from God's favour. Jehovah never bade him depart, nor took from him his good Spirit. So, tried heart, when foes press around thee, and one thing after another seems to go wrong, do not begin to write bitter things against thyself, as though God had forsaken thee. Remember that it is of the Lord that thou art blessed, and not of men. He will never forsake thee, and his deliverance shall soon make thy heart glad. Even in the midst of the trial, "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," and, like Isaac, after you have drunk of the waters of "contention" and "hatred", you will be brought to Rehoboth, where you shall have "room", yea, even to Beer-

sheba, "the well of the oath", or "the seventh well", "the well of satiety", where your enemies shall seek your favour, and glorify your Lord.

Isaac had especially one trial that ate into his very soul; he had domestic sorrow. Esau's double marriage with Hittite women was a grief to his father and to his mother; and I mention this because there may be some of God's people who are suffering in the like way. I saw one, some days ago, who said, "I am like the Spartan who carried a fox in his bosom, that ate even to his heart, for I have a thankless, ungrateful child;" and, as he spoke to me, I saw the heart-break of the man. Ah! It may be that some of you are in that condition. If any young man or young woman here is causing that grief to a parent, I pray him or pray her to think of it. You are not heartless, I hope: you have not forgotten your mother's prayers or your father's care of you. Do not kill those who gave you being, or insult and vex those to whom you owe so much. But oh, dear brother or sister, if you have come here broken-hearted about your Esau, and all that he is doing, I want to take you by the hand and say, "But still thou art blessed of the Lord. Let this console thee." What if Abraham has his Ishmael? Yet God blessed him. Bear bravely this trial. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Give God no rest, day or night, till he save thy boy, and bring back thy girl. But still, be not despairing; be not cast down; for it is true of thee—and drink in, I pray thee, this cup of consolation—that "thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Let me speak two or three earnest words in closing. "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." "Now." Beloved, do labour to get a hold of a present blessing. If you are indeed saved, do not be always thinking of what you are to enjoy in heaven; but seek to be the blessed of the Lord now. Why not have two heavens, a heaven here and a heaven there? What is the difference between a believer's life here and a believer's life there? Only this: here Christ is with us, and there we are with Christ. If we live up to our privileges this is the only difference we need to know. Try to be "now the blessed of the Lord." I have heard of a traveller who was followed by a beggar, in Ireland, who very importunately asked for alms. As long as there seemed a chance of getting anything, the old woman kept saying, "May the blessing of God follow your honour all through your life!" but when all hope of a gift was vanished, she bitterly added, "and never

overtake you." But the blessings which God has for his chosen are not of that slow-footed kind which never catch us up. It is written, "All these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God." I beseech you, then, to lay hold of this overtaking blessing. Let it not pass unheeded. "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Next, be very grateful that you are in this position of grace. You might have been in the drink-shop, you might have been speaking infidelity, you might have been in prison, you might have been in hell. But "thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Wherefore, praise the Lord, whose mercy endureth for ever. If you do not lift up your voice, yet lift up your heart, and bless him for the grace which hath made you to differ from other people.

Again, tell others about it. If "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," communicate to others the sacred secret that has been the means of bringing such joy to thee. Are we earnest enough about the souls of others? Christian men and women, do you love your fellow-creatures, or do you not? How few there are of us who make it our business to be constantly telling out the sweet story of Jesus and his love! I read, the other day, of a chaplain in the Northern army in the lamentable war in the United States, who, while he lay wounded on the battle-field, heard a man, not far off, utter an oath. Though he himself was so badly wounded that he could not stand, yet he wished to reach the swearer to speak a gospel message to him, and he thought, "I can get to him if I roll over." So, though bleeding profusely himself, he kept rolling over and over till he got to the side of the poor blasphemer, and on the lone battle-field he preached to him Jesus. Some of the other men came along, and he said to them, "Can you carry me? I fear that I am dying, but I do not want to be taken off the field. I should like you, if you would, to carry me from one dying man to another, all the night long, that I might tell them of a Saviour." What a splendid deed was this! A bleeding man talking to those who were full of sin about a Saviour's bleeding wounds! Oh, you who have no wound, who can walk, and possess all the faculties to fit you for the service, how often you miss opportunities and refuse to speak of Jesus! "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord," and at this moment I would have

you think that the blessed Lord lays his pierced hand on thee saying, "Go and tell others what I have done for thee." Never cease to tell the divine tale, as opportunity is given, until thy voice is lost in death; then thy spirit shall begin to utter the story in the loftier sphere.

You are coming to the Lord's table, and I invite you, beloved, to come here with much love. Do not come with doubts and fears, with a cold or lukewarm heart. Remember "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Come, eat his flesh, and drink his blood. There, on the table, thou wilt see nothing but the embers of his flesh and blood; but if thou believest, Christ will feed thee spiritually upon himself, and as thou dost eat that bread of heaven, and drink that wine of life, thou mayest well hear a voice saying, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Well do I remember the time when I would have given away my eyes to be as a dog under the table, to have eaten only the crumbs which fell, as others feasted, and now for forty-and-one years to-day I have sat as a child at the table, blessed be his name!

As I told our friends this morning, this day is an anniversary of peculiar interest to me. Forty-and-one years ago I went down into the river, and was baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

"Yet have been upheld till now:
Who could hold me up but thou?"

May you, each of you, as you come to the table, hear a voice saying in your heart, "Now a believer; now justified; now quickened; now regenerate; now in Christ; now dear to the heart of God. 'Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.'"

Oh, that some who came in here without the blessing would get it before they go! He that believeth in Jesus hath all the blessing which Jesus can give to him; forgiveness for the past; grace for the present; and glory for the future. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," is the word of the Lord to thee, thou doubter. He was made a curse for thee,

that he might redeem thee from the curse of the broken law, for it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." He hung on a tree for guilty man. Believe thou in him, and as thou believest, eternal joys shall come streaming down into thy dry and desolate heart, and it shall be said to thee, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." You shall be blessed now, and blessed for evermore! God grant it, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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Shoes of Iron, and Strength Sufficient: A New Year's Promise

And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be. - Deuteronomy 33:24-25

I once heard an old minister say that he thought the blessing of Asher was peculiarly the blessing of ministers; and his eyes twinkled as he added, "At any rate, they are usually blessed with children, and it is a great blessing for them if they are acceptable to their brethren, and if they are so truly anointed that they even dip their foot in oil." Well, well, I pray that all of us who preach the gospel may enjoy this triplet of blessings in the highest sense. If our quiver is not full of children according to the flesh, yet may we have many born unto God through our ministry. May we be blessed by being made spiritual fathers to very many, who shall be brought by us to receive life, pardon, peace, and holiness, through our Lord Jesus. What is the use of our life if it be not so? To what end have we preached unless we see souls born into the family of grace? My inmost soul longs to see all my hearers born anew: this would be my greatest joy, my highest blessedness. Ask for me the blessing of Asher—"Let Asher be

blessed with children"; and may the Lord make my spiritual offspring to be as the sands upon the sea-shore.

It is a great blessing from the Lord when our speech is sweet to the ears of saints—when we have something to bring forth which our brethren in Christ can accept, and which comes to them with a peculiar preciousness and power, so that they can receive it, and feel that it is thoroughly acceptable to them. We do not wish to be acceptable to the worldly wise, nor to the error-hunters of the day; but we are very anxious to be pleasant to the Lord's own children—our brethren in Christ. They have a holy taste whereby they discern spiritual meats, and we would bring forth for food that which they will account to be nourishing and savoury. Every minister prays to be "acceptable to his brethren."

And what could we do without the third blessing, namely that of unction? "Let him dip his foot in oil." Oh, for an anointing of the Holy Spirit, not only upon the head with which we think, but upon the foot with which we move! We would have our daily walk and conversation gracious and useful. We wish that, wherever we go, we may leave behind us the print of divine grace. I was asking concerning a preacher what kind of man he was, and the simple, humble cottager, answered me, "Well, sir, he is this kind of man: if he comes to see you, you know that he has been." We must not only have oil in the lamps of our public ministry, but oil in the vessels of our private study. We need the holy oil everywhere, upon every garment, even down to our skirts. I know that there are mockers who scoff at the very mention of unction; but I pray that to myself and my brethren the promise may be fulfilled, "He shall dip his foot in oil." Such a man, anointed with fresh oil, holds an unquestioned office, enjoys an unfailing freshness, and exercises an effectual influence. Wherever he goes you see his footprints, for his foot has been dipped in oil.

Well, now, if these three blessings be good for ministers, they are equally good for all sorts of workers. You in the school, you who visit tract districts, you who manage mothers' meetings, and you who in any shape or way endeavour to make Christ known, may you have the threefold blessing! The Lord give you many spiritual children: may you be blessed with them, and never be without additions to their number! The Lord

make you acceptable to those among whom you labour; and the Lord grant you always to go forth in his strength, anointed with his Spirit!

That is the first part of our text, and I am not going to say any more about it, as the second part is that to which I shall call your especial attention. May the Holy Spirit make the promise exceeding sweet to you, and grant you a full understanding of it.

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

There are two things in the text—shoes and strength. We will talk about these two, hoping to possess them both.

I. "THY SHOES SHALL BE IRON AND BRASS." That is a very great promise, and I fear that I shall not be able to bring out all its meaning in one discourse.

I find that the passage has several translations; and, though I think that which we have now before us is by far the best, yet I cannot help mentioning the others, for I think they are instructive. These interpretations may serve me as divisions in opening up the meaning. I take it as a rule that the Lord's promises are true in every sense which they will fairly bear. A generous man will allow the widest interpretation of his words, and so will the infinitely gracious God.

This promise meant that Asher should have treasures under his feet—that there should, in fact, be mines of iron and copper within the boundaries of the tribe. Metals enrich nations, and help their advancement in many ways. Tribes that possess minerals are thereby made rich, what ever metals those may be; but such useful metals as iron and copper would prove of the utmost service to the people of that time, if they knew how to use them. Is there any spiritual promise at all in this! Asher is made rich and iron and copper lying beneath his feet. Are saints ever made rich with treasures under their feet? Undoubtedly they are. The Word of God has mines in it. Even the surface of it is rich, and it brings forth food for us; but it is with Scripture as Job saith it is with the earth: "As for the earth,

out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold." There are treasures upon the surface of the Word which we may pick up very readily: even the casual reader will find himself able to understand the simplicities and elements of the gospel of God; but the Word of God yields most to the digger. He that can study hard, and press into the inner meaning—he is the man that shall be enriched with riches current in heavenly places. Every Bible student here will know that God has put under his feet great treasures of precious teaching, and he will by meditation sink shafts into the deep places of revelation. I wish we gave more time to our Bibles. We waste too much time upon the pretentious, poverty-stricken literature of the age; and some, even Christian people, are more taken up with works of fiction than they are with this great Book of everlasting fact. We should prosper much more in heavenly husbandry if we would "dig deep while sluggards sleep." Remember that God has given to us to have treasures under our feet; but do not so despise his gifts as to leave the mines of revelation unexplored.

You will find these treasures, not only in the Word of God, but everywhere in the providence of God, if you will consider the ways of the Lord, and believe that God is everywhere at work, He that looks for a providence will not be long without seeing one. All events are full of teaching to the man that has but grace and wit to interpret them. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." There shall be treasures under your feet if your feet keep to the ways of truth. A rich land is the country along which believers travel to their rest: its stones are iron, and out of its bowels thou mayest dig brass. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right."

The Revised Version has it, "Thy bars shall be iron and brass;" and certainly the original text bears that meaning. "Thy bars shall be iron and brass:" there shall be protection around him. The city gates shall be kept fast against the enemy, so as to preserve the citizens. The slaughtering foe shall not be able to intrude, because, instead of the common wooden bar, which might be sufficient in more peaceful times, there shall be given bars of metal, not easily cut in sunder or removed. Herein I see a spiritual

blessing for us also. What a mercy it is, when God strengthens our gates and secures the bars thereof, so that, when the enemy comes, he is not able to enter or to molest us! Peace from all assaults, safety under all alarms, shutting in from all attacks—this is a priceless boon. Happy people who have God for their protector! Blessed are they who rest in the sure promises and faithfulness of God, for they may laugh their enemies to scorn. O brethren, how safe are they whose trust is in the living God and in his covenant and promise! Personally I know what this means. I have rested as calmly in the centre of the battle as ever I have reposed in the deepest calm: with all against me I am as quiet in soul as when everyone called himself my friend. It is true—"Thy bars shall be iron and brass."

Still, I like the Old Version best, and the original certainly bears it, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." The Revised Version puts this in the margin He shall have protection for his feet. The chief objection that has been raised to this is that it would be a very unusual thing for shoes to be made of iron and brass. Such a thing is not heard of anywhere else in Scripture, neither is it according to Oriental custom. For that reason I judge that the interpretation is the more likely to be correct, since the protection which God gives to his people is unusual. No other feet shall wear so singular a covering; but those who are made strong in the Lord shall be able to wear shoes of iron, and the Lord shall give them sandals of brass. As Og, the King of Bashan, was of the race of the giants, and "his bedstead was a bedstead of iron," so shall the Lord's champions wear shoes of iron. Theirs are no common equipments, for they are no common people. God's people are a peculiar people, and everything about them is peculiar. Even if the poetry of the passage would not bear to run upon all fours, there is no reason why it should, since it only relates to shoes. We may be quite content to take the notion of iron and brazen shoes with all its strangeness, and even let the strangeness be a commendation of it. You have peculiar difficulties, you are a peculiar people, you traverse a peculiar road, you have a peculiar God to trust in, and you may, therefore, find peculiar consolation in a peculiar promise: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass."

With shoes of iron and of brass,

O'er burning marl thy feet shall pass,
Tread dragons down, from fear set free;
For as thy day thy strength shall be.

But what does this mean—"thy shoes shall be iron and brass"? Are there not several meanings? Does it not mean that our feet, tender and unprotected by nature, shall receive protection—protection from God? Our feebleness and necessity shall call upon God's grace and skill, and he will provide for us, and give to us exactly what we, by reason of our feebleness, so much need.

We want to have shoes of iron and brass, first, to travel with. We are pilgrims. We journey along a road which has not been smoothed by a steam-roller, but remains rough and rugged as the path to an Alpine summit. We push on through a wilderness where there is no way. Sometimes we traverse a dreary road, comparable too a burning sand. At other times sharp trials afflict us as if they cut our feet with flints. Our journey is a maze, a labyrinth: the Lord leads us up and down in the wilderness, and sometimes we seem further from Canaan than ever. Seldom does our march take us through gardens: often it leads us through deserts. We are always travelling, never long in one stay. Sometimes the fiery cloudy pillar rests for a little, but it is only for a little. "Forward!" is our watchword. We have no abiding city here. We pitch our tent by the wells and palms of Elim, but we strike it in the morning, when the silver bugle sounds, "Up, and away!" and so we march to Marah, or to the place of the fiery serpents. Ever onward; ever forward; ever moving! This is our lot. Be it so. Our equipment betokens it: we have appropriate shoes for this perpetual journey. We are not shod with the skins of beasts, but with metals which will endure all wear and tear. Is it not written, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass"? However long the way, these shoes will last to the end.

Perhaps I address some friend whose way is especially rough. You seem to be more tried than anybody else. You reckon yourself to be more familiar with sorrow than anyone you know: affliction has marked you for its own. I pray you take home this promise to yourself by faith: the Lord saith to thee, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." This special route of

yours, which is beset with so many difficulties—your God has prepared you for it. You are shod as none but the Lord's chosen are shod. If your way is singular, so are your shoes. You shall be able to traverse this thorny road—to journey along it with profit to yourself, and with glory to God. For your travelling days you are well fitted, for your shoes are iron and brass.

"If the sorrows of thy case
Seem peculiar still to thee,
God has promised needful grace,
'As thy days, thy strength shall be.'"

Shoes of iron remind us of military array—they are meant to fight with. Brethren, we are soldiers as well as pilgrims. These shoes are meant for trampling upon enemies. All sorts of deadly things lie in our way, and it is by the help of these shoes that the promise is made good. "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." Are we not often too much like the young man Jether, who was bidden by his father to slay Zebah and Zalmunna, but he was afraid. We tremble to put our foot upon the neck of the enemy; we fancy that if we should attempt it, we should be guilty of presumption. Let us have done with this false humility, for thus we dishonour the Lord's promise: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." Better far to say, "Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us." Thus we may say without fear, for assuredly "The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly."

"O my soul, thou has trodden down strength," said the holy woman of old, when the adversaries of Israel had been routed. Thus can our exultant spirits also take up the chant. I also can say, "O my soul, thou has trodden down strength." Yes, believer, with thy foot thou has crushed thy foe, even as thy Lord, who came on purpose that he might break with his foot, even with his bruised heel, the head of our serpent adversary. Be not afraid, therefore, in the day of conflict, to push onward against the foe. Do not be afraid to seize the victory which Christ has already secured for thee. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass" thou shalt trample down thy foe, and march unharmed to victory.

What a blessing it is when we get self under our feet! We shall have good use for iron shoes if we keep him there. What a mercy it is when you get a sinful habit under your feet! You will need have shoes of brass to keep it there. What a mercy it is when some temptation that you have long struggled with at last falls to the ground, and you can set your foot upon it! You need to have both of your shoes strengthened with iron, and hardened with brass, that you may bruise this spiritual enemy, and crush out its life. Feet shod with sound metal of integrity and firmness will be none too strong in this evil world, where so many, like serpents, are ready to bite at our heels. Only so shod shall we win the victory.

See, the Lord promises that we shall have shoes suitable alike for travelling and for trampling upon enemies!

Next, we have fit shoes for climbing. One interpreter thinks that the sole of the shoe was to be studded with iron or copper nails. Certainly, those who climb would not like to go with the smooth soles which suit us in our parlours and drawing-rooms. There are many instances where a rough tip of iron, or a strong nail in the heel of the shoe, has checked the slipping mountaineer when gliding over a shelving rock, and there he has stayed on the very brink of death. Our spiritual life is an upward climb, with constant danger of a fall. It is a great mercy to have shoes of iron and brass in our spiritual climbings, that should our feet be almost gone, we may find foothold before we are utterly cast down. We ought to climb: the higher our spiritual life the better. It is written of the believer, "He shall dwell on high." We ought not to be satisfied till we reach the highest places of knowledge, experience, and practice. High doctrine is glorious doctrine, high experience is blessed experience, high holiness is heavenly living. Many souls always keep in the plains: the simple elements are enough for them; and, thank God, they are enough for salvation and for comfort. But if you want the richest delight and the highest degree of grace, climb the hills and roam among the mysteries of God, the sublimer revelations of his divine will. Especially climb into the doctrines of grace: be not afraid of electing love, of special redemption, of the covenant, and all that is contained in it. Be not afraid to climb high, for if thy feet be dipped in the oil of grace, they shall also be so shod that they shall not

slip. Trust in God, and you shall be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed. Your shoes shall be iron and brass, for lofty thought and clear knowledge, if you commit your mind to the instruction of the Lord. Receiving nothing except as you find it in the Word, but in a childlike spirit receiving everything that you find there, you shall stand upon your high places. Your feet shall be like hinds' feet, and your place of abode shall be above the mists and clouds of earth's wretched atmosphere of doubt.

Rise, also, to the highest graces and the noblest virtues. As is the food we feed on, such should our actions be. Let us love, for God is love, and as dear children we must be imitators of him in all gentleness, tenderness, and forgiveness. Climb to the heights of self-denial, the summits of consecration. Be as near heaven as is possible for those who dwell on earth. Have you not the shoes to climb with? Wherefore tarry down below?

I will not press this longer upon you, for I hope that your hearts aspire to climb up where your Lord reveals himself in clearer light; but, lest you should be at all afraid of the climbing as the aged man is afraid of that which is high, I would arouse you to a holy bravery, since God has not given you shoes of iron and brass merely to trip over the plains. He means you to climb; your equipments prove it. Will you be as the children of Ephraim, who, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle? Will you be shod with iron, and melt like wax under a little heat of opposition?

Once more. These shoes are for travelling, for trampling, for climbing; they are also made of iron and brass for perseverance. You would not need such shoes for a little bit of a run—for a trip up the street and back again. Since the Lord has shod you in this fashion, it is a warning to you that the way is long and weary, and the end is not by-and-by. The Lord has furnished you with shoes that will not wear out. "Old shoes and clouted" were good enough for Gibeonites, but they are not fit for Israelites. The Lord does not mean that you should be arrayed as beggars, or become lame through worn-out shoes. The sacred canticle, in one of its verses, saith, "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's

daughter!" The princes of the heavenly household shall be shod according to their rank and this shall be the case at the end of their journey as surely as at the beginning. Whether Israel traversed sand or rock, the camp never halted because the people had become lame; for the Lord had said "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." It is a good pair of shoes that lasts a man for forty years; yet there are some of us who can testify that God's grace has furnished us with spiritual shoes of that kind. I can speak of nearly that length of time since I knew the Lord, and I bear my unhesitating witness that I have found the grace of God all-sufficient, and his promises most sure and steadfast.

If we are allowed to live till we touch the borders of a century, or if we even fulfill our hundred years, these shoes would never be too old. These are the sort of shoes that Enoch wore; and was it not for more than three hundred years that he walked with God? He was always walking, but his shoes of iron and brass were never worn out. It matters not, dear friend, how severe may be your trials and troubles, or how long may be your pilgrimage through this wilderness, God, who gives these extraordinary shoes, such as no other has ever fashioned, and such as men are not accustomed to wear, has in this provided you against the utmost of endurance, the extremity of suffering. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass"—does not this symbol signify the best, the strongest, the most lasting, and the most fitting provision for a pilgrimage of trial? Thy shoes shall last as long as thou shalt last. Thou shalt find them as good as new when thou art about to lie down on thy last bed, to be gathered to thy fathers. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass."

I may be addressing some here that are very low in spirit: they fear that they shall not hold on their way, they are ready to halt, yea, ready to lie down in despair. I trust the way will hold you on when you can hardly hold on your way. May you hear the ring of your iron sandals, and be ashamed of cowardice. They should be iron men to whom God has given iron shoes. I would encourage you to go forward in the way, for you are, by God's grace, made fit for travelling. You are not bare-footed, nor badly shod. You ought to go forward bravely, after your heavenly Father has put such shoes as these upon your feet. You are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and you may trip lightly on your way; and again I say,

though that way should be a very long one, you need not think that your provision for the way will fail you. Even to hoar hairs the Lord will be with you. He has made, and he will bear; even he will carry you. Your last days shall be better than your first days. Yea, you shall go from strength to strength through his abounding and faithful love.

I find great difficulty in speaking tonight, because of some failure of my voice; but the divine promise is so sweet that even when poorly uttered it has a music all its own. For fear my voice should quite fail me, I will hasten on to say a few words upon the second point. We have examined the shoes, now let us consider the strength.

II. "AS THY DAYS,SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE."

This provision is meant to meet weakness. The words carry a tacit hint to us that we have no strength of our own, but have need of strength from above. Our proud hearts need such a hint; for often we poor creatures begin to rely upon ourselves. Although we are weak as water, we get the notion that our own wit, or our own experience, may now suffice us, though once they might not have done so. But our best powers will not suffice us now, any more than in our youth. If we begin to rest in ourselves it will not be long before we find out our folly. The Lord will not let his people depend upon themselves: they may make the attempt, but, as sure as they are his people, he will empty them from vessel to vessel, and make them know that their fullness dwells in Christ, and not in themselves. Remember that, if you have a sense of weakness, you have only a sense of the truth. You are as weak as you think you are; you certainly do not exaggerate your own helplessness. The Saviour has said "Without me, ye can do nothing"; and that is the full extent of what you can do. The Lord promises you strength, which he would have no need to promise you if you had it naturally apart from him. But he promises to give it, and therein he assures you that you need it. Come down from your self-esteem: stoop from the notion of your own natural ability: divest yourself of the foolish idea that you can do anything in and of yourself, and come down to the strong for strength, and ask your Lord to fulfill this promise in your experience, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

The strength which is here promised is to abide through days. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Not for today only, but for tomorrow, and for every day as every day shall come. The longest and the shortest day, the brightest and the darkest day, the wedding and the funeral day, shall each have its strength measured out, till there shall be no more days. The Lord will portion out to his saints their support even as their days follow each other.

"Days of trial, days of grief,
In succession thou may'st see;
This is still thy sweet relief,
'As thy day, thy strength shall be.'"

This strength is to be given daily We shall never have two days' grace at a time.

"Day by day the manna fell:
Oh, to learn this lesson well,
'Day by day' the promise reads:
Daily strength for daily needs!"

If I get strength enough to get through this sermon, I shall be satisfied for the present. I do not want strength to get through next Sabbath morning's sermon till that Sabbath morning comes. If I can weather the present storm, I shall not just now require the strength to outlive the storms of all the year 1889. What should I do with this reserve force if I had it? Where would you store away your extra grace? You would put it in the lumber-room of your pride, where it would breed worms, and become an offence. A storage of what you call "grace" would turn into self-sufficiency. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be": this secures you a day's burden and a day's help, a day's sorrow and a day's comfort. After all, what more do we want? If a man has a meal, let him give thanks for it: he does not want two meals at once. If a man has enough for the day, he certainly is not yet in want for tomorrow. He cannot eat tomorrow's food today; or, if he did, it would injure his health, and be no comfort to him. Let us narrow our vision as to the necessities of daily life, not looking so far ahead as to compress into today more evil than naturally belongs to it; for "Sufficient

unto the day is the evil thereof." Our strength is to be given to us daily.

And then the text seems to say clearly that it will be given to us proportionately, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." A day of little service, little strength; a day of little suffering, little strength; but in a tremendous day—a day that needs thee to play the Samson—thou shalt have Samson's strength. A day of deep waters in which thou shalt need to swim, shall be a day in which thou shalt ride the billows like a sea-bird. Do you not think that this might almost tempt us to wish for days of great trial, in order that we might receive great grace? If we are always to go smoothly, and to receive but little grace in consequence, we shall never rise to the great things of the divine life. We shall be dwarfs, and none shall say, "There were giants in those days." We may not wish to be always children, with boyish tasks and childish duties; it is right we should grow, and that in consequence we should shoulder burdens from which youthful backs are exempt. Who would wish to be always a little child? Great grace will be sent to us to meet our great necessities. And is not that a most desirable thing? I remember that for a long season the Lord was very gracious to me in the matter of funds for the extensive works which I have been called upon to originate and superintend, and I felt very grateful for the ease which I enjoyed; yet it crossed my mind that I was learning less of God than in more trying seasons, and I trembled. Years gone by there were considerable necessities which did not appear to be met at once, and I went with them to God in prayer, and I trusted him, and he supplied my needs in such a wonderful way that I seemed to have the closest intercourse with him. I could most plainly see his hand stretched out to help me. I could see him working for me as gloriously as if he wrought miracles. These were glorious days with me! I cannot tell you what holy wonder often filled my soul when the Lord interposed on behalf of the Orphanage or the College. The record reads so charmingly that unbelievers would never accept it as true. Then God made me by grace like one who steps from the summit of one mountain to another: I stepped across the valleys, leaving the deep places far below. So in my easy seasons I thought to myself, "Everything comes in regularly and abundantly. I am like a little child walking along a smooth lawn. This is but a common, ordinary state of affairs, in which even a man of no faith could pursue his way. I do not see so much of God, though assuredly I

ought to see him as clearly now as ever." I did not wish for necessities, but I remembered how the Lord glorified himself in them, and therefore I half desired them. The regular blessing day by day, almost without need of special prayer, does not constrain you to look to God so vividly as when you gaze down into the deep, dark abyss of want, and feel, "If he does not help me now, I shall soon be in dire distress." This forces forth the living prayer. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." Our great necessities bring God so very near to us, so manifest to our consciousness, that they are an unspeakable blessing. So I did not ask to have a time of need; I hope that I shall never be so foolish as that; but when I found a time of need hurrying up, as I soon did, I felt a special delight in it—I took pleasure in my necessities. My heart cried, "Now I shall see my Lord; now I shall see him again. Now I shall get a hold of that great arm, and hang upon it, and I shall see how the Lord will deliver me in time of need." I did thus lay hold upon my Lord again, and I found him still God All-sufficient, for which I bless his name. In proportion as he sends the trial he sends the help. Be not, therefore, afraid of great trial: on the contrary, look for it, and when it comes, say to yourselves, "Now for great grace. Now for a special manifestation of the faithfulness of God."

Mark, again, that strength will be given to us in all forms. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Our days vary, our trials change; our service varies, too. Our lives are far from being monotonous: they are musical with many notes and tones. Our present state is like chequered work: or, say, as a mosaic of many colours. But the strength that God gives varies with the occasion. He can bestow physical strength, and mental strength, and moral strength, and spiritual strength. He gives strength just where the strength is needed, and of that peculiar kind which the trial demands. We have no need to fear because we feel weak in a certain direction: if we need strength in that special quarter, the strength will come there. "But if I am tried," says one, "in a certain way, I shall fail." No, you will not. "As your days, so shall your strength be." "I am horrified," says one, "at the thought of having to pass through the ordeal of a surgical operation." Do not be horrified at it; for though at the present moment you may be quite unfit for the trial, you will be quite ready for it when it comes. Have you never been in great danger and found yourself cool and calm beyond

anything you could have expected? It has been so with me, and I have learned from my experience, not to measure what I shall be, in a trying hour, by what I happen to be just now. The Lord will take care to fit us for our future, and, as our days, so shall our strength be.

I find that some persons read this passage thus—when our days grow many, and we come to the end, yet our strength shall be equal to what it was in the days of our youth. We shall, according to this, find our strength continuing as our days continue. It is a cheering meaning, certainly. The children of God do find that, spiritually, their strength is renewed day by day. The outer man decayeth, that is nature: but the inward man is renewed day by day, that is grace. As thy days are, so shall thy strength continue to be. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Though days come one after another, so shall strength come with them; there shall be such a continuity of perpetual renewal that the heart shall be strong even to the end of life, and the old man shall know no inward decay.

An hour or so ago, I stood by what will certainly be the death-bed of one of our best friends, and I was cheered and comforted when I heard him so blessedly speaking both of the present with its pain, and of the future with its near descent into the vale of death. He said, "I have no doubt as to my eternal bliss. I have had no doubt—no, not a shadow of doubt—of my interest in Christ through my long illness. In fact, I have felt a perfect rest of mind about it all. And," he added, "this is nothing more than ought to be, with us who listen to the glorious gospel, for we live on good spiritual meat. Sound doctrine should make us strong in the Lord. I have not been a hearer of yours for thirty years, and heard of covenant love and faithfulness, to die with a trembling hope. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Thus, dear friends, shall we also be supported, for the brother of whom I speak is a simple-minded man, who makes no pretensions to learning, but is one of our own selves. It will be a great privilege to find that when death's days come—the days of sickness, and decline, and weakness, yet still our strength remains the same. It will be glorious to go from strength to strength, and even in the day of utter

physical prostration to find the spirit leaping for joy, in anticipation of the time when it shall be free from the cumbering clay, and shall stretch its wings and fly aloft to yonder world of joy. Yes, as our days our strength shall be.

Come, child of God, be peaceful, be happy in the prospect of the future. Do more, be joyous, and show your joy. You are out of harm's reach, for Christ has you in his hand. You shall never be staggered nor overcome, for the Lord is your strength and your song, and he has become your salvation. This text is a royal banquet for you. Here are fat things full of marrow. Eat abundantly, O beloved. Feel your spirit renewed by the Holy Spirit. Be prepared for whatever is yet to come; for such a word as this, not from me, but from the Lord himself, may gird up your loins for another march towards Canaan; "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

I am sorry, very sorry, for those among you who have no portion and lot in such a promise as this. Whatever you may have in this world, you are very poor in losing such a promise as this. You are shoeless, or if you have some wooden sabot, it will soon be worn out. You will never be able to travel to heaven in any shoes that mortal men can make for you. You need to go to the great Father, who alone can say, "Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." I am sorry for you in your present condition, for you have no strength but your own, and that is a poor piece of weakness. You are troubled even now: what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? The common footmen of daily life have wearied you: what will you do when you have to contend with horses? O souls, what will you do when you are ushered into the presence of the dread mysteries of another world? O sirs, you are without strength; but is not that a grand verse, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? Ungodly as you are, clutch at such a word as that. "Without strength" as you are, yet lay hold upon the Lord's strength. It is for those who have no strength that Christ came into the world. It is for the ungodly that he laid down his life. Come, and trust him. Let him become your strength and your righteousness from this time forth; and may he manifest himself to you in a special and gracious way; and unto his name shall be praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

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Blessing for Blessing

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. - Ephesians 1:3-4

God blesses us; let us bless him. I pray that every heart here may take its own part in this service of praise.

"O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord,
And all that in me is,
Be stirred up his holy name
To magnify and bless!"

Sit in your seats, and keep on blessing God from the first word of the sermon to the last; and then go on blessing God till the last hour of life, and enter into heaven into the eternal glory, still blessing God. It should be our life to bless him who gave us our life. It should be our delight to bless him whom give us all our delights. So says the text, and so let us do: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I. Our first occupation, at this time, will be that of BLESSING GOD.

But how can we bless God? Without doubt the less is blessed of the Greater. Can the Greater be blessed by the less? Yes, but it must be in a modified sense. God blesses us with all spiritual blessings; but we cannot give him any blessings. He needs nothing at our hand; and if he did, we could not give it. "If I were hungry," saith the Lord, "I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." God has an all-sufficiency within himself, and can never be thought of as dependent upon his creatures, or as receiving anything form his creatures which he needs to

receive. He is infinitely blessed already; we cannot add to his blessedness. When he blesses us, he gives us a blessedness that we never had before; but when we bless him, we cannot by one iota increase his absolutely infinite perfectness. David said to the Lord, "My goodness extendeth not to thee." This was as if he had said, Let me be as holy, as devout, and as earnest as I may, I can do nothing for thee; thou art too high, too holy, too great for me to be really able to bless thee in the sense which thou dost bless me.

How, then, do we bless God? Well, I should say, first, that this language is *the expression of gratitude*. We say with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," and we say with Paul, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We can bless God by praising him, extolling him, desiring all honour for him, ascribing all good to him, magnifying and lauding his holy name. Well, we will do that. Sit still, if you will, and let your heart be silent unto God; for no language can ever express the gratitude that, I trust, we feel to him who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Praise him also in your speech. Break the silence; speak of his glory. Invite other to cry with you, "Hallelujah!" or "Hallels unto Jah!" "Praise to Jehovah!" Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. Oh, that all flesh would magnify the Lord with us!

This language is also the *utterance of assent* to all the blessedness that is ascribed to the Lord. After hearing how great he is, how glorious he is, how happy he is, we bless him by saying, "Amen; so let it be! So would we have it! He is none too great for us, none too blessed for us. Let him be great, glorious and blessed, beyond all conception." I think that we bless God when we say concerning the whole of his character, "Amen. This God is our God for ever and ever." Let him be just what the Bible says he is; we accept him as such. Sternly just, he will not spare the guilty. Amen, blessed be his name! Infinitely gracious, ready to forgive. Amen, so let it be! Everywhere present, always omniscient. Amen, so again do we wish him to be! Everlastingly the same, unchanging in his truth, his promise, his nature. We again say that we are glad of it, and we bless him. He is just such a God as we love. He is indeed God to us, because he is really God, and we can see that he is so, and every attribute ascribed to him is a fresh proof to us that Jehovah is the Lord. Thus, we bless him by

adoration.

We also bless God in *the spreading of his kingdom*. We can win hearts to him through his mighty grace blessing our service. We can fight against evil; we can set up a standard for the truth. We can be willing to suffer in repute, and every way else, for his name's sake. We can by his grace do all this, and thus we are blessing God. Surely, dear friends, if it is well-pleasing in God's sight that sinners should repent, if it makes heaven the gladder, and makes joy in the presence of the angels that men should repent, we are in the best and most practical way blessing God when we labour to bring men to repentance through faith in Christ Jesus.

There is also another way of blessing God which, I trust, we shall all endeavour to practise; and that is by *the doing good to his children*. When they are sick, visit them. When they are downcast, comfort them. When they are poor, relieve them. When they are hard pressed by outward adversaries, stand at their side, and help them. You cannot bless the Head, but you can bless the feet; and when you have refreshed the feet, you have refreshed the Head. He will say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." If they be naked, and you clothe them; if they be sick, and you visit them; if they be hungry, and you feed them; you do in this respect bless God. David not only said, "Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee;" but added, "but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight." You can be good to them, and in that respect you may be blessing God. He has done so much for us, that we would fain do something for him; and when we have reached the limit of our possibilities, we long to do more. We wish that we had more money to give, more talent to use, more time that we could devote to his cause, we wish that we had more heart and more brain; sometimes we wish that we had more tongue, and we sing, -

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"

This word "blessed" is an attempt to break the narrow circle of our capacity. It is an earnest endeavour of a burning heart to lay at God's feet

crowns of glory which it cannot find: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. But now, secondly, we shall spend a little time in VIEWING GOD in the light in which Paul sets him before us: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We bless the god of nature. What beauties he has strewn around us! We bless the God of providence. How bountifully doth he send us harvests and fruitful seasons! We bless the God of grace who hath redeemed us, and adopted us as his children. But here is a peculiar aspect of God, which should call forth our highest praises; for he is called "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

When we see God *in connection with Christ*, we see God through Christ, when we see God in Christ, then our hearts are all aflame, and we burst out with, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." God apart from Christ—that is a great and glorious theme; but the human mind fails to grasp it. The infinite Jehovah, who can conceive him? "Our God is a consuming fire." Who can draw near to him? But in the Mediator, in the Person of the God, the Man, in whom we find blended human sympathy and divine glory, we can draw nigh to God. There it is that we get our hands upon the golden harp-strings, and resolve that every string shall be struck to the praise of God in Christ Jesus.

But note carefully that God is described here as *the God our Lord Jesus Christ*. When Jesus knelt in prayer, he prayed to our God. When Jesus leaned in faith upon the promises, he trusted in God that he would deliver him. When our Saviour sang on the passover night, the song was unto God. When he prayed in Gethsemane, with bloody sweat, the prayer was unto our God. Jesus said to Mary at the sepulchre, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." How we ought to bless God when we think that he is the God, whom our Redeemer blesses! This is the God who said of Christ, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Delightful thought! When I approach Jehovah, I approach the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, when I see his blood-stained footprints there on the ground

before me, though I put my shoe off from my foot, for the place is holy ground, yet I follow with confidence where my Friend, my Saviour, my Husband, my Head has been before me; and I rejoice as I worship the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is also called *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. This is a great mystery. Think not that we shall ever understand the high relationship between the first and second Persons of the blessed Trinity, the Father and the Son. We speak of eternal filiation, which is a term that does not convey to us any great meaning; it simply covers up our ignorance. How God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as God, we do not know; and perhaps to wish to gaze into this tremendous mystery were as great a folly as to look at the sun, and blind ourselves with its brilliance. It is so; that ought to be enough for us. God the Father is the Father of Jesus Christ as to his divine nature: "Thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee." He is also his Father as to the human side of his nature. He was begotten of the Holy Ghost. That body of his, that human life, came of God; not of Joseph, not of man. Born of a woman, God sent forth his Son; but he was his Son then. It was God's son that was born at Bethlehem. Gabriel said to the Virgin Mary, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Now take the two natures of their wondrous blending in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you see how the great God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, sweet thought, he is my Father, too; my Father is Christ's Father. Jesus Christ's Father is our Father, and he teaches us all to call him, "Our Father, which art in heaven." Often in prayer he said, "Father"; and he bids us say the same, putting the plural pronoun before it, "Our Father." Now will you not bless the Lord, who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do you not feel a glowing in your hearts, as you think of the near and dear relationship into which you are brought through Jesus Christ? The God of Jesus Christ, the Father of Jesus Christ, is my God, my Father, too. Blessed, blessed, blessed, for ever blessed be that dear name!

III. Our third occupation, at this time, is that of **RECOUNTING HIS GREAT MERCIES**. I will read the rest of the third verse: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

This recapitulation of mercies is written with *full assurance*; and you will not bless God unless you have a touch of that same experience. Paul does not say, "Who has, we hope and trust, blessed us," but he writes, "Who hath blessed us." Ah, beloved, if you have a full assurance that God has blessed you in Christ, and that now his smile rests upon you, and all the benisons of the covenant are stored there for you, I think that you cannot help saying, "Blessed, blessed be the name of the Most High!" that doubt, that trembling, this it is that empties out the marrow from the bone of our blessedness. If you have suspicions about the truth of this precious Book, if you have questions about the truth of the doctrines of grace, if you have doubts about your own interest in those things. I do not wonder that you do not praise God, for a blessing which is only mine by peradventure, well, peradventure I shall be grateful for it; but peradventure I shall not. But if I know whom I have believed, if I have a firm grip of spiritual mercies, if all heavenly things are mine in Christ my Lord, I can sing, "Wake up, my glory; awake psaltery and harp; I myself will awake right early." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings."

With this full assurance should come *intense delight*: "Who hath blessed us." God has blessed us. Come, brethren, he has not done some trifle for us, which we can afford to ignore. He has not merely given us some absolutely necessary boons, which we must have, for we could not live without them; but he has in grace dealt still more abundantly with us. He has gone beyond workhouse fare, and made us a feast with saints and princes. He has given us more than home-spun garments; he has put upon us robes of beauty and of glory, even his own spotless righteousness. He has blessed us; we are blessed; we feel that we are. Each believer can say: -

"I feel like singing all the time,
For my tears are wiped away;
For Jesus is a Friend of mine,
I'll praise him every day.
I'll praise him! Praise him! Praise him all the time!"

We are not sitting here, and groaning, and crying, and fretting, and worrying, and questioning our own salvation. He has blessed us; and therefore we will bless him. If you think little of what God has done for you, you will do very little for him; but if you have a great notion of his great mercy to you, you will be greatly grateful to you gracious God.

Let me also remark, next, that as assurance and delight lead to blessing God, so does a *right understanding* of his mercies. To help your understanding, notice what Paul says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings." An enlightened man is grateful to God for temporal blessings; but he is much more grateful to God for spiritual blessings, for temporal blessings do not last long; they are soon gone. Temporal blessings are not definite marks of divine favour, since God gives them to the unworthy, and to the wicked, as well as to the righteous. The corn, and wine, and oil, are for Dives; and Lazarus gets even less than his share. Our thanks are due to God for all temporal blessings; they are more than we deserve. But our thanks ought to go to God in thunders of hallelujahs for spiritual blessings. A new heart is better than a new coat. To feed on Christ is better than to have the best earthly food. To be an heir of God is better than being the heir of the greatest nobleman. To have God for our portion is blessed, infinitely more blessed than to own broad acres of land. God hath blessed us with spiritual blessings. These are the rarest, the richest, the most enduring of all blessings; they are priceless in value. Wherefore, let me beg you to join in blessing the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed you with spiritual blessings.

But did you notice the word "all"? I must bring that out clearly. I must turn the microscope on it. "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings." Surely, Paul means that we have not a spiritual blessing which God did not give. We have never earned one; we could never create one. All spiritual blessings come from the Father; he has really given us all spiritual blessings. "I have not received them," says one. That is your own fault. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. A new heart, a tender conscience, a submissive will, faith, hope, love, patience, we have all these in Christ. Regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, perfection are all in Christ. If we do not take them out, it is

the fault of our palsied hand, that has not strength enough to grasp them; but he has given us all spiritual blessings in Christ. Whenever you read your Bible, and see a great promise, do not hesitate to claim it. He hath given us all spiritual blessings in Christ. "I am afraid," says one, "that I should be presuming if I took some of the promises." He hath given us all spiritual blessings in Christ. You are in your Father's house; you cannot steal; for your Father says, "Help yourself to what you like." He has made over his whole estate of spiritual wealth to every believing child of his; wherefore take freely, and you will, by doing so, glorify God. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.

This he has done in the "heavenly places." What does that mean, "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places"? Does it not mean that he is working upon us all spiritual blessings out of the heaven where he dwells? Or does it mean much more, that his is sending us all these spiritual blessings to bring us to the heaven where he dwells, and where he would have us dwell?

I want to stir up your heart by reminding you that all the spiritual blessings we receive are the richer and rarer because they are given to us "in Christ." Here are the blessings; and Christ is the golden casket that holds them all. When the City of London makes a man a freeman of the city, the document giving him his liberty is usually presented to him enclosed in a golden casket. Christ is that golden casket, in which we find the charter of our eternal liberty. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. If they came to us any other way, we might lose them; or we might not be sure that they were genuine; but when they come to us in Christ, they come to stay, and we know that they are real. If Christ is mine, all blessings in heavenly places are mine.

I seemed, to myself, to be talking very drily of things that ought to be swimming in a sea of joy and delight. Beloved, do not let my faint words rob my Lord of any of his glory. He has done such great things for you; bless his name. We cannot stand up, and ask for instruments of music with which to sound his praise; but we can sit still, and each one say, "Blessed be his name! It is all true; he has blessed me; I know that he has. He has blessed me, with a liberal hand, with all spiritual blessings. He has

blessed me, just where I wanted blessing, where I was poorest in spiritual things. I could make my way in business, but I could not make my own way in grace; so he has blessed me with all spiritual blessings; and he has made the garments all the dearer because of the wardrobe in which he has hung them. He has given me these royal things in Christ; and as I look to my dear Lord, and see what there is for me stored up in him, I prize each thing the more because it is in him. Come, Holy Spirit, set our hearts on fire with blessing and praise to God for all the great things that he has done for us!"

IV. I shall close with this fourth remark: Let us bless God, BEHOLDING THE MANNER OF HIS GIFTS. That is described in the fourth verse: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

Now, brethren, we are to praise God because all spiritual blessings have come to us in the same way as our election came, "according as he hath chosen us in him." How did that come? Well, it came of *his free, sovereign grace*. He loved us because he would love us. He chose us before he chose us. "Ye have not chosen me; but I have chosen you." If there is any virtue, if there be any praise in us now, he put it there. To the bottomless abyss of his own infinite goodness we must trace the election of his grace. Well, now, every blessing comes to us in the same way. God hath not blessed thee, my brother, with usefulness because thou didst deserve it; but because of his grace. He did not redeem thee, or regenerate thee, or sanctify thee, or uphold thee, because of anything in thee. Again and again, by the prophet Ezekiel, did the Lord remind his ancient people that the blessings he bestowed upon them were all gifts of his grace. "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake." And again, "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for you own ways, O house of Israel." Every blessing comes to us with the hall-mark of sovereign grace upon it. As the Lord distributed the gifts of his grace, he says, "May I not do as I will with my own?" He does so, and we bless, and praise, and adore the sovereign grace of God, which having chosen us, continues to bless us according as he hath chosen us in Christ.

Next, we have to bless God that all his gifts come to us *in Christ*. Notice Paul's words, "according as he hath chosen us in him." God called us in Christ. He justified us in Christ. He sanctified us in Christ. He will perfect us in Christ. He will glorify us in Christ. We have everything in Christ, and we have nothing apart from Christ. Let us praise and bless the name of the Lord that this sacred channel of his grace is as glorious as the grace itself. There is as much grace in the gift of Christ to save us as there is in the salvation which Christ has wrought out for us. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Again, all our blessings come from *the divine purpose*. Listen: "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him." No spiritual blessing comes to any man by chance. No man gets a boon from God through his "good luck;"; it all comes according to the eternal purpose of God which he purposes or ever the earth was.

"Long e'er the sun's refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove,
They on his sacred bosom lay,
Loved with an everlasting love."

"Before the foundation of the world", says the text, there was a purpose in the heart of God, and in that purpose we were chosen, and by that same purpose God continues to bless us. Look, beloved, God never gives his people either a gift or a grace without his purpose. Has God given you a brain cleat, quick, capacious? Think for him. Has God given you a tongue fluent, eloquent? Speak for him. He does not give you these gifts without purpose. Has God given you influence among your fellow-men? Use it for him. Your election came according to his purpose; and so have all your gifts, and much more, all your graces. Have you a strong, bright-eyes faith? Have you burning zeal? Have you vehement love? Have you any of these gifts of the covenant? Use them for a purpose. God has given them for a purpose; find out what that purpose is, and glorify God thereby.

Lastly, the text tells us that God blesses us with all spiritual blessings in

heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." God's choice of us was not because we were holy, by *to make us holy*; and God's purpose will not be fulfilled unless we are made holy. Some people, when they talk about salvation, mean escaping from hell, and getting into heaven by the skin of their teeth. We never mean any such thing. We mean deliverance from evil, deliverance from sin. Like a dog in the manger, they cannot eat the hay themselves, and they growl at those who can. If you wish to be safe from sin, ask God for that great blessing, and he will give it to you; but if you do not want it, do not complain if God says, "I shall give it to such and such a person, and you that do not even ask for it shall be left without it." If you do not care to be holy, you shall not be holy. If you did not care for it, and wish for it, you might have it, for God denies it to none who seek it at his hands. But if you neither wish for it, nor value it, why do you lift your puny fist against the God of heaven because he hath chosen others, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love?

The object of our election is our holiness, and the object of every spiritual blessing is our holiness. God is aiming at making us holy. Are you not glad of that? May I not say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because his aim in every gift is to make us holy"? Brothers and sisters, would we not sacrifice everything we have, and count it no sacrifice, if we might be perfectly holy? I said to a young girl, who came to join the church, "Mary, are you perfect?" She looked at me and said, "No, sir." I said, "Would you like to be?" "Oh, that I would! I long for it; I cry for it." Surely, the God who makes us long to be perfect, has already wrought a great work in us; and if we can say that, to be perfect, would be heaven to us, then we are already on the road to heaven, and God is working out in us his eternal purpose, which is, "that we should be holy."

There is one thing more: "That we should be holy and *without blame before him in love*." Does that mean that we are to be loving, full of love, and without blame in that matter? Well, I am afraid that there are not very many Christians who are without blame on the score of love. I know a man, a noble man intellectually, and, in some respects, spiritually. I believe that he would die at the stake for the grand old Calvinistic faith;

but he is as hard as iron; you cannot feel any kind of love to him, for he does not feel any kind of love to anybody else. That man is not without blame before God in love. I have known others; wonderful Christians they appear to be, they could pray for a week; but if you are poor, and ask them for a little help, your asking will all be in vain. I do not think that they are without blame before God in love. O brothers, God has chosen us to be loving, he has ordained us to be loving; and all the innumerable blessings which he has given to us, he sends to win us to a loving spirit, that we may be without blame in that matter. Our dear friend, Mr. William Olney, whom we remember here still, and never can forget, was, I think, without blame in that matter of love. I sometimes thought that he used to shed his love on some who might have been the better for a hard word; for they were deceivers; but he could not bring his mind to think that anybody could be a deceiver; and if anybody was in want of help, no matter though their own misconduct had brought them into poverty, his hand was in his pocket, and out again, very quickly with help for them. He never failed in love; and I pray that you and I, with prudence and wisdom mixed with it, may be without blame before God in the matter of love. Love your fellow-Christians. Love poor sinners to Christ. Love those that despitefully use you. Love those round about you who are strangers to the love of God. It may be that they will see in your love some little image of the love of God, as in a drop of water you may sometimes see the sun and the heavens reflected. God make us to be reflections of the love of God! His purpose is that we may be holy and without blame before him in love.

Now, I have set before you a rare treasury. Does this treasury belong to you? My dear hearers, is Christ yours? Are you trusting him? If not, there is nothing yours. Without Christ, you can do nothing, and you are nothing, and you have nothing. Come to Jesus as you are, and put your trust in him, and then all things are yours. If Christ be yours, beloved, then I charge you bless the Lord, ay, bless the Lord again and again, for you will never bless him as much as he deserves to be blessed. Let us finish this service as we closed our worship this morning, by singing the doxology,—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

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Daily Blessings for God's People

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. - Psalm 68:19-20

We observe that this Psalm is a very difficult one. One of the ablest commentators calls it a titanic Psalm. It is truly a giant Psalm, and to master it means much labour. Yet it is by no means difficult to understand when it comes to practical duties, and to those doctrines which are vital. For instance, the two verses before us are very simple and do not need any explanation, but only need to be impressed upon our memory. So is it always throughout Holy Scripture; wherever there are difficult places, they do not touch vital truths. The matter of our salvation is plain enough. The Book of Revelation may be difficult, but not the Gospel according to Matthew. With regard to the future, there may be many clouds, but with regard to that blessed day which is past, which was the crisis of the world's history, when our Saviour hung upon the tree, the darkness is past, and the true light shineth there. Don't, therefore, busy yourselves most about those things which are most difficult, for they are usually of least importance. Concern your heart most with the simplicities of the gospel, for it is there, in the way, the truth, and the life, that the essential matter lies.

Let us come to these two verses, and remark that they remind us first of the mercies of life. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits." They then assure us of the mercies of death. "He that is our God is the God of our salvation, and unto God belong the issues from death." And then the two verses tell us of the common occupation of both life and death, namely, the blessing of God, whose mercy continues to us in both states. Blessed be Jehovah, whether I receive the daily load of his

benefits, or whether he open for me the gates of the grace.

Let us begin then, and contemplate for a few moments: -

I. THE MERCIES OF OUR LIFE.

The text saith, "He daily loadeth us with benefits." Let us keep to the English version just now. Take the words of it. What is it that he gives us? Benefits. We have a very beautiful word in the English language - benevolence. You know that means good wishing, bene volens. He may be a benevolent man who is not able to do any act of kindness, to give any of his substance away for lack of any. But God's goodness to us is not merely bene volens, in which he wishes us well, but it is beneficence or good doing. His gifts and benefits are deeds of goodness, acts of goodness. He doth to us that which is good. He doth not only wish us well, and speak to us well, and direct us well, but he doeth well unto us. He doth not only say, "I pity thy last estate," but he delivers the lost out of their ruin. He doth not say, as the churl doth, "Be thou warmed, and be thou filled," and do no more, but, wishing us well, he doth well unto us; he warms our hearts with his love, and fills them with his mercy, and sends us on our way rejoicing. It is true God speaks us well. What more could he say than, to us, he has said in his blessed Word? It is true he wishes us well. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live." But the essence of his goodness lies in this, that he goes beyond wishes and words into acts.

Begin, brethren, with the greatest of his acts. "He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." In that gift he hath already given us all things, and from that blessed pledge he has never gone back, but he has given us all that we want for this life, and for the life to come, for ye have grace and glory, and hath abounded in each. The upper springs fail not, neither do the nether springs. If Christ is our perpetual bread and wine, so, too, our common bread, in answer to our prayer, is given us according to his assurance, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." Will you try to think of the benefits which you have received, dear brother, dear sister? Turn them over now in your mind - the benefits that you have actually yourself received - not only read of,

and heard of, and had promises of, but that you have received. Oh! the benefits of early education! the being restrained from, sin. Oh! the benefits of conviction! of being enlightened and made to see the guilt of sin. Oh! the sweet benefit of being led to the Saviour! made to stand at the cross foot, where the blood speaks better things than that of Abel. Oh! the benefit of perfect pardon and of righteousness, which covers us and justifies in the sight of God! What an unspeakable benefit is regeneration! Who shall prize the benefit of adoption? Who is he that shall describe the benefit of daily education in the things of God - of preservation from falling into final, vital sin - of sanctification carried on from day to day? We have benefits that we know of, but we probably have ten times as many that we know not of. Some of them come in at the front door of the house; some of the richest of them seem to steal in at the back door. They are among the most precious bounties that fly in with so soft a wing that we hear them not when they come. Ye shall sooner count the hairs on your head, or the dust upon the sand beach, than you shall be able to estimate the number of his benefits.

Leave that word then, and note the next. It is said in the text concerning God's benefits, that he loads us with them - loads us with benefits. He does not put a little upon us of his goodness, but much; very much, until it becomes a load. Have you never known what it is to be bowed right down with such goodness? I have, I freely confess it - I have desired to praise him, but a sense of love so bowed me down that I could only adopt the language of the psalmist and say, "Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Zion." It seemed as if "words were but air, and tongues but clay, and his compassion's so divine," that it was impossible to speak of them. His mercies, as our hymn said just now, come as thick and as fast as the moments do. In fact, it is literally so. Every moment needs heavings of the lungs, pulsings of the blood. The slightest circumstance might prevent one or the other. God's continued benefits come to us even in the simple form of preserved life. We are constantly exposed to peril. "Plagues and death around us fly." God preserves us from perils to the body. Our thoughts - whither might they go? They might in a moment lead us into heresies and foul blasphemies. It is no little thing to be preserved from that spiritual pestilence that walketh both in darkness and the noonday. Glory be to God, who sends us temporal and spiritual benefits so

numerous, and each one so weighty, that eye cannot say less than this, "That he daily loadeth us with his benefits, until we seem bowed down to the earth under a joyful sense of obligation to his mercy." "He loadeth us with benefits."

Oh! are any of you inclined to murmur? Do you think God deals hard with you? Well, you are what you are by his grace. Though you are not what you wish to be, yet remember you are not what, if strict justice were carried out, you would be. In the poor-house you might be - few admire that residence. In the prison you might be - God preserves you from the sin that would bring you there. In the lunatic asylum you might be - better men and women than you are have come to that. At the grave's mouth you might be - on the sick bed, on the verge of eternity. God's holiest saints have not been spared from the grave. In hell you might be - amongst the lost, wailing, but hopelessly wailing, gnashing your teeth in utter despair. O God, when we think of what we are not, because thy grace has kept us from it, we cannot but say, "Thou hast loaded us with benefits."

But then think of what you are, you Christians. You are God's children; you are joint-heirs with Christ. "All things are yours"; ay, and "things to come," you have guaranteed too - preservation to the end, and you have, after the end of this life, glory without end. The "many mansions" are for you; the palms and harps of the glorified are for you. You have a share in all that Christ has, and is, and shall be. In all the gifts of his ascension you have a part; in the gifts that come to us through his session at the right hand of God, you have your share; and in, the glories of the Second Advent, the grand hope of the Church of God, you shall partake. See how, in the present, and in the past, and in the future, he loadeth you with benefits. There are two great words already.

But the next word is equally large. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits." A poor man shall call at your door, and you shall give to him all he wants for food, and cover him, and give him something to make glad his heart withal. If you do it once, you reckon that you have done well. Supposing he should call again to-morrow, you might find it in your heart to do the same. But suppose he called upon

you seven days in the week: I am afraid that by degrees that would become seven times too often, for we count, when we have done men a good turn, that someone else should see to them next time. If we load them especially with benefits, we say, "Don't encroach; don't ride a willing horse too fast. You must not come again so often. You weary me." Ah! this is man; but look at God. He daily loadeth us with benefits. How many days has he done that with some of us? Thirty years? "Ah!" saith one, "I can talk of sixty years" - yes, and some of you of seventy and eighty years. Well, he has loaded you with benefits every day. You have never been above the rank of a pauper, so far as your God is concerned. But I will put it differently. You have been a gentleman commoner upon the goodness of God all your life. It has been your lot, like that of Mephibosheth, to sit daily at the King's table and give a portion from him. And yet you murmur. You have been unbelieving, proud, idle; all sorts of ill-temperers have you shown. Yet has he daily loaded you with benefits. It has sometimes seemed to be a wrestling between our sin and God's love, but up to this hour his love has conquered. We have drawn mightily upon his exchequer, but that exchequer has never been exhausted. The load of mercy which was used yesterday won't do for to-day. Like manna, it must come fresh and fresh, and the blessing is that it does come fresh and fresh. When God draws the curtain and stands in the sunlight, mercy streams in on the sunbeam; and when he shuts the eyelids of the day and the evening comes, it is mercy that puts its finger upon our eyelids and bids us rest. He "daily loadeth us with benefits" - every day; and he loads us with benefits not only on bright days, but on dark days. When we are sick, and tossing to and fro upon the bed, he still is loading us with benefits, only in another form. He sends sometimes his choicest mercies to us in black-edged envelopes. The very brightest gems of heaven come to us, and we know them not. They sparkle not until faith's eye has seen them. Nature has not perceived their excellence. How he loadeth us with benefits on Sabbath days! There is a dear brother who is almost always here, who, when he sees me on Sunday mornings, generally makes use of some such exclamation as this, "Every day is good to me, but the Sabbath day is seven good days in one. It is blest seven times over." And, indeed, it so is. He loadeth us with benefits on the Sabbath. But then we have our Monday mercies and our Tuesday mercies too; and right on to the close on Saturday night the Lord continues to heap on his mercies one after

another, that he may make us feel that we shall sooner weary with thanking him than he will weary in giving us cause for thankfulness.

There is one other word - a very little one, but a sweet one too: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits." "Us." Personal matters bring sweetness to our soul, and herein lieth the wonder. That God should load David with benefits was marvellous to David, but not to me. The marvel to me is that he should load me with benefits. Beloved brethren and sisters, I do not feel your imperfections, and, therefore, I do not so much perceive the sovereignty of God in dealing graciously with you, but I know some of my own shortcomings, and they seem to me to be greater than those of others; therefore, do I with gratitude admire the abounding mercy of God that he should load me with benefits.

"Why do I meet to hear his voice,
And enter where there's room;
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

There may be some whose consciences will allow them to think that their praying made the distinction. I am not able to believe that, but I am compelled to feel that, if I enjoy the things of Christ that others do not, it is of the Lord's mercy, and not of any goodness in me, but entirely of his infinite grace. Let us bless the Lord at this hour because he loadeth us with benefits when he might have passed us by. He might have suffered us to go on heaping up our transgressions until the measure thereof had been filled, and then he might have made us reap for ever that which we had sown. Instead of this, he has made us - many of us - however unlikely persons - to be his chosen ones, and he hath loaded us with benefits.

I have spoken very simply entirely with the view that those hearts that have tasted that the Lord is gracious may now wake up all their powers to praise and bless the name of the Most High. We must not pass away from this, however, without observing that our translation is not literal - indeed, is not the meaning of the passage. Those of you who will look at your Bibles will perceive that the words "who" and "with benefits", are put in it italics to show that they are not in the Hebrew, but have been

supplied by the translators, as they thought them necessary to the sense; and some of the best interpreters say that the passage means this, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burdens"; and I have little doubt that that is the correct translation. It is not so much that he loads us, as that he lifts our load for us, and bears it for us. Well, at any rate, that is a sweet rendering, "He daily bears our burden"; and it is a rendering which is a word of rebuke to some of you. Did you not come into this tabernacle tonight with your burdens on your back? Well, it was wrong you should ever have them. "Cast all your care on him, for he careth for you." A man who has a burden-bearer certainly need not bear the burden himself. Faith is never burdened, because she knows where to lay her burden. She hath a burden, but she puts it on the Almighty God. But unbelief, with a far less load than faith carries easily, is bowed down to the dust. Arise, O child of God, whatever thy burden is, and by an act of faith cast it upon God. You have done your little all; leave it now. Your fretfulness will not alter things. You cannot change the night, nor make one hair white or black. Why fret and worry? The world went on very well before you were born; it will when you are dead. Leave the helm. Whenever you have been foremost you made a mistake. He that carves for himself will cut his fingers; but when God has been foremost, and you have been content to follow, you have never had any mistake then; and when God has been your shepherd, you have been constrained to say, "I shall not want." Oh! then, have done with burden-bearing, and take up the language of the text, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burdens."

And then the text adds that he is "the God of our salvation." In this life we ought to praise him. His daily mercies are all sweetened with this reflection - that we are saved souls. Our morsel may be dry, but we dip it in this dainty sauce of his salvation. It is true I am poor, but I am saved. It is true I am sick, but I am saved. It is true I am obscure and unknown, but I am saved; and the salvation of God sweetens all. Then is it added to that, it is "our" salvation. He that can grasp the salvation which is in Christ and say, "This is mine," is rich to all the intents of bliss, and has his daily life gilded with joy.

And then it is added beyond that, "our God." God is ours. He that is our

God is the God of salvation. His omnipotence and omniscience, his immutability and his faithfulness - all his attributes are ours. The Father is ours; the Son is ours; the Spirit is ours. The God of election is ours; the God of redemption is ours; the God of sanctification is ours. Oh! with all this, how can we be cast down? Why should we repine! We have certainly abounding cause for blessing and praising the Lord. Those are the mercies of life. And now for a few minutes let us contemplate: -

II. THE MERCIES OF DEATH.

"Unto God belong the issues from death." This may mean several things. We will include its meanings under these heads. Unto God belong escapes from death. Oh! blessed be his name, we may come very near the grave, and the jaws of death may be open to receive us; but the pit cannot shut her mouth upon us until our hour is come.

"Plagues of death around me fly.
Till he please, I cannot die.
Not a single shaft can hit,
Until the God of love see fit.

"What though a thousand at thy side,
At thy right hand ten thousand, died?
Our God, his chosen people saves,
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves."

Whatever occurs around us, we need not be alarmed. We are immortal until our work is done. And amidst infectious or contagious diseases, if we are called to go there, we may sit as easily as though in balmy air. It is not ours to preserve our life by neglecting our duty. It is better to die in service than live in idleness - better to glorify God and depart, than rot above ground in neglecting what he would have us to do. Unto God belong the issues from death. We may, therefore, go without temerity into any danger where duty calls us.

But then unto God belong the issues that lead actually down to death. It may be we shall not die. There are some who are comforted much by the

belief that Christ will come, and they shall not die. I do not profess to be among the number. I would as soon die as not, and rather, I think, if I might have my choice, for herein would be a greater conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in actually passing through the grave and rising again, than will fall to the lot of those who do not die. At all events, those who die not shall have no preference beyond them that sleep. So the Apostle tells us. "To" die is "gain"; and we will look upon it as such. But whenever we die, if we die, it will be at God's bidding. No one hath the key of death but the Lord of life. A thousand angels could not hurl us to the grave. All the devils in hell cannot destroy the least lamb in Christ's flock. Till God saith "Return," our spirit shall not leave the body; and we may be well content to depart when God saith the time is come. Oh! how blessed it is to think that the arrows of death are in the quiver of God, and they cannot be shot forth unless as the Lord wills it! Unto the Lord belong the issues from death.

Think of this, then, about your departed friends The Master took them home. Think about your own departure. It is not to be arranged by your folly, not by the malice of the wicked. It will all be planned and designed by the infinite love of God.

But the text may mean something more. Unto God belong the issues from death; that is, the coming up from death again. We place the bodies of the saints in the territory of death, but they are only put there, as it were, because there is a lien upon them for a time. They must come out. They must be delivered. for his word says, if we believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, "so also them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." There shall not be a bone or a piece of a bone of one of the saints kept by the enemy as a trophy of his conquest over the Saviour. Christ shall vanquish death entirely, and from the sepulchre he shall snatch all the trophies of the grave. We shall rise again, beloved. What though our bodies rot? What though they feed plants, and in due time feed animals, and pass through innumerable permutations and combinations? Yet he that made us can re-make us; and the voice that bade us live shall bid these bodies live again. "Unto God belong the issues from death." In this we are comforted - to fall asleep, because the angel of the churches shall guard our dust.

And then this further thought. The issues from death grasp all that comes after death. The spirit issues from death - never touched by it indeed. Leaving the body behind a while, the spirit enters into a glory, waiting for the fulness. Then when Christ descends, and the trumpet sounds, and the dead in Christ rise in the first resurrection, then shall the re-united manhood enter into the fulness of the glory with a manifested Saviour. These issues from death belong to God, and God secures them to his people. He shall give them to them for whom he has appointed them. He shall give them to those whom he has made worthy by his grace to be partakers of this heritage. They belong to him - not to us by merit, but they are his gifts by covenant and by grace. Oh! then, how sweet it is to think, "The path down to the grave, my God has planted it. It is all his - all his own; and when my turn shall come to go into that garden wherein is the sepulchre, I shall be in my Father's territory." Jesus Christ is Lord of the sick-bed. He makes the bed of his people in their affliction. Even down to the borders of the grave - to the edge of Jordan's river - it is all Immanuel's land; and he often makes it the land of Beulah. And then, when I dip my foot in that chill stream, it is still my Master's country. I am not out of the presence of the Lord of life now I am coming to the land of death-shade and through the river, but it is the Master's river still, and, on the other side, it is my Lord's own land. When the shining ones shall meet me to conduct me up to the jewelled "city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," I shall be always at home, always in my Father's country, never an exile, never come upon a tract of territory over which he hath no power. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for he is with me. His rod and his staff, even there have they sway, and they shall comfort me." Be of good cheer, beloved. "Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life," and, life being ended, you shall "dwell in the house of your God for ever." In life and in death, you shall prove the tokens of his special love. And now we wind up with this. Here is: -

III. THE COMMON OCCUPATIONS OF BOTH CONDITIONS.

"I will praise thee in life
I will praise thee in death

I will praise thee as long
As thou lendest me breath."

"I will praise thee for ever and ever." The one occupation of a Christian is to praise his God. Now, in order to do this, we must maintain by God's grace a grateful, happy, praiseful frame of mind; and we must endeavour to express that condition of mind by songs of gratitude. This should be our morning's work. Should there not be the morning song? This should be the evening's work. Let it be our vespers to bless and praise God. Israel had the morning lamb and the evening lamb. Let us make both ends of the day bright with his praise, and during the day. We are in a wrong state of mind if we are not in a thankful state of mind. Depend upon it, there is something wrong with you if you cannot praise God. "Oh!" says one, "what, in trouble?" Yes, in every bitter trouble too, for Job could say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." "But are we never to be sorrowful?" Yes, yet always rejoicing. How can that be? Ah! the Lord teach you it! It is a work of grace. Cast down, but yet, for all that, rejoicing in the Lord! He lifts up the light of his countenance upon us, even when heart and flesh are failing us. I say again, there is something amiss with us when our heart does not praise God. Do as much as you can also. When your heart is glad, try to praise him with your lip. Do you work alone? Sing. Perhaps, if you work in company, you cannot; but sing with the heart. Men of the world, I am afraid, sing more than we do. I do not admire the most of their songs. They do not seem to have much sense about them - at least the modern ones. But let us sing some of the songs of Zion. You do not want to put your harps on the willows, but if they are there, take them down and praise the Lord, who leadeth you with benefits in life and in death. Therefore, habitually praise him. And, brethren and sisters, all our actions, as well as our thoughts and words, should tend to, the praise of him who always blesses us. You may stop praising God when he stops having mercy upon you - not till then; and as there is always a new mercy coming to your doors let new praise be going up out of your hearts." But how can I praise God by my actions? saith one. "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him." I try to praise God by preaching to-night. Some of you will go to your trades. Well, praise God at your trades. Any work, any lawful calling may be to the

Christian priest - (and all Christians are priests) - the exercise of his sacred functions. You may make your smock-frock, if you will, a vestment; you shall make your meal a sacrament; you shall make everything in the house like the pots that were before the altar; the bells upon the horses shall be "holiness unto the Lord."

And, dear brethren, to close. Let me remark that if we praise God ourselves by word and life, we ought to try to bring others to praise him too. You do not praise God, indeed, unless you want others to do so. It is a mark of sincere thankfulness that it desires others to assist it in the expression of its joy. Blessed be the Lord, this same Psalmist here, who says for himself, "Blessed be the Lord", is the writer of the 67th Psalm. You know how he says there, "Let the people praise thee - yea, let all the people praise thee! Oh! let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" Then he says again, "Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee!" Do your utmost to be the means, in God's hands, of bringing others to praise him. Tell them what he has done for you. Tell them of his saving grace. Invite sinners to Christ. Let it be: -

"All your business here below
To say, "Behold the Lamb!"

and in this way you will be setting other tongues a-praising God, so that when your tongue is silent, there shall be others that will take up the strain. Labour for this, beloved, every one of you. Labour for the extension of the choir that shall sing the praises of the Saviour I trust we shall never fall into that narrow-minded spirit which seems to say, "It is enough for me if I am saved, and if those that go to my little place of worship are all right. It is quite enough." No, Master, thy throne is not to be set up in some little conventicle in a back street, and there alone. Thou art not to reign in some little corner of a city, and there alone Thou art not to take this island of Great Britain, and reign in it alone; nor in Europe - in one quarter of the earth alone. Let the whole earth be filled with his praise! And what Christian heart will refuse to say, "Amen and amen"? God grant it may be so! Amen.

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The True Christian's Blessedness

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—Romans 8:28.

We have here the description of a true Christian, and a declaration of that Christian's blessedness. We have him first very succinctly, but very fully described in these words—"Them that love God, them who are the called according to his purpose." These two expressions are the great distinguishing marks whereby we are able to separate the precious from the vile, by discovering to us who are the children of God.

The first contains an outward manifestation of the second—"Them that love God." Now, there are many things in which the worldly and the godly do agree, but on this point there IS a vital difference. No ungodly man loves God—at least not in the Bible sense of the term. An unconverted man may love a God, as, for instance, the God of nature, and the God of the imagination; but the God of revelation no man can love, unless grace has been poured into his heart, to turn him from that natural enmity of the heart towards God, in which all of us are born. And there may be many differences between godly men, as there undoubtedly are; they may belong to different sects, they may hold very opposite opinions, but all godly men agree in this, that they love God. Whosoever loveth God, without doubt, is a Christian; and whosoever loveth him not, however high may be his pretensions, however boastful his professions, hath not seen God, neither known him for "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." True believers love God as their Father; they have "the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba, Father." They love him as their King, they are willing to obey him, to walk in his commands is their delight; no path is so soft to their feet as the path of God's precepts, the way of obedience thereunto. They love God also as their Portion, for in him they live and move and have their being; God is their all, without him they have nothing, but possessing him, however

little they may have of outward good, they feel that they are rich to all the intents of bliss. They love God as their future Inheritance, they believe that when days and years are past they shall enter into the bosom of God; and their highest joy and delight is the full conviction and belief, that one day they shall dwell for ever near his throne, be hidden in the brightness of his glory, and enjoy his everlasting favor. Dost thou love God, not with lip-language, but with heart-service? Dost thou love to pay him homage? Dost thou love to hold communion with him? Dost thou frequent his mercy-seat? Dost thou abide in his commandments, and desire to be conformed unto his Image? If so, then the sweet things which we shall have to say this morning are thine. But if thou art no lover of God, but a stranger to him, I beseech thee do not pilfer to-day and steal a comfort that was not intended for thee. "All things work together for good," but not to all men; they only work together for the good of "them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Note the second phrase, which contains also a description of the Christian—"the called according to his purpose." However much the Arminian may try to fritter away the meaning of this 8th chapter of the Romans we are obliged as long as we use terms and words to say, that the 8th chapter of the Romans and the 9th, are the very pillars of that Gospel which men now call Calvinism. No man after having read these chapters attentively, and having understood them, can deny that the doctrines of sovereign, distinguishing grace, are the sum and substance of the teaching of the Bible. I do not believe that the Bible is to be understood except by receiving these doctrines as true. The apostle says that those who love God are "the called according to his purpose" by which he means to say two things—first, that all who love God love him because he called them to love him. He called them, mark you. All men are called by the ministry, by the Word, by daily providence, to love God, there is a common call always given to men to come to Christ, the great bell of the gospel rings a universal welcome to every living soul that breathes; but alas! though that bell hath the very sound of heaven, and though all men do in a measure hear it, for "their line is gone out into all the earth and their Word unto the end of the world" yet there was never an instance of any man having been brought to God simply by that sound. All these things are insufficient for the salvation of any man; there must be

superadded the special call, the call which man cannot resist, the call of efficacious grace, working in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure. Now, all them that love God love him because they have had a special, irresistible, supernatural call. Ask them whether they would have loved God if left to themselves, and to a man, whatever their doctrines, they will confess—

"Grace taught my soul to pray,
Grace made my eyes o'erflow,
'Tis grace that kept me to this day
And will not let me go."

I never heard a Christian yet who said that he came to God of himself, left to his own free-will. Free-will may look very pretty in theory, but I never yet met any one who found it work well in practice. We all confess that if we are brought to the marriage-banquet—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That gently forced us in
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

Many men cavil at election; the very word with some is a great bug ear; they no sooner hear it than they turn upon their heel indignantly. But this know, O man, whatever thou sayest of this doctrine, it is a stone upon which, if any man fall, he shall suffer loss, but if it fall upon him it shall grind him to powder. Not all the sophisms of the learned, nor all the legerdemain of the cunning, will ever be able to sweep the doctrine of election out of Holy Scripture. Let any man hear and judge. Hearken ye to this passage in the 9th of Romans! "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." "Thou wilt say then unto me,

Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor! What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." These are God's words; if any man doth cavil at them, let him cavil; he rejecteth the testimony of God against himself. If I promulgated the doctrine on my own authority, I could not blame you if you should turn against me, and reject it; but when, on the authority of Holy Scripture, I propound it, God forbid that any man should quarrel therewith.

I have affirmed, and I am sure most Christians will bear witness, that what I said was the truth, that if any man loveth God he loves him because God gave him grace to love him. Now, suppose I should put the following question to any converted man in this hall. Side by side with you there sits an ungodly person; you two have been brought up together, you have lived in the same house, you have enjoyed the same means of grace, you are converted, he is not; will you please to tell me what has made the difference? Without a solitary exception the answer would be this—"If I am a Christian and he is not, unto God be the honor." Do you suppose for a moment that there is any injustice in God in having given you grace which he did not give to another? I suppose you say, "Injustice, no; God has a right to do as he wills with his own; I could not claim grace, nor could my companions, God chose to give it to me, the other has rejected grace wilfully to his own fault, and I should have done the same, but that he gave 'more grace,' whereby my will was constrained." Now, sir, if it is not wrong for God to do the thing, how can it be wrong for God to purpose to do the thing? and what is election, but God's purpose to do what he does do? It is a fact which any man must be a fool who would dare to deny that God does give to one man more grace shall to another; we cannot account for the salvation of one and the non-salvation of another but by believing, that God has worked more effectually in one

man's heart than another's—unless you choose to give the honor to man, and say it consists in one man's being better than another, and if so I will have no argument with you, because you do not know the gospel at all, or you would know that salvation is not of works but of grace. If, then, you give the honor to God, you are bound to confess that God has done more for the man that is saved than for the man that is not saved. How, then, can election be unjust, if its effect is not unjust? However, just or unjust as man may choose to think it, God has done it, and the fact stands in man's face, let him reject it as he pleases. God's people are known by their outward mark: they love God, and the secret cause of their loving God is this—God chose them from before the foundation of the world that they should love him, and he sent forth the call of his grace, so that they were called according to his purpose, and were led by grace to love and to fear him. If that is not the meaning of the text I do not understand the English language. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Now, my hearers, before I proceed to enter into the text, let the question go round. Do I love God? Have I any reason to believe that I have been called according to his purpose? Have I been born again from above? Has the Spirit operated in my heart in a manner to which flesh and blood never can attain? Have I passed from death unto life by the quickening agency of the Holy Ghost? If I have, then God purposed that I should do so, and the whole of this great promise is mine.

II. We shall take the words one by one, and try to explain them.

1. Let us begin with the word "work." "We know that all things work." Look around, above, beneath, and all things work. They work, in opposition to idleness. The idle man that folds his arms or lies upon the bed of sloth is an exception to God's rule; for except himself all things work. There is not a star though it seemeth to sleep in the deep blue firmament, which doth not travel its myriads of miles and work; there is not an ocean, or a river, which is not ever working, either clapping its thousand hands with storms, or bearing on its bosom the freight of nations. There is not a silent nook within the deepest forest glade where work is not going on. Nothing is idle. The world is a great machine, but it is never standing still: silently all through the watches of the night, and

through the hours of day, the earth revolveth on its axis, and works out its predestinated course. Silently the forest groweth, anon it is felled; but all the while between its growing and felling it is at work. Everywhere the earth works; mountains work: nature in its inmost bowels is at work; even the center of the great heart of the world is ever beating; sometimes we discover its working in the volcano and the earthquake, but even when most still all things are ever working.

They are ever working too, in opposition to the word play. Not only are they ceaselessly active, but they are active for a purpose. We are apt to think that the motion of the world and the different evolutions of the stars are but like the turning round of a child's windmill; they produce nothing. That old preacher Solomon once said as much as that. He said—"The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits." But Solomon did not add, that things are not what they seem. The world is not at play; it hath an object in its wildest movement. Avalanche, hurricane, earthquake, are but order in an unusual form; destruction and death are but progress in veiled attire. Everything that is and is done, worketh out some great end and purpose. The great machine of this world is not only in motion, but there is something weaving in it, which as yet mortal eye hath not fully seen, which our text hinteth at when it says, It is working out good for God's people.

And once again, all things work in opposition to Sabbath. We morally speak of work, especially on this day, as being the opposite of sacred rest and worship. Now, at the present moment all things work. Since the day when Adam fell all things have had to toil and labor. Before Adam's fall the world kept high and perpetual holiday; but now the world has come to its work-days, now it hath to toil. When Adam was in the garden the world had its Sabbath: and it shall never have another Sabbath till the Millennium shall dawn, and then when all things have ceased to work, and the kingdoms shall be given up to God, even the Father, then shall the world have her Sabbath, and shall rest; but at present all things do work.

Dear brethren, let us not wonder if we have to work too. If we have to toil, let us remember, this is the world's week of toil. The 6,000 years of continual labor, and toil, and travail, have happened not to us alone, but to the whole of God's great universe; the whole world is groaning, and travailing. Let us not be backward in doing our work. If all things are working, let us work too—"work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work." And let the idle and slothful remember that they are a great anomaly; they are blots in the great work-writing of God; they mean nothing; in all the book of letters with which God has written out the great word "work," they are nothing at all. But let the man that worketh, though it be with the sweat of his brow and with aching hands, remember that he, if he is seeking to bless the Lord's people, is in sympathy with all things—not only in sympathy with their work, but in sympathy with their aim.

2. Now, the next word, "All things work together." That is in opposition to their apparent confliction. Looking upon the world with the mere eye of sense and reason, we say, "Yes, all things work, but they work contrary to one another. There are opposite currents; the wind bloweth to the north and to the south. The world's barque, it is true, is always tossed with waves, but these waves toss her first to the right and then to the left; they do not steadily bear her onward to her desired haven. It is true the world is always active, but it is with the activity of the battle-field, wherein hosts encounter hosts and the weaker are overcome." Be not deceived; it is not so; things are not what they seem; "all things work together." There is no opposition in God's providence; the raven wing of war is co-worker with the dove of peace. The tempest strives not with the peaceful calm—they are linked together and work together, although they seem to be in opposition. Look at our history. How many an event has seemed to be conflicting in its day, that has worked out good for us? The strifes of barons and kings for mastery might have been thought to be likely to tread out the last spark of British liberty; but they did rather kindle the pile. The various rebellions of nations, the heavings of society, the strife of anarchy, the tumults of war—all, all these things, overruled by God, have but made the chariot of the church progress more mightily; they have not failed of their predestinated purpose—"good for the people of God." I know my brethren, it is very hard for you to believe this. "What!"

say you? "I have been sick for many a day, and wife and children, dependent on my daily labor, are crying for food: will this work together for my good?" So saith the word, my brother, and so shalt thou find it ere long. "I have been in trade," says another, "and this commercial pressure has brought me exceedingly low, and distressed me: is it for my good?" My brother, thou art a Christian. I know thou dost not seriously ask the question, for thou knowest the answer of it. He who said, "all things work together," will soon prove to you that there is a harmony in the most discordant parts of your life. You shall find, when your biography is written, that the black page did but harmonize with the bright one—that the dark and cloudy day was but a glorious foil to set forth the brighter noon-tide of your joy. "All things work together." There is never a clash in the world: men think so, but it never is so. The charioteers of the Roman circus might with much cleverness and art, with glowing wheels, avoid each other; but God, with skill infinitely consummate, guides the fiery coursers of man's passion, yokes the storm, bits the tempest, and keeping each clear of the other from seeming evil still enduceth good, and better still; and better still in infinite progression.

We must understand the word "together," also in another sense. "All things work together for good:" that is to say, none of them work separately. I remember an old divine using a very pithy and homely metaphor, which I shall borrow to-day. Said he, "All things work together for good; but perhaps, any one of those 'all things' might destroy us if taken alone. The physician," says he, "prescribes medicine; you go to the chemist, and he makes it up; there is something taken from this drawer, something from that phial, something from that shelf: any one of those ingredients, it is very possible, would be a deadly poison, and kill you outright, if you should take it separately, but he puts one into the mortar, and then another, and then another, and when he has worked them all up with his pestle, and has made a compound, he gives them all to you as a whole, and together they work for your good, but any one of the ingredients might either have operated fatally, or in a manner detrimental to your health." Learn, then, that it is wrong to ask, concerning any particular act of providence; is this for my good? Remember, it is not the one thing alone that is for your good; it is the one thing put with another thing, and that with a third, and that with a fourth,

and all these mixed together, that work for your good. Your being sick very probably might not be for your good only God has something to follow your sickness, some blessed deliverance to follow your poverty, and he knows that when he has mixed the different experiences of your life together, they shall produce good for your soul and eternal good for your spirit. We know right well that there are many things that happen to us in our lives that would be the ruin of us if we were always to continue in the same condition. Too much joy would intoxicate us, too much misery would drive us to despair: but the joy and the misery, the battle and the victory, the storm and the calm, all these compounded make that sacred elixir whereby God maketh all his people perfect through suffering, and leadeth them to ultimate happiness. "All things work together for good."

3. Now we must take the next words. "All things work together for good." Upon these two words the meaning of my text will hinge. There are different senses to the word "good." There is the worldling's sense: "Who will show us any good?"—by which he means transient good, the good of the moment. "Who wilt put honey into my mouth? Who will feed my belly with hid treasures? Who will garnish my back with purple and make my table groan with plenty?" That is "good,"—the vat bursting with wine, the barn full of corn! Now God has never promised that "all things shall work together" for such good as that to his people. Very likely all things will work together in a clean contrary way to that. Expect not, O Christian, that all things will work together to make thee rich; it is just possible they may all work to make thee poor. It may be that all the different providences that shall happen to thee will come wave upon wave, washing thy fortune upon the rocks, till it shall be wrecked, and then waves shall break o'er thee, till in that poor boat, the humble remnant of thy fortune thou shalt be out on the wide sea, with none to help thee but God the Omnipotent. Expect not, then, that all things shall work together as for thy good.

The Christian understands the word "good" in another sense. By "good," he understands spiritual good. "Ah!" saith he, "I do not call gold good, but I call faith good! I do not think it always for my good to increase in treasure, but I know it is good to grow in grace. I do not know that it is for

my good that I should be respectable and walk in good society; but I know that it is for my good that I should walk humbly with my God. I do not know that it is for my good that my children should be about me, like olive branches round my table, but I know that it is for my good that I should flourish in the courts of my God, and that I should be the means of winning souls from going down into the pit. I am not certain that it is altogether for my good to have kind and generous friends, with whom I may hold fellowship; but I know that it is for my good that I should hold fellowship with Christ, that I should have communion with him, even though it should be in his sufferings. I know it is good for me that my faith, my love, my every grace should grow and increase, and that I should be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ my blessed Lord and Master." Well, Christian, thou hast got upon the meaning of the text, then. "All things work together," for that kind of good to God's people. "Well!" says one, "I don't think anything of that, then." No, perhaps thou dost not; it is not very likely swine should ever lift their heads from their troughs to think aught of stars. I do not much wonder that thou shouldst despise spiritual good, for thou art yet "in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity;" a stranger to spiritual things, and let thy despising of spiritual things teach thee that thou art not spiritual, and therefore thou canst not understand the spiritual, because it must be spiritually discerned. To the Christian, however, the highest good he can receive on earth is to grow in grace. "There!" he says, "I had rather be a bankrupt in business than I would be a bankrupt in grace; let my fortune be decreased—better that, than that I should backslide; there! let thy waves and thy billows roll over me—better an ocean of trouble than a drop of sin, I would rather have thy rod a thousand times upon my shoulders, O my God, than I would once put out my hand to touch that which is forbidden, or allow my foot to run in the way of gainsayers." The highest good a Christian has here is good spiritual.

And we may add, the text also means good eternal, lasting good. All things work together for a Christian's lasting good. They all work to bring him to Paradise—all work to bring him to the Saviour's feet. "So he bringeth them to their desired haven," said the Psalmist—by storm and tempest, flood and hurricane. All the troubles of a Christian do but wash him nearer heaven; the rough winds do but hurry his passage across the

straits of this life to the port of eternal peace. All things work together for the Christian's eternal and spiritual good.

And yet I must say here, that sometimes all things work together for the Christian's temporal good. You know the story of old Jacob. "Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me," said the old Patriarch. But if he could have read God's secrets, he might have found that Simeon was not lost, for he was retained as a hostage—that Joseph was not lost but gone before to smooth the passage of his grey hairs into the grave, and that even Benjamin was to be taken away by Joseph in love to his brother. So that what seemed to be against him, even in temporal matters, was for him. You may have heard also the story of that eminent martyr who was wont always to say, "All things work together for good." When he was seized by the officers of Queen Mary, to be taken to the stake to be burned, he was treated so roughly on the road that he broke his leg; and they jeeringly said, "All things work together for good, do they? How will your broken leg work for your good?" "I don't know," said he, "how it will, but for my good I know it will work, and you shall see it so." Strange to say, it proved true that it was for his good; for being delayed a day or so on the road through his lameness, he just arrived in London in time enough to hear that Elizabeth was proclaimed queen, and so he escaped the stake by his broken leg. He turned round upon the men who carried him, as they thought, to his death, and said to them, "Now will you believe that all things work together for God?" So that though I said the drift of the text was spiritual good, yet sometimes in the main current there may be carried some rich and rare temporal benefits for God's children as well as the richer spiritual blessings.

4. I am treating the text as you see, verbally. And now I must return to the word "work"—to notice the tense of it. "All things work together for good." It does not say that they shall work, or that they have worked; both of these are implied, but it says that they do work now. All things at this present moment are working together for the believer's good. I find it extremely easy to believe that all things have worked together for my good. I can look back at the past, and wonder at all the way whereby the Lord hath led me. If ever there lived a man who has reason to be grateful

to Almighty God, I think I am that man. I can see black storms that have lowered o'er my head, and torrents of opposition that have run across my path, but I can thank God for every incident that ever occurred to me from my cradle up to now, and do not desire a better pilot for the rest of my days, than he who has steered me from obscurity and scorn, to this place to preach his word and feed this great congregation. And I doubt not that each of you, in looking back upon your past experience as Christians, could say very much the same. Through many troubles you have passed, but you can say, they have all been for your good. And somehow or other you have an equal faith for the future. You believe that all things will in the end work for your good. The pinch of faith always lies in the present tense. I can always believe the past, and always believe the future, but the present, the present, the present, that is what staggers faith. Now, please to notice that my text is in the present tense. "All things work," at this very instant and second of time. However troubled, downcast, depressed, and despairing, the Christian may be, all things are working now for his good; and though like Jonah he is brought to the bottom of the mountains, and he thinks the earth with her bars is about him for ever, and the weeds of despair are wrapped about his head, even in the uttermost depths all things are now working for his good. Here, I say again, is the pinch of faith. As an old countryman once said to me, from whom I gained many a pithy saying—"Ah! sir, I could always do wonders when there were no wonders to do. I feel, sir, that I could believe God; but then at the time I feel so there is not much to believe." And he just paraphrased it in his own dialect like this—"My arm is always strong, and my sickle always sharp, when there is no harvest, and I think I could mow many an acre when there is no grass; but when the harvest is on I am weak, and when the grass groweth then my scythe is blunt." Have not you found it so too? You think you can do wondrous things; you say,

"Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled,
Now I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world."

And now a little capful of wind blows on you and the tears run down your cheeks, and you say, "Lord, let me die; I am no better than my fathers."

You, that were going to thrash mountains, find that molehills cast you down.

It behoveth each of us, then, to comfort and establish our hearts upon this word "work." "All things work." Merchant; though you have been sore pressed this week, and it is highly probable that next week will be worse still for you, believe that all things even then are working for your good. It will cost you many a pang to keep that confidence; but oh! for thy Master's honor, and for thine own comfort, retain that consolation. Should thine house of business threaten to tumble about thine ears so long as thou hast acted honourably, still bear thy cross. It shall work, it is working for thy good. This week, mother, thou mayest see thy first-born carried to the tomb. That bereavement is working for thy good. O man, within a few days, he that hath eaten bread with thee may lift up his heel against thee. It shall work for thy good. O thou that art high in spirits to-day, thou with the flashing eye and joyous countenance, ere the sun doth set some evil shall befall thee, and thou shalt be sad. Believe then that all things work together for thy good; if thou lovest God, and art called according to his purpose.

5. And now we close by noticing the confidence with which the apostle speaks. "A fiction!" says one; "a pleasant fiction, sir!" "Sentimentalism!" says another; "a mere poetic sentimentalism." "Ah!" cries a third; "a downright lie." "No," says another, "there is some truth in it, certainly; men do get bettered by their afflictions, but it is a truth that is not valuable to me, for I do not realize the good that these things bring." Gentlemen, the apostle Paul was well aware of your objections; and therefore mark how confidently he asserts the doctrine. He does not say, "I am persuaded;" he does not say, "I believe;" but with unblushing confidence he appears before you and says, "We" (I have many witnesses) we know that all things work together." What Paul are you at? So strange and startling a doctrine as this asserted with such dogmatic impudence? What can you be at? Hear his reply! "'We know;' In the mouth of two or three witnesses it shall all be established; but I have tens of thousands of witnesses." "We know," and the apostle lifts his hand to where the white-robed hosts are praising God for ever.—"These," says he, "passed through great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the

blood of the Lamb: ask them!" And with united breath they reply, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Daniel, all the mighty ones that have gone before, tell out the tale of their history, write their autobiography, and they say, "We!" It is proven to a demonstration in our own lives; it is a fact which runs like a golden clue through all the labyrinth of our history—"All things work together for good to them that love God." "We," says the apostle again—and he puts his hand upon his poor distressed brethren—he looks at his companions in the prisonhouse at Rome; he looks at that humble band of teachers in Rome, in Philippi, in all the different parts of Asia, and he says, "We!" "We know it. It is not with us a matter of doubt; we have tried it, we have proved it. Not only does faith believe it, but our own history convinces us of the truth of it." I might appeal to scores and hundreds here, and I might say, brethren, you with grey heads, rise up and speak. Is this true or not? I see the reverend man rise, leaning on his staff, and with the tears "uttering his old cheeks, he says, "Young man it is true, I have proved it; even down to grey hairs I have proved it; he made, and he will carry; he will not desert his own!" Veteran! you have had many troubles, have you not? He replies, "Youth! troubles? I have had many troubles that thou reckest not of, I have buried all my kindred, and I am like the last oak of the forest, all my friends have been felled by death long ago. Yet I have been upheld till now, who could hold me up but my God!" Ask him whether God has been once untrue to him and he will say, "No; not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised; all hath come to pass!" Brethren, we can confidently say, then, hearing such a testimony as that, "We know that all things work." Besides, there are you of middle age, and even those of us who are young: the winter has not spared our branches, nor the lightnings ceased to scathe our trunk; yet here we stand; preserved by conquering grace. Hallelujah to the grace that makes all things work together for good!

O my hearer, art thou a believer in Christ? If not, I beseech thee, stop and consider! Pause and think of thy state; and if thou knowest thine own sinfulness this day, believe on Christ, who came to save sinners, and that done, all things shall work for thee, the tumbling avalanche, the rumbling earthquake the tottering pillars of heaven, all, when they fall or shake,

shall not hurt thee, they shall still work out thy good. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved," for so runneth the gospel. The Lord bless you! Amen.

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Jesus—"All Blessing and All Blest"

"Men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed."—
Psalm 72:17.

There are many famous names in human history; but many of them are connected with deeds which have brought no blessing upon mankind. To bless, and to be blessed, is the noblest sort of fame; and yet how few have thought it worth the seeking! Full many a name in the roll of fame has been written there with a finger dipped in blood. It would seem as if men loved those most who have killed the most of them. They call those greatest who have been the greatest cutthroats. They make their greatest illuminations over massacres of their fellows, calling them victories. To be set aloft upon a column, or represented by a public statue, or to have poets ringing out your name, it seems to be necessary to grasp the sword, and to hack and slay your fellow-men. Is it not too sadly true that when men have been cursed by one of their leaders they henceforth call him great? O misery, that wholesale murder should be the shortest method of becoming illustrious!

There is one name that will last when all others shall have died out; and that name is connected with blessing, and only with blessing. Jesus Christ came into the world on purpose to bless men. Men, as a race, find in him a blessing wide as the world. While he was here he blessed, and cursed not. All around him, both by speech, and act, and glance, and thought, he was an incarnate blessing. All that came to him, unless they wilfully rejected him, obtained blessings at his hands. The home of his infancy, the friends of his youth, the comrades of his manhood, he blessed

unsparingly. To bless men, he labored. To bless men, he parted with everything, and became poor. To bless men, at last he died. Those outstretched hands upon the cross are spread wide in benediction, and they are fastened there as if they would remain outstretched till the whole world is blessed. Our Lord's resurrection from the dead brings blessings to mankind. Redemption from the grave, and life eternal, he has won for us. He waited on earth a while, until he ascended, blessing men as he went up. His last attitude below the skies was that of pronouncing a blessing upon his disciples. He is gone into the glory; but he has not ceased to bless our race. The Holy Spirit came among us soon after the ascension, because Jesus had received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also. The wonderful blessings which are comprised in the work, person, and offices of the Holy Spirit—all these come to us through Jesus Christ, the ever-blessed and ever-blessing One. Still he loves to bless. Standing at the helm of all affairs, he guides the tiller of Providence with a view to the blessing of his chosen. He spends his time still in making intercession for transgressors, that the blessing of God may rest upon them; while his Spirit, who is his Vicegerent here below, is evermore occupied with blessing the sons of men. Our Lord Jesus will soon come a second time, and in that glorious hour, though his left hand must deal out justice, still his right hand will lavish blessing. His chief end and bent in his coming will be that he may largely bless those loving hearts that watch for his appearing. Christ is all blessing. When you have written down his name, you have pointed to the fountain from which all blessings flow; you have named that Sun of righteousness to whose beams we owe every good and perfect gift. From the beginning, throughout all eternity, the Lord Jesus blesses men.

"O'er every foe victorious,
He on his throne shall rest;
From age to age more glorious
All blessing and all blest.
The tide of time shall never
His covenant remove
His name shall stand for ever,
That name to us is—Love."

I purpose, at this time, if the Lord shall help me, to speak very simply about the fullness of blessing which comes from our Master and Lord. First saying, dear friends, that we ourselves are living proofs of the statement that men shall be blessed in him; then, desiring to say, in the second place, that we have seen it to be true in others also; and, thirdly, expressing our conviction that it shall be true, on the largest scale, with the nations: "All nations shall be blessed in him," and therefore they shall call him blessed.

I. First, then, WE OURSELVES ARE LIVING WITNESSES THAT MEN ARE BLESSED IN CHRIST. You and I do not pretend to be great sages, famous philosophers, or learned divines; but we feel when a pin pricks us, or when a dog bites us. We have sense enough to know when a thing tastes well or ill in the eating. We know chalk from cheese, as the proverb hath it. We know somewhat about our own wants; and we also know when we get those wants supplied. We have not mastered the extraordinary, but in the common-place we feel at home. A man is none the worse witness in court because he does not know all the technical terms used in science. A judge is never better pleased than when he sees in the witness-box: some plain, blunt, honest fellow, who will blunder out the truth. We will speak the truth at this time, so far as we know it, whether we offend or please. Every man is to speak as he finds; and we will speak concerning Jesus Christ as we have found him. I will try, if I can, to be spokesman for all present who are believers in Christ, and I ask a patient hearing.

We bear witness that we have been blessed in him. How much, how deeply, how long, and in how many ways we have been blessed in him, I will not undertake to say; but this I will say most emphatically, for many of you now present, whose lives and histories I know almost as I know my own, we have in verity, beyond all question, been blessed in Jesus to the highest degree, and of this we are sure. We believe and faith grasps the first blessing—that we have received a great blessing in Christ by the removal of a curse which otherwise must have rested upon us. That curse did overshadow us once, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to

do them." We could not keep the law: we did not keep it: we gave up all hope of keeping it. Therefore, the dark thunder-cloud of that tremendous sentence hung over us, and we heard the voice of justice speaking out of it, like a volley of the dread artillery of God in the day of tempest. The thunder of the curse rolled heavily over our heads and hearts. How some of us cowered down and trembled! We can never forget the horror of our soul under the near apprehension of divine wrath. To be cursed of God meant all woes in one. Some of us were brought very low indeed by the frown of a guilty conscience. We gave up even the dream of hope. We thought ourselves effectually, finally, and everlastingly condemned; and so indeed we should have found it, had there not been a divine Interposer. But now that curse is taken from us, and we do not dread its return, for he was made a curse for us, of whose name we are speaking now—even he "who knew no sin, but was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." No curse now remaineth: only blessing abideth. Hallelujah! If our Lord had done nothing else for us but the rolling away of the curse, he would have blessed us infinitely, and we would have blessed him for ever. If he had accomplished nothing but the bearing away of our sin into the wilderness—as the scapegoat of old bore away the iniquity of Israel—he would have done enough to set our tongues for ever praising him. He has lifted from the world the weight of the eternal curse; therefore, let all the bells of our cities ring out his honor, and all the voices of the villages sing forth his praise. O ye stars of light, shine to his glory; for he is blessed beyond all earthly measure! Let our grateful hearts in silence mean and muse his praise.

The negative being removed, we have had a positive actual experience of blessing, for God has blessed us in Christ Jesus, and we know that none are more blest than we are. We are now not at all the men that we used to be as to our inward feelings. Some years ago, under the apprehension of divine wrath, we were unhappy and troubled, so that we could find no rest; but now we are blessed in Christ so greatly that we are at perfect peace, and our soul has dropped its anchor in the haven of content. Our joy is usually as great as formerly our sorrow used to be. We feared our sorrow would kill us: we now sometimes think that our joy is more likely to do so, for it becomes so intense that at times we can scarcely bear it, much less speak it. As we could get no rest before, so now, by faith, we

feel as if we never lost that rest, for we are so quiet of heart, so calm, so settled, that we sing, "My heart is fixed, O God; my heart is fixed!" Not because temporal circumstances are quite as we would wish them, but because we have learned to leave off wishing, we are now more than satisfied. Getting God's blessing upon everything, we have learned to be content, and something more: we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We used to fret before we knew him; but his love has ended that. We thought we could do things better than God could, and we did not like his way of managing; but he has taught us to be like children, pleased with whatever our Father provides; and therefore we joyfully declare, "My soul is even as a weaned child: I have nothing to wish for. I want nothing but what my Father pleases to give me." Having God's sweet love, we would not give a snap of the finger for all that princes call their treasure, or all that great men reckon to be their honor. Unto us who believe, Christ is precious—both treasure and honor in one: in fact, Christ is all. It is a delightful calm of mind which the believer enjoys when he dwells in Christ. Humble faith puts the soul into the guardian hand of the Redeemer, and leaves it there in the restfulness of entire trust. Grace baptizes us into blessedness. It plunges us into that sea of everlasting rest in which we hope for ever to bathe our weary souls. Yes, blessed be his name, the Lord Jesus has made life worth living! It is no longer "something better not to be." We must speak well of the condition into which he has introduced us, since we have known his name. "Well, Jack, old fellow," said one who met a man who had lately joined the church, "I hear you have given up all your pleasures." "No, no," said Jack; "the fact lies the other way. I have just found all my pleasures, and I have only given up my follies." Every Christian man can confirm that way of putting it. We who have believed in Jesus have lost no real pleasures, but we have gained immensely in that direction. If anything sinful was a pleasure to us once, it is not so now: when we discovered it to be evil, it ceased to be pleasure, and we thrust it away without regret. We have lost nothing by conversion that was worth the keeping; but what we gained by coming to Christ has been an inconceivable recompense to us. Is it not so, brethren? Are we not blessed in Christ?

Now, there are some of us who, if we were asked to tell what blessings we have received from Christ, would scarcely know where to begin, and when

we had once begun, we should never leave off unless it were from sheer want of time or strength. Brethren, certain of us owe all that we have to the influence of the Lord Jesus. From our birth and childhood we were indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of us now present had the great felicity to spring of godly parents: before we knew the meaning of language, that softly sweet name of Jesus Christ was sung in our ears. The kindness that we received in our earliest days was very much of it due to "Gentle Jesus," of whom our mothers taught us to sing. He found for us the first swaddling bands of love, and watched over our first sleep. Ah! those poor children of the back streets—children who are trained in infamy and blasphemy, how sad their start in life! But some of us had great advantages, which were granted us of sovereign grace by his dear pierced hand. We bless the Lord who saved our parents, and, through saving them, sent to our trembling infancy a mine and a mint of blessing. In our opening childhood we began to understand for ourselves the loving influence of an affectionate and anxious mother, and then golden showers of grace fell on us from the love of Jesus. We recollect, some of us, those hours on the Sabbath, when mother would talk with us of heavenly things; with tears in her eyes persuading her boy to give his heart to Jesus early, and not to let his first days be spent in sin. We remember a wise and prudent father, whose example and instruction all went the same way. The comforts of our home—and they were many—we owed them all to Jesus, for his love made our parents what they were, and created a holy, happy atmosphere around us. He might have left our father to frequent the drunkard's haunt, and might have suffered our mother to be what many mothers are, unworthy of the name, and then our childhood would have been utter wretchedness, and our home the nursery of vice. Education in crime might have been ours: we might have been tutored for the gallows. Since that, we have had to shift for ourselves, and have left the parental roof; but I, for one, have been casting my thoughts back, to see if I could remember any good thing that I have which I do not owe to the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not know that I have anything that I cannot distinctly trace to him and his influence. I have many Christian friends—most valuable friends I find them: but my association with them commenced in the house of God; and the friendship between us has been cemented by common service yielded to our blessed Master. Many of you would hardly have had a friend in the

world if it had not been that Jesus introduced you to his disciples, and they have been the best friends you have ever had, or ever will have. You used to know certain fine fellows who called themselves your friends, and as long as you had a shilling to bless yourself with, they stuck to you to have sixpence of it. You know the style of their friendship, and you must now have serious doubts as to its value. Well, they left you when you became Christians, and their departure has been a very gainful loss to you. When they cleared out altogether, you found that their removal was for your good, if not for their own. But those friends you have made in Christ have been really helpful to you. They have deeply sympathized with you, and as far as they could they have helped you. Many have been carried through sharp trials by the help of Christian hands. But, whatever you may have to say on the point, I am personally a debtor, over head and ears, to my Savior. What is there—I repeat the question—that I do not owe to Jesus? I am again and again thinking, and thinking, and thinking; but if anything which I call my own be worth the having, I must trace it to him. And are you not, dear friends, many of you, compelled to say the same? Amongst the best things you have are your Sabbaths; but they are his days—his resurrection days. Your Bible, too, is a priceless treasure; but that is his Testament—his legacy of love. The mercy-seat is a storehouse of wealth; but he is that mercy-seat, and his own blood is sprinkled on it. You have nothing, dear friend, that you do not owe to Jesus, the fountain of salvation. You are blessed in him.

I might single out another class of persons, who, from quite another point of view, would be compelled to say that they, also, have been blessed in Christ. They started in another way, and were upon a road which led to death, but they have been rescued. Some of you started life in the midst of an entirely worldly family. There was kindness—parental kindness, in the home, but it was unwise. Abundance of temporal enjoyment was always supplied, but there was a very scanty recognition of anything like religion; and, indeed, no knowledge whatever of personal piety. It is little wonder that young persons, who are trained in a godless manner, and allowed to do very much as they like, should plunge into this sin, and into that. That some young men are saved is a special miracle, for their circumstances make their ruin almost inevitable. I am addressing some of my Christian brethren, who remember what liberty to sin was, and how they availed

themselves of it. They took large license to destroy themselves under the presence of seeing the world, and they were never content except when they were gratifying their passions, and obeying the commands of the devil. In their salvation they have been blessed indeed.

But you also who have gone to no great extent in open sin, you also have been signally blessed in Christ by gracious and unmistakable conversion. In receiving the Lord Jesus into your soul, what a change has been made! From what a bondage have you been rescued! Into what a new life have you been brought! What new scenes now open up before you! What new hopes, what new joys, what new prospects, are all your own! Do I speak to some who plunged into the very grossest sin, and yet can say, "But we are washed, but we are sanctified"? Blessed be our dear Master's name for grace to such individuals! Such indeed are blessed in him. I know that I am addressing those who had in their earliest days the very worst example; who have been brought into the house of God from the place where Satan's seat is; who cannot, after years of godliness, get out of their memory the recollection of the bad, depraved old times of their youth. In your salvation Jesus has wrought a blessed deed. You could drink as others drank. You could fall into sins of uncleanness as others did. Let us say very little about these open evils. I do not like to hear men talk about their old sins as if they were adventures: they are a shame and a sorrow to all right-minded persons. We humbly hint at them to the praise of the glory of his grace: for great grace it was in the case of some of us. Oh, but the day in which you first knew that dear name; felt repentance melting your hard heart; felt hope springing up in your formerly insensible spirit; began to see that there was something nobler and better to live for than merely to gratify sensual passions; that you were an immortal spirit, and not meant to fatten like the swine, but were created to be a brother of the angels, and to be akin to God himself—that was a happy day—a day written in heaven, and made bright with the light of seven days! When Jesus changed your nature, and forgave your sins, and made you to be like himself, you were indeed blessed in him.

I want you now to look back again. I ought not to tire you, even if my talk should seem dull and commonplace, because to recollect what God has given, and to be grateful concerning it, ought to be a sweet pastime to

each one of us. It is not only a duty, but a recreation to be grateful. I do not know any emotion which can give greater joy than that of thankfulness to the Most High. Dear friends, the Lord has greatly blessed us in the name of Jesus in times of very special trouble. I may not be able to describe your personal trial, but I will take one as a specimen. Depression of spirits comes upon the man. He scarcely knows how or why, but his soul melteth because of heaviness. There is, at the back of his sadness, probably, some real trial: this he is very apt to magnify, and make more of than need be, and also to expect a dark and terrible calamity to come which will not come; but yet the foreboding is as real a trial as if the catastrophe had actually occurred. The poor despondent creature cannot endure himself, but almost grows weary of life. Like the king of Israel, who had all that heart could wish—gardens, and palaces, and singing men, and singing women—who had all the appurtenances, both of folly and of wisdom, to make him happy, yet he cries "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Nothing will cheer this child of grief: he is downcast and desolate. If you have ever gone through that experience, it has been a very great delight to you when you have got alone, and thought of your Lord Jesus, whose everlasting love cannot cease towards you, whose fullness of grace cannot be exhausted, whose power and faithfulness will always stand you in good stead. If, by a sort of desperate resolve, you have cast yourself upon him, to sink or swim, to find everything in him, or else to have nothing, you have risen up a new man altogether. You have felt, "I can face the adversary; I can meet the trial; for Jesus is mine." Despair of spirit has fled when you have leaned hard on the Cross-bearer. I have been one of the cave-dwellers, and the dark has shut me in, but Jesus has been my heaven below. I may have a degree of heaviness about me, but still I trust in the Lord, and I am not afraid, for the name of Jesus has caused me to be strong. Yes, men shall be "blessed in him" by the strength which he gives in the hour of need. You remember the loss of that dear little child. How blessed you were in Jesus when he came and solaced you! You remember your father's death, or the loss of your husband, or the death of the dearest earthly friend. Ay, then in such times you knew how precious Christ could be, and how blessed you were in him! Some of you have passed through the deserts of poverty. You have frequently been very hard pressed; but still, though you cannot tell how, you have had just enough. You are yet alive though death

seemed certain. You have been "blessed in him," and so you have survived every storm. Some of you have had little enough of earthly comfort, and yet you have not been unhappy. I have sometimes admired a dog for his economical use of comforts. When it has been a long, rainy day, the sun has just peeped out, and there has been a gleam of sunlight on the floor: I have seen him get up and wag his tail, and shift his quarters so as to lie down where the bit of sunshine was. It is a fine thing to have just that state of mind—never to go sullenly into the shadow, but always cheerfully to accept the square yard of sunshine, and make the most of it. There is something, after all, to be thankful for—something for which to praise the name of God. And if the Lord Jesus Christ had taught us nothing else but that—the practice of lying down wherever there is a trace of sunshine, and, better still, of always finding sunshine in his dear name—I am sure we are bound to say that we have been "blessed in him."

Well, every year will teach us more and more fully how blessed we are in Jesus; and there will come a day the last of our earthly days, when we shall know on a higher scale how blessed we are in him. One of the pleasantest scenes that ever I see is the dying bed of a fine old Christian. I saw one but a few days ago, who, since I was at his bedside, has entered into rest. It was very pleasant to talk with him about what the Lord had done. He was ready to speak well of the dear name. There was much self-depreciation, but much more honoring of Christ by testimony concerning support given in the hour of affliction and succor in the time of need. Brother, you think it will be hard to die. You may not find it so. One, when he was dying, said, "Is this dying? Why, it is worth while going through all the troubles of life, even for death's own sake, if it be like this, for I have such heavenly enjoyment as I never could have imagined." Some of God's saints are very needlessly anxious about dying. I knew one to whom it was always a burden, and he went to bed one night, and he never woke any more—thus answering his own fears, for he did not even know when he passed away, but died in his sleep. He was gone, gone, gone to heaven without a pang. When you see how believers pass away to be with their Lord in glory, you have a commentary upon the words of my text,— "Men shall be blessed in him."

But do you see them? Their spirits have ascended unto God, their Father.

How full of bliss they are! Disembodied they are, but they are not destroyed. Their poor earthly frames are still in the grave, yet are their liberated spirits supremely blest; for they are "for ever with the Lord," and they are blessed in him. Wait ye but a very little while, and the trumpet shall ring out from the angel's mouth, "Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment;" and then shall men be blessed in him, if indeed "in him." When the righteous, restored to their bodies, shall, in their perfect manhood, behold him face to face, and dwell with him world without end, "men shall be blessed in him."

I do not feel satisfied with the style of my speech at this time; but we who speak the Word are by no means masters of ourselves. I cannot rise to the height of this great argument; and I do not think that, if I were to try a hundred times, I could ever satisfy myself when speaking upon this divinest theme. My Lord is the most blessed Master that ever a servant had; and he has blessed me personally so unspeakably that, if I were to bear my witness with the tongues of orators and angels by the space of a century, yet must I cease from the task, and humbly confess—I have not told you the half—nor can I tell you even the tithe of how good my Well-beloved is to me." I suspect that you are most of you of my mind, and say, "Neither can we tell either." I sometimes tell you the story of what happened to me when I declared, in a sermon, that, in the heaven of the grateful, I would sing the loudest of them all, because I owed more to the grace of God than anybody else. I meant it not out of any sense of superiority, but rather of inferiority. One good old soul, when I came down the pulpit stairs, remarked to me, You have made a great mistake in your sermon." I answered, "No doubt I made a dozen." "Nay, but," she said, the great mistake was this: you said that you owed more to God than anybody else, but you do not owe anything like so much as I do. I have had more grace from him than you have. I have been a bigger sinner than ever you were. I shall sing the loudest. Well, well," I thought, "I will not quarrel with her; it shall make me the more glad to find myself outdone." I found that all the Christians were much of the same mind. Brethren, we will have it out when we get up yonder. But you shall praise God, indeed, if you praise him more than I will; and you must be double debtors to my Lord if you owe him more than I do. If you are more unworthy and more undeserving than I am, you must indeed be unworthy and undeserving;

and if his rich, free, sovereign grace has exhibited itself more fully in you than it has in unworthy me, it has indeed overflowed all its banks We will leave the loving contest for the present; but when all the birds of Paradise reach their nests above, there shall be a competition of adoring praise, and all of us will do our best to bless the name of the Lord.

II. Our second head was to be a practical one: we can only give a few minutes to it. WE HAVE SEEN OTHER MEN BLESSED IN CHRIST. Our observation confirms our experience. If this were the proper time, I could narrate many instances—which I could also confirm by producing the individuals—in which men have been remarkably blessed in Christ. What social changes we have seen in those who have believed in him! They have not been the same persons: in many respects they are new. I have known persons at whose houses I have visited—well, you could not have believed that the man who lodged in the house, where he was first found, could ever have risen to occupy a room in a house at all like that in which he came to reside. The room in which I conversed with him was a palace to the dog-hole in which he once existed. There was a change in his dwelling. There was a change in his wife. You would hardly know the woman; she is so different from the wretched slut and slave who called him "husband" with a sigh and a sneer. She is here now, sitting with him, and they are as happy as angels. I shall not point them out, but they are as good as any of you. We have known the case in which, from rags—absolute rags—the coming of Christ into the soul has lifted a man into competence, and respectability, and position. Godliness has a gain about it—an honest, worthy gain for the life which now is. It teaches men habits of thrift, and prudence, and temperance; and delivers them from the thralldom of drunkenness, and other vices, by which the major part of poverty is occasioned. It is worth mentioning even such blessings as these, as the poor little children know. They used to run away when father came in, for they were afraid of him; but now, instead of that, they are watching for the time when his work is done, to go toddling down the street to meet dear father, for the luxury of being brought home in his arms. Our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed some men and some women at such a rate that the devil himself would not have the impudence to say it was not a blessing. Liar as Satan is, he could not deny that godliness has brought sunshine where there was none: the blessing has been too

distinct and manifest for any to deny it.

What a moral change have we seen in some! They could not speak without an oath, but the habit of profane swearing ended in a minute, and they have never been tempted to it since. Rash, bad-tempered men, who would break up the furniture of the house in their passion, have become as gentle as lambs. Such furies usually become quiet, peaceable, and long-suffering: grace has a marvellous influence upon the temper. Men of hot passions, that used to give a word and a blow—but generally the blow first—now watch themselves, and guard against their infirmity! They take a little time to think before they do let fly a hard word or give a sharp look. The change that we have seen in some men has been as complete as that which could have been wrought by that fabled mill, into which the legend says that they put old men, and turned the handle, and ground them young again. Truly a far greater renovation is wrought in mind and heart where Jesus comes. Men are "blessed in him."

Then, as to mental blessing. What have we seen? This have I seen: here is one case out of many. A young man, who had fallen into sin, came to me in deep despair of mind. He was so desponding that his very face bore witness to his misery. He wore the aspect of one who could not live much longer as he then was. I had tried to set the gospel clearly before him on the previous Sabbath, but he told me that he could not grasp it, for that by his sin he had reduced his mind to such a state that he felt himself to be little better than an idiot. He was not speaking nonsense either, for there are vices which destroy the intellect. I told him that Jesus Christ could save idiots—that even if his mind was in measure impaired as the result of sin, yet there was quite enough mind left to be made glad with a sense of pardon, seeing there was more than enough to make him heavy with a sense of guilt. I cheered that brother as best I could, but I could effect nothing by my own efforts. Soon the Lord Jesus Christ came to him, and he is now a happy, earnest, joyful Christian. Not long ago he sent an offering of thanksgiving to God for having lifted him up from the deeps into which he had fallen. I hope there is a long life of real usefulness before him.

We cannot mention one tithe of what we personally know. Eternity will open a great book of record. I call upon the spirits of the just made

perfect to witness what the grace of God did for them; I call upon parents here to tell the pleasing story of the conversion of their sons and daughters; and I call upon those who watch for their fellowmen to say whether they have not met with many cases in which men have been blessed in Jesus, by being snatched from between the jaws of madness itself, by the sweet, calming influence of the ever dear and blessed name of our Redeemer. Yes, indeed and of a truth, men are, and shall be blessed in him.

The practical point is, brothers and sisters, since we want to do good, let us preach up our Lord Jesus Christ as the sovereign balm for every sinner's wound. If you want to be philanthropists, be Christians. If you would bless your fellow-men with the best of all blessings, convey to them the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Do not believe that there is anything you can do for your children which will be more effectual than teaching them about Jesus. Do not think that anything in the workshop can soften the vulgarities, silence the blasphemies, and end the profanities of your fellow-workmen, like setting Jesus Christ before them. When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, they tried to tell the Greenlanders about the existence of a God, and they spent some months in such preliminary subjects before they came to the gospel; but they never gained the attention of the people. Discourses upon such necessary subjects as the Godhead, and the immortality of the soul, and the like, were flavourless to the Greenlanders. It happened one day that one of the missionaries, translating the gospel according to John, read out these words: "God so loved the world, that he gave his Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "What is that?" said the Greenlanders. "What is that? We never heard the like of that. Why have you not told us that before?" Nothing had been done till the missionaries came to the gospel itself. Then they reached the Greenlander's heart—awakened his dormant intellect, and led him to Jesus. Oh, let us keep on with the subject of Christ crucified! Whatever there is not in our shop window, let us always have Christ as the chief article of our heavenly commerce. Whatever there may lack of grace and beauty in our speech, and our outward appearance, may there be no lack of Jesus Christ, set forth among the sons of men; for "men shall be blessed in him," and not without him. Great schemes of socialism have

been tried and found wanting; let us look to regeneration by the Son of God, and we shall not look in vain. Nothing has come of newfangled preaching, from the first day till now; but never has the old faith of Jesus failed. Men have been blessed in Jesus, and they shall be blessed in him as long as the race shall exist.

III. Lastly, this whole matter is to extend till **THE ENTIRE WORLD SHALL BE BLESSED IN CHRIST**. Even at this moment the whole world is the better for Christ. But where he is best known and loved, there is he the greatest blessing. What snatched many an island of the southern sea from barbarism and cannibalism? What, but Jesus Christ preached among them? Men have been blessed in him in Europe, America, Asia, and everywhere. Africa, and other lands still plunged in barbarism, shall receive light from no other source but that from which our fathers received it centuries ago—from the great Sun of righteousness.

Men shall be blessed in Christ, because where he comes oppression cannot live. You may tell me that the governor of such an empire is a despot. Oh, yes; but despots cannot long flourish where there is an open Bible. Tyrannies may last a generation or two, but all the world knows that their time is short. They will go down: they must go down where Christ is lifted up. That inspired Book is a testimony for human liberty, louder than all others. It is a declaration of the rights of men under King Jesus: despotism must fall before it sooner or later. We, in this country, owe our liberties, beyond everything, to the Christianity which is the outflow of a present Christ among us. Slavery? What a plague-spot it was upon the fair hand of our sister nation across the Atlantic! The spot is washed away; and it was true religion which forced the washing. There would have been no freeing of the slave from fetters if it had not been for the Christianity which, after long silence, at last spoke out, and when it spake, it was as when a lion roareth. The Christianity of England is always pleading for the slave, for the aborigine, for the down-trodden. Leave our politicians alone, and we shall soon have all the infamies alive again. Slavery would be tolerated, if not encouraged, if there were not Christian souls upon the watch. What saves us from war at this moment? What influence is it that is always contrary to war, and always cries for peace? Why, it is the Christian element among us which counts anything better

than bloodshed! Let the Christian element spread, and it will be a power to bless mankind. It shall, in proportion as it spreads, put down evil, and foster good. Already, many a monopoly has been ended, and many a liberty has been gained. Much religious intolerance has been subdued by the power of Jesus Christ over his people; and I do pray, dear friends, that we may live to see all nations more manifestly affected by the gospel of Jesus Christ. May every nation be ruled by just and righteous laws! May every nation be willing to submit exterior disputes to the arbitration of justice! It will be so one day. The nations shall be friends, and all men shall feel that they are members of one great family. "Do ye unto others as ye would that they should do to you," is the sum of the moral teaching of our divine Lord; and if that be followed, it will bring about a halcyon era, the like of which the world has never seen. If his Spirit will come and renew men's hearts, and teach them to love and to obey the Lord their God, then shall all nations call the Redeemer blessed, and from every corner of the whole earth, the song shall go up, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!" Amen.

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Blessed In Him

"Men shall be blessed in him."—Psalm 72:17

I wish that I could speak at my very best concerning the glorious HIM who is mentioned in the text; but I have hardly got into full working order after my season of rest. One's voice becomes rusty, like an unused key, and one does not at first feel quite at ease in speaking after a time of comparative quietude. Do not, however, think that my subject is a poor one; if there are defects in my discourse, remember that it will only be the speaker who is poverty-stricken, not the great King and Lord of whom he is speaking. "Men shall be blessed in him." O sirs, if one had the tongues

of men and of angels, and if one could only for once use that speech which it is not lawful for a man to utter,—those words which Paul tells us that he heard when he was caught up to the third heaven,—if we could even speak as never man yet spake, we could not fully set forth all the glories of him of whom this text speaks.

David's thoughts, doubtless, rested in part upon Solomon when he said, "Men shall be blessed in him;" and our Lord himself spoke of Solomon in all his glory; but what poor stuff is human glory at the very highest! The "Him" mentioned in the text, the higher and the greater Solomon who is truly meant in these words, has a real glory,—not of earthly pomp and fading tinsel, nor of gold and pearls and precious stones, but the more excellent glory of character and the true beauty of holiness. In him all divine excellences are blended. I cannot hope to set him forth as he deserves, I cannot tell you all his virtues and his glories; but, oh! he is very dear to many of us. His name is engraven on the fleshy tablets of our hearts, and when we lie upon our last bed, and all things else shall be forgotten in the decay of nature, we shall still remember that dear name which is above every name, the contemplation of our Savior's blessed person shall then absorb every faculty of our being. "Men shall be blessed in him," the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of man, the Savior, the Redeemer, the God over all blessed for ever, who is also bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

As I should fail altogether to speak of him as he deserves, I will not attempt the impossible task; but will try to speak of men being blessed in him. That is a note a little lower; if we cannot reach the highest octave, we may attain to a lower one; yet, while we speak of the blessing that comes from him, let us still think of him from whom the blessing comes, and let us remember that, as all blessings come from him, it is because all blessings are laid up in him; because every conceivable good is stored up in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, "and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace."

I. My first remark concerning the text is, that it makes mention of A SINGULAR CONDITION: "Men shall be blessed in him."

It is a singular condition to be blessed, for, by nature, men are not

blessed. We are born under a curse. Our first father turned aside the blessing when he disobeyed God's command, and in the early dawn of the day of our race, he darkened our sky once for all. The curse still abides upon man, that in the sweat of his face he shall eat bread, and upon woman, that in sorrow she shall bring forth children. How much woe lies in the curse that falls upon us in consequence of our own personal sin!" Who slew all these"—these comforts and joys of life? Oftentimes, they have been slain by a man's own hands, through his own sin, or through the sins of those who surround him. The trail of the old serpent is everywhere. You cannot open your eyes without discovering that man is not blessed, but oftentimes abides under the curse. Put that truth down before you, and then read the text, "Men shall be blessed in him." Apart from him, they are accursed; they wring their hands, and wish they had never been born, and some sigh and sorrow almost without ceasing. Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward, and it is a singular thing that any man should be blessed, so singular, that no man ever is blessed until he comes to be connected with the Lord Jesus Christ: "Men shall be blessed in him."

Many people, who forget all about the curse, nevertheless acknowledge that they are unhappy. Go up and down amongst the whole race of men, and how few you will find really happy! I believe that none are truly happy until they are in Christ; but even if they were happy, that is not the word that is used in our text. It does not say, "Men shall be happy in him." It gives us a fuller, deeper, richer word than that: "Men shall be blessed in him." To be more happy, may be a thing of time and of this world only; I do not mean that the happiness may not be true and real, but still, compared with all that the word "blessed" implies, the word "happy" has no eternity, no depth, no fullness, no force in it. So that, even if men were happy, they would not come up to the fullness of the promise in our text. But, alas! the mass of men are unhappy—sighing for this, and mourning for that, never blessed, but only hoping to be so. The text, therefore, comes in with its sweet silvery ring, telling that men shall cease to be unhappy, and that they shall rise even above merely being happy, and they shall come to be "blessed in him."

I regret to say that there is a third class of people who, when they rise

above the curse, and are not absolutely unhappy, yet nevertheless are in a state of doubt and hesitation. We could not positively say that they are cursed, for we hope that some part of the blessing has fallen upon them; we may not call them unhappy, yet we know that they are not eminently happy. They hope that they are saved, or they trust that they shall be safe at the last; but they are not sure that the blessings of salvation are theirs already. Our text does not say that, in Christ, this condition of luminous haze, if I may so call it,—this condition of doubt and uncertainty is all that is to be attained. No, but it says, "Men shall be blessed in him;" and no man can call himself truly blessed till he knows that he is blessed, till he is sure of it, till he has passed the period of dubious questioning, till he has come out of the miry and boggy country of hesitation and doubt, and stands upon the firm ground of full assurance, so that he can say, "I am God's child; the Father's love is fixed upon me; I have a part and portion in the covenant of grace; I am saved."

Now it is to that blessed condition that the text directs our thoughts; it promises that men shall be delivered from the curse, that they shall be uplifted from their natural unhappiness, that they shall be rescued from their doubtful or their hopeful questioning, and shall even come to be blessed. God shall pronounce them blessed. He shall set upon them the broad seal of divine approbation, and call them blessed; and with that seal there shall come streaming into their hearts the sweetness of intense delight, which shall give them experimentally a blessing to their own conscious enjoyment.

Let me tell you what Christ does for a man who is really in him, and then you will see how he is blessed.

The man who comes to Christ by faith, and truly trusts Christ, has all the past rectified. All his sins, whatever they may have been, are pardoned in a moment as soon as he believes in Jesus Christ the Son of God. His iniquities are blotted out, and are as if they had never been committed. As the cloud passes away, and is no more to be seen, so the thick clouds of our sins are dispersed by Christ as soon as we believe in him. Nor will they ever return to darken our sky. The forgiveness which God gives is not temporary, but eternal. Once pardoned, you are pardoned for ever; the act of divine amnesty and oblivion stands fast for ever and ever. Is not

that man truly blessed, then, who is made free from sin? David says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." This is the blessedness which Christ gives to those who are in him, that, as for the past, in its entirety, with all its blackness, with all its aggravated sin, he has taken it upon himself, and borne the penalty due on account of it, and he makes a clean sweep of it, and says of the man who trusts in him, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee; go in peace." That is one part of the blessedness of those who are in Christ, the past is all forgiven.

At the same time, the man who is in Christ receives present favor. As soon as we truly believe in Jesus, there steals over our heart a delicious sense of rest, according to his gracious invitation and promise, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And as we go on to serve the Lord, and take his yoke upon us, and learn of him, we find rest unto our souls, for his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. I believe that, oftentimes, a child of God, when he realizes his union to Christ, feels so blessed that he does not know of anything that could make him more blessed than he is. He says, "I am perfectly content with my Lord, and with what I am in him. With myself, I am always dissatisfied, and always groaning because I cannot entirely conquer sin; but with my Savior. I am always satisfied, I am triumphant in him, and rejoicing in him, indeed, blessed in him." Some of you know what a blessed thing it is to be a child of God, and an heir of heaven, how blessed it is to have the throne of grace where you can take your troubles, and to have a Helper who is strong enough to deliver you. I spoke, the other day, with a Christian friend, and I said to him, "My life sometimes seems to be like that of a man walking upon a tight rope. The walk of faith is very mysterious; one false step, or one slip and where should we be?" My friend replied, "Yes, it is so, no doubt; but then, underneath are the everlasting arms." Ah! that is a blessed addition to the figure; there is no slipping off the rope on which God calls us to walk; but if there were, underneath are the everlasting arms, and all is well; and the Christian, when he knows that, and lives as one should live who is in Christ, is even now a truly blessed man.

But that is not all, for he who believes in Christ has his future guaranteed. He does not know how long he shall live, and he does not want to know, for his Father knows. God knows all that you and I may wish to know; and as he knows it, it is better than our knowing it. Whether our life is long or short, he will be with us unto the end, and as our days our strength shall be. He will sanctify to us every trial we meet, and nothing shall by any means harm us. He will bring us safely to our journey's end, and we shall go through the cold death-stream without a fear; we shall rise triumphant on the shore of the hill-country on the other side, and we shall behold our Savior's face without a veil between for ever and for ever. All this is an absolute certainty if we are the children of God, for it is not possible that one of the divine family should perish, that one bought with the blood of Christ should ever be cast away. He will keep his own, and preserve them even to the end. Are they not blessed, then, and is not the text full of sweetness as to this singular condition, "Men shall be blessed in him"?

Where are you, ye blessed men and women? Where are you? Come and enjoy your blessedness; do not be ashamed to be happy. I do believe that some Christians are a little frightened at themselves when they find that they are full of joy; and if, perchance, they should ever break through the rules of decorum, and express their joy, then they turn crimson. It was not thus with the saints of old, for sometimes they spoke and sang so loudly of the joy of their hearts that even their adversaries said, "The Lord hath done great things for them," and they replied, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad," and again they lifted up their hallelujahs. Then were their mouths filled with laughter, and their tongues with singing. So let it be with you, for you are indeed a blessed people if you are in Christ.

II. Having thus dwelt upon this singular condition, I now give you another key-word. The text says, "Men shall be blessed in him." This is A WIDE STATEMENT.

Oftentimes, the greatest truths lie in the shortest sentences. There is a great mass of truth within the compass of these few words: "Men shall be blessed in him." There are only six words here, but to make the wide statement true requires breadth of number. You could not well say, "Men

shall be blessed in him," if those to be blessed were a very few. It is not possible that the election of grace should consist of a few scores of persons making up a specially favored denomination; else the psalmist would not speak after this wide fashion, "Men shall be blessed in him." The Holy Ghost is not given to exaggeration, and he would have put it, "A few men will be blessed in him." But here there is nothing of the kind; it is "Men shall be blessed in him," meaning the great mass of the human race, vast multitudes of the sons of Adam. I do believe that, when this dispensation comes to an end, notwithstanding all the dreary centuries that have passed, Christ shall have the pre-eminence as to numbers as well as in every other respect, and that the multitudes who shall be saved by him shall far transcend those who have rejected his mercy. The text says, "Men shall be blessed in him," that is to say, the most of men, innumerable myriads of men shall get the blessing that Jesus purchased by his death on the cross.

But when the text says, "Men shall be blessed in him," it implies great width of variety. "Men"—not merely kings or noblemen, but "Men shall be blessed in him." Men,—not working men, or thinking men, or fighting men, or this sort of men, or the other sort of men, but men of all sorts,—"Men shall be blessed in him." It is a delightful thought that Christ is as much fitted to one rank and one class of persons as to another.

"While grace is offered to the prince,
The poor may take their share;
No mortal has a just pretense,
To perish in despair."

Christ is the Christ of the multitude. His Father says of him, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people;" but he is equally the Christ of the most refined and eclectic. He comes with equal grace to those who stand in the highest or the lowest earthly position. "Men shall be blessed in him." Of course, the word "men" includes women and children, it means the human race. "Men shall be blessed in him." Do not, therefore, let anyone say, "I am a strange, odd person;" for the text puts in this little-big word, "men," which takes you in, whoever you may be. If you come to

Christ, you are included in this promise, "Men shall be blessed in him." So that there is a width of variety implied here.

Our text also indicates length of period: "Men shall be blessed in him." Men have been blessed in him; these many centuries, Christ has shone with all the radiance of omnipotent love upon this poor fallen world, but his light is as full as ever; and, however long this dispensation shall last, "Men shall be blessed in him." Though some of those men are, perhaps, grey with years and decrepit through age, yet still the promise stands, "Men shall be blessed in him;" and while that verse has the word "shall" in it, why should not the greyest head receive the divine blessing? Why should not a man who is on the borders of the grave yet lay hold of this blessed text, and say, "I will trust him in whom men shall be blessed"?

Further, the text suggests fullness of sufficiency concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a wonderful depth of meaning in this passage when it says, "Men shall be blessed in him." "Oh!" says one, "Men shall be blessed by philosophy, or by Christ and philosophy" "Not at all; it is, "Men shall be blessed in him." "But they shall be blessed in him through trade and commerce and the like." Not so; "Men shall be blessed in him." Have not we, who are half a century old, heard a great number of theories about how the millennium is to be brought about? I remember that, at one time, free trade was to bring it, but it did not; and nothing will ever make men blessed unless they get into Christ: "Men shall be blessed in him." The quacks are crying up this remedy and that, nostrums old and new; but there is only one true Physician of souls. It is the Christ of God who alone has the balm that will cure the disease of sin. When he is received, the world shall be blessed; but as long as he is rejected, the curse will still remain upon the sons of men. "Men shall be blessed in him." Oh, that our fellow-men would receive him! Oh, that they would bow down before the Crucified, and own him as their Lord and Savior Oh, that all would look up to his wounds, still visible in his glory, and put their trust in him! Then should come that glorious time when wars shall cease to the ends of the earth, and every evil shall be put away. His unsuffering kingdom must yet come. Oh, that it might come speedily! But it can only come through himself, not by any other means. "Men shall be blessed in him," and anything short of trusting in him will end in eternal

failure.

You have noted, dear friends, these two things, the singular condition, and the wide statement.

III. Now I want to dwell for a minute or two, for the exaltation of our Lord, upon THE FULL ASSURANCE which is expressed in this text: "Men shall be blessed in him."

The prophet speaks here, my brethren, in a very positive manner; there is no quiver in his voice, there is no hesitancy about his speech. I am afraid that, at the present moment, there are some even of godly men who tremble for the ark of the Lord; and the hand of Uzzah is visible here and there. But the ark of the covenant of the Lord needs no steadying hand from you or from me; the cause of God is always safe in his own keeping. The cause of truth is always secure, for God preserveth it. Let us not be afraid, neither let us be discouraged. It is a grand thing to get a sentence like this with a "shall" in it: "Men shall be blessed in him." "It is not," "perhaps they may be," but "Men shall be blessed in him." Not, "perchance they may be blessed under certain conditions;" but, "Men shall be blessed in him."

This means, in the first place, they shall not try him and fail. There never was a man, who came to Christ, who failed to get a blessing from him. There never was one who believed in Jesus, and yielded himself up to the gracious sway of the Prince of Love, who did not get a blessing from him. I have never met with a Christian yet who, in life or in death, has said, "I have been disappointed in Christ. He has deceived me. I sought and hoped for blessedness, but I have missed it." Never can this be said truly. "Men shall be blessed in him." If they do really come to him, they shall not miss this blessedness.

Nay, I go further, and say that they shall not desire him, and be denied. There was never a soul that desired to be blessed in Christ, and was willing to yield itself up to Christ, that Christ did ever reject. There is no one in hell who can truthfully say, "I came to Jesus, and he spurned me;" and there never shall be one such, for it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." The foot that was nailed to the cross never

spurned a sinner yet. The hand that was pierced never pushed away a penitent. Christ is all invitation, there is no rejection about him, he constantly bids sinners come unto him, and this text is true for you, whoever you may be, "Men shall be blessed in him."

I am glad to go as far as that, and to say that none who ever came to Christ failed to get a blessing from him, and that none who desire to come to him have ever been denied by him; but I am going still further. "Men shall be blessed in him," that is to say, they shall come to Christ, and get the blessing. Some, alas! will not come to him; but, O sirs, if any of you refuse to come, do not make any mistake about the matter! You think that, by refusing his invitation, you will thwart Christ, and defeat the purposes of God; by no manner of means. The King's wedding feast shall be furnished with guests; and if you who are bidden will not come, there are others who will; he will send his servants out into the highways and hedges, to compel others to come in, that his house may be filled. Do not imagine that the result of the death of Christ depends upon you, and that it is in your power to prevent the accomplishment of the almighty purposes of the Savior's love. Nay, nay; "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." If ye believe not, I must say to you what Christ said to the Jews, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of his sheep." His sheep hear his voice, and he knows them, and they follow him, and he gives unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. "All that the Father giveth me," saith he, "shall come to me." Not one of those whom God has given to his Son shall be left to perish; they shall all come to him, and so the text shall be fulfilled, "Men shall be blessed in him." Do not imagine that when Jesus hung there on yonder bloody tree, and groaned away his life for men, he was dying at a peradventure. There was at the back of him the eternal purpose and the covenant that cannot be changed, and the invincible One who, without violating the will of men, can yet achieve the will of God, making men willing in the day of his power, turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God.

Be of good courage, my brethren; the consequences of redemption are not left in jeopardy. Those results which God has purposed will, to the last jot

and little, be fulfilled. "Men shall be blessed in him." It is not to me a question whether Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God; she shall do it, though I may not live to see it. It is not to me a question whether the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; they must become his. Let us work in this confidence, and believe every promise in this blessed look. If we get down-hearted and full of fear, we are unworthy of our Lord. If we served a temporal prince with limited power, we might talk with 'bated breath; but the banner that gleams on high, above our ranks, is the banner of the Lord God omnipotent, and the shout that shall be heard at the last, is this: "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." I ask you,—Is it not very natural that he should reign? If he really be omnipotent, are not all the certainties as well as the probabilities, in favor of his universal dominion? Must he not reign? Yea, saith the Spirit, "He shall reign for ever and ever." "Men shall be blessed in him." There is the tone of full assurance about this blessed prophecy; wherefore, let us rejoice and praise the name of the Lord.

IV. Now, lastly, I want you with all your hearts to think of my text with A PERSONAL APPROPRIATION: "Men shall be blessed in him."

Dear hearers, are you blessed in Christ? Will you personally answer the question? Do not pass it round, and say to yourself, "No doubt there are many who think that they are blessed, and who are not." Never mind about them; for the present moment, ask this question of yourself, "Am I blessed in Christ?" Some people think that they have Christ as their Savior, but their religion brings them no blessedness. They go to church or to chapel very regularly; they are, apparently, a good sort of people; but a part of their religion consists in being on the whole as comfortably miserable as they can. As to anything like blessedness, that does not enter into their minds. Now, if my religion did not make me really happy, I should seriously question whether I was a possessor of the religion of the happy God, for "Men shall be blessed in him."

"Oh!" says one, "but we have so many trials and troubles." Ah, that we have! Do you know a man or woman who does not get any? I should like you to mark all the doors in London where people live who have not any trouble; it will not cost you much for chalk. There is nobody without

trouble. If a man could be without trouble, he would be without a blessing, for in this world one of the rarest blessings, one of the richest, truest blessings that God ever sends to his children, is adversity. He sends more blessings upon the black horse than he ever sends upon the grey one; it is the messenger of sorrow who often brings the choicest jewels to our door. Ah! there is many a woman who has not left her bed these dozen years, or had a fair night a rest all that long time, who is truly blessed. There is many a man who is as poor as poverty can make him, shivering in the cold to-night, and scarcely knowing where to find another bit of coal to keep his little fire alight; yet he is blessed. If it were necessary, I could get some of you to stand up, and testify that, though you have very little of this world's joys, and very little of temporal good, yet you can say, "Yes, I am blessed, I am blessed indeed,—

"I would not change my best estate,
For all that earth calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Well, you have that blessedness, then, enjoy it. What would you think of a man who went thirsty when he had a well in his back yard? What would you think of a person who always went about poverty-stricken, though he had millions in the bank? Think of Mr. Vanderbilt standing in the street, and asking passers-by for a half-penny. Yet I have seen children of God act like that in spiritual things. A little boy came up to me in an Italian town, and asked me to give him a soldo, he meant a half-penny. He was quite a moneyed man, for he had a farthing in his pocket! He took it out, and showed it me, and he seemed delighted with it; but then he said that it was the only one he had in the world. You might think, from the way some persons act, that they had about a farthing's worth of faith; but that is all they have. Is it not so? O you who have Christ and God, this world and worlds to come, and whom God has pronounced blessed,—what! are you going to live the starveling life of the unblest and the unsaved? I pray you, do not so. Gentlemen, live according to your quality! Peers of the upper house, for you are such if you are born again, I beseech you, act in accordance with your true nobility. Hath not Christ made you princes and

kings, and hath he not said that you shall reign with him for ever and ever? Look up then; lift up your heads, and say, "Yes, he hath blessed me, and I am blessed indeed. "My poor spirit danceth for joy because of him."

"My heart it doth leap at the sound of his name."

"But," says one, "I have never enjoyed that." My dear friend, if thou canst believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou mayest enjoy it. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is to trust yourself with him just as you are, to cast your guilty soul on him. Oh, that you would do it! That one act will mark your passing from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. That one act will be the means of your coming into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and your life shall be totally changed from this time forth so that you shall joy in God by Jesus Christ our Lord. "Men shall be blessed in him." Are you to be one of those men? God grant that you may be!

The Lord add his blessing, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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AN UNALTERABLE LAW

Without shedding of blood there is no remission. - Hebrews 9:22

Everywhere under the old figurative dispensation, blood was sure to greet your eyes. It was the one most prominent thing under the Jewish economy, scarcely a ceremony was observed without it. You could not enter into any part of the tabernacle, but you saw traces of the blood-sprinkling. Sometimes there were bowls of blood cast at the foot of the altar. The place looked so like a shambles, that to visit it must have been far from attractive to the natural taste, and to delight in it, a man had need of a spiritual understanding and a lively faith. The slaughter of animals was the manner of worship; the effusion of blood was the appointed rite, and the diffusion of that blood on the floor, on the curtains, and on the vestments of the priests, was the constant memorial. When Paul says that almost all things were, under the law, purged with blood, he alludes to a few things that were exempted. Thus you will find in several passages the people were exhorted to wash their clothes, and certain persons who had been unclean from physical causes were bidden to wash their clothes with water. Garments worn by men were usually cleansed with water. After the defeat of the Midianites, of which you read in the book of Numbers, the spoil, which had been polluted, had to be purified before it was claimed by the victorious Israelites. According to the ordinance of the law, which the Lord commanded Moses, some of the goods, such as raiment and articles made of skins or goat's hair, were purified with water, while other things that were of metal that could abide the fire, were purified by fire. Still, the apostle refers to a literal fact, when he says that almost all things, garments being the only exception, were purged, under the law, with blood. Then he refers to it as a general truth, under the old legal dispensation, that there was never any pardoning of sin, except by blood. In one case only was there an apparent exception, and even that goes to prove the universality of the rule, because the reason for the exception is so fully given. The trespass offering, referred

to as an alternative, in Lev 5:11, might, in extreme cases of excessive poverty, be a bloodless offering. If a man was too poor to bring an offering from the flock, he was to bring two turtle-doves or young pigeons; but if he was too poor even for that, he might offer the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering, without oil or frankincense, and it was cast upon the fire. That is the one solitary exception through all the types. In every place, at every time, in every instance where sin had to be removed, blood must flow, life must be given. The one exception we have noticed gives emphasis to the statute that, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Under the gospel there is no exception, not such an isolated one as there was under the law; no, not even for the extremely poor. Such we all are spiritually. Since we have not any of us to bring an offering, any more than an offering to bring; but we have all of us to take the offering which has already been presented, and to accept the sacrifice which Christ has, of himself, made in our stead; there is now no cause or ground for exemption to any man or woman born, nor ever shall there be, either in this world or in that which is to come,—"Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." With great simplicity, then, as it concerns our salvation, may I ask the attention of each one here present, to this great matter which intimately concerns our everlasting interests? I gather from the text, first of all, the encouraging fact that:—

I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS REMISSION—that is to say, the remission of sins. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Blood has been shed, and there is, therefore, hope concerning such a thing. Remission, notwithstanding the stern requirements of the law, is not to be abandoned in sheer despair. The word remission means the putting away of debts. Just as sin may be regarded as a debt incurred to God, so that debt may be blotted out, cancelled, and obliterated. The sinner, God's debtor, may cease to be in debt by compensation, by full acquittance, and may be set free by virtue of such remission. Such a thing is possible. Glory be to God, the remission of all sin, of which it is possible to repent, is possible to be obtained. Whatever the transgression of any man may be, pardon is possible to him if repentance be possible to him. Unrepented sin is unforgivable sin. If he confess his sin and forsake it, then shall he find mercy. God hath so declared it, and he will not be unfaithful to his word. "But is there not," saith one, "a sin which is unto

death?" Yea, verily, though I know not what it is; nor do we think that any who have enquired into the subject have been able to discover what that sin is; this much seems clear, that practically the sin is unforgivable because it is never repented of. The man who commits it becomes, to all intents and purposes, dead in sin in a more deep and lasting sense even than the human race is as a whole, and he is given up case-hardened—his conscience seared, as it were, with a hot iron, and henceforth he will seek no mercy. But all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. For lust, for robbery, for adultery—yea, for murder, there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared. He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

And this forgiveness which is possible is, according to the Scriptures, complete; that is to say, when God forgives a man his sin, he does it outright. He blots out the debt without any back reckoning. He does not put away a part of the man's sin, and have him accountable for the rest; but in the moment in which a sin is forgiven, his iniquity is as though it had never been committed; he is received in the Father's house and embraced with the Father's love as if he had never erred; he is made to stand before God as accepted, and in the same condition as though he had never transgressed. Blessed be God, believer, there is no sin in God's Book against thee. If thou hast believed, thou art forgiven— forgiven not partially, but altogether. The handwriting that was against thee is blotted out, nailed to the cross of Christ, and can never be pleaded against thee any more for ever. The pardon is complete.

Moreover, this is a present pardon. It is an imagination of some (very derogatory to the gospel) that you cannot get pardon till you come to die, and, perhaps, then in some mysterious way, in the last few minutes, you may be absolved; but we preach to you, in the name of Jesus, immediate and present pardon for all transgressions—a pardon given in an instant—the moment that a sinner believes in Jesus; not as though a disease were healed gradually and required months and long years of progress. True, the corruption of our nature is such a disease, and the sin that dwelleth in us must be daily and hourly mortified; but as for the guilt of our transgressions before God, and the debt incurred to his justice, the remission thereof is not a thing of progress and degree. The pardon of a

sinner is granted at once; it will be given to any of you tonight who accept it—yea, and given you in such a way that you shall never lose it. Once forgiven, you shall be forgiven for ever, and none of the consequences of sin shall be visited upon you. You shall be absolved unreservedly and eternally, so that when the heavens are on a blaze, and the great white throne is set up, and the last great assize is held, you may stand boldly before the judgment-seat and fear no accusation, for the forgiveness which God himself vouchsafes he will never revoke.

I will add to this one other remark. The man who gets this pardon may know he has it. Did he merely hope he had it, that hope might often struggle with fear. Did he merely trust he had it, many a qualm might startle him; but to know that he has it is a sure ground of peace to the heart. Glory be to God, the privileges of the covenant of grace are not only matters of hope and surmise, but they are matters of faith, conviction, and assurance. Count it not presumption for a man to believe God's Word. God's own Word it is that says, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ is not condemned." If I believe in Jesus Christ, then I am not condemned. What right have I to think I am? If God says I am not, it would be presumption on my part to think I am condemned. It cannot be presumption to take God's Word just as he gives it to me. "Oh!" saith one, "how happy should I be if this might be my case." Thou hast well spoken, for blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity. "But," saith another, "I should hardly think such a great thing could be possible to such an one as I am." Thou reasonest after the manner of the sons of men. Know then that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts. It is yours to err; it is God's to forgive. You err like a man, but God does not pardon like a man; he pardons like a God, so that we burst forth with wonder, and sing, "Who is a God like unto thee, that passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" When you make anything, it is some little work suitable to your abilities, but our God made the heavens. When you forgive, it is some forgiveness suitable to your nature and circumstances; but when he forgives, he displays the riches of his grace on a grander scale than your finite mind can comprehend. Ten thousand sins of blackest dye, sins of a hellish hue he doth in a moment put away,

for he delighteth in mercy; and judgment is his strange work. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live." This is a joyful note with which my text furnishes me. There is no remission, except with blood; but there is remission, for the blood has been shed.

Coming more closely to the text, we have now to insist on its great lesson, that:—

II. THOUGH THERE BE PARDON OF SIN, IT IS NEVER WITHOUT BLOOD.

That is a sweeping sentence, for there are some in this world that are trusting for the pardon of sin to their repentance. It, beyond question, is your duty to repent of your sin. If you have disobeyed God, you should be sorry for it. To cease from sin is but the duty of the creature, else sin is not the violation of God's holy law. But be it known unto you, that all the repentance in the world cannot blot out the smallest sin. If you had only one sinful thought cross your mind, and you should grieve over that all the days of your life, yet the stain of that sin could not be removed even by the anguish it cost you. Where repentance is the work of the Spirit of God, it is a very precious gift, and is a sign of grace; but there is no atoning power in repentance. In a sea full of penitential tears, there is not the power or the virtue to wash out one spot of this hideous uncleanness. Without the blood-shedding, there is no remission. But others suppose that, at any rate, active reformation growing out of repentance may achieve the task. What if drunkenness be given up, and temperance become the rule? What if licentiousness be abandoned, and chastity adorn the character? What if dishonest dealing be relinquished, and integrity be scrupulously maintained in every action? I say, 'tis well; I would to God such reformations took place everywhere—yet for all that, debts already incurred are not paid by our not getting into debt further, and past delinquencies are not condoned by future good behaviour. So sin is not remitted by reformation. Though you should suddenly become immaculate as angels (not that such a thing is possible to you, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots), your reformations could make no atonement to God for the sins that are past

in the days that you have transgressed against him. "What then," saith the man, "shall I do?" There are those who think that now their prayers and their humblings of soul may, perhaps, effect something for them. Your prayers, if they be sincere, I would not stay; rather do I hope they may be such prayers as betoken spiritual life. But oh! dear hearer, there is no efficacy in prayer to blot out sin. I will put it strongly. All the prayers of all the saints on earth, and, if the saints in heaven could all join, all their prayers could not blot out through their own natural efficacy the sin of a single evil word. No, there is no deterrent power in prayer. God has never set it to be a cleanser. It has its uses, and its valuable uses. It is one of the privileges of the man who prays, that he prays acceptably, but prayer itself can never blot out the sin without the blood. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," pray as you may.

There are persons who have thought that self-denial and mortifications of an extraordinary kind might rid them of their guilt. We do not often come across such people in our circle, yet there be those who, in order to purge themselves of sin, flagellate their bodies, observe protracted fasts, wear sackcloth and hair shirts next to their skin, and even some have gone so far as to imagine that to refrain from ablutions, and to allow their body to be filthy, was the readiest mode of purifying their soul. A strange infatuation certainly! Yet today, in Hindostan, you shall find the fakir passing his body through marvellous sufferings and distortions, in the hope of getting rid of sin. To what purpose is it all? Methinks I hear the Lord say, "What is this to me that thou didst bow thy head like a bulrush, and wrapt thyself in sackcloth, and eat ashes with thy bread, and mingle wormwood with thy drink? Thou hast broken my law; these things cannot repair it; thou hast done injury to my honour by thy sin; but where is the righteousness that reflects honour upon my name?" The old cry in the olden days was, "Wherewithal shall we come before God?" and they said, "Shall we give our firstborn for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul?" Alas! it was all in vain. Here stands the sentence. Here for ever must it stand, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is the life God demands as the penalty due for sin, and nothing but the life indicated in the blood-shedding will ever satisfy him.

Observe, again, how this sweeping text puts away all confidence in

ceremony, even the ceremonies of God's own ordinance. There are some who suppose that sin can be washed away in baptism. Ah! futile fancy! The expression where it is once used in Scripture implies nothing of the kind—it has no such meaning as some attach to it, for that very apostle, of whom it was said, gloried that he had not baptized many persons lest they should suppose there was some efficacy in his administration of the rite. Baptism is an admirable ordinance, in which the believer holds fellowship with Christ in his death. It is a symbol; it is nothing more. Tens of thousands and millions have been baptized and have died in their sins. Or what profit is there in the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass, as Antichrist puts it? Do any say it is "an unbloody sacrifice," yet at the same time offer it for a propitiation for sin—we fling this text in their faces, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Do they reply that the blood is there in the body of Christ? We answer that even were it so, that would not meet the case, for it is without the shedding of blood—without the blood-shedding; the blood as distinct from the flesh; without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

And here I must pass on to make a distinction that will go deeper still. Jesus Christ himself cannot save us, apart from his blood. It is a supposition which only folly has ever made, but we must refute even the hypothesis of folly, when it affirms that the example of Christ can put away human sin, that the holy life of Jesus Christ has put the race on such a good footing with God that now he can forgive its faults and its transgression. Not so; not the holiness of Jesus, not the life of Jesus, not the death of Jesus, but the blood of Jesus only; for "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

And I have met with some who think so much of the second coming of Christ, that they seem to have fixed their entire faith upon Christ in his glory. I believe this to be the fault of Irvingism—that, too much it holds before the sinner's eye Christ on the throne, whereas, though Christ on the throne is ever the loved and adorable, yet we must see Christ upon the cross, or we never can be saved. Thy faith must not be placed merely in Christ glorified, but in Christ crucified. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." I

remember one person who was united with this church (the dear sister may be present now), that had been for some years a professor, and had never enjoyed peace with God, nor produced any of the fruits of the Spirit. She said, "I have been in a church where I was taught to rest upon Christ glorified, and I did so fix my confidence, such as it was, upon him, that I neither had a sense of sin, nor a sense of pardon, from Christ crucified! I did not know, and until I had seen him as shedding his blood and making a propitiation, I never entered into rest." Yes, we will say it again, for the text is vitally important: "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission," not even with Christ himself. It is the sacrifice that he has offered for us, that is the means of putting away our sin—this, and nothing else. Let us pass on a little further with the same truth:—

III. THIS REMISSION OF SIN IS TO BE FOUND AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

There is remission to be had through Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed. The hymn we sang at the commencement of the service gave you the marrow of the doctrine. We owe to God a debt of punishment for sin. Was that debt due or not? If the law was right, the penalty ought to be exacted. If the penalty was too severe, and the law inaccurate, then God made a mistake. But it is blasphemy to suppose that. The law, then, being a righteous law, and the penalty just, shall God do an unjust thing? It will be an unjust thing for him not to carry out the penalty. Would you have him to be unjust? He had declared that the soul that sinned should die; would you have God to be a liar? Shall he eat his words to save his creatures? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." The law's sentence must be carried out. It was inevitable that if God maintained the prerogative of his holiness, he must punish the sins that men have committed. How, then, should he save us? Behold the plan! His dear Son, the Lord of glory, takes upon himself human nature, comes into the place of as many as the Father gave him, stands in their standing, and when the sentence of justice has been proclaimed, and the sword of vengeance has leaped out of its scabbard, behold the glorious Substitute bares his arm, and he says, "Strike, O sword, but strike me, and let my people go." Into the very soul of Jesus the sword of the law pierced, and his blood was shed, the blood, not of one who was man only, but of One who, by his

being an eternal Spirit was able to offer up himself without spot unto God, in a way which gave infinite efficacy to his sufferings. He, through the eternal Spirit, we are told, offered himself without spot to God. Being in his own nature infinitely beyond the nature of man, comprehending all the natures of man, as it were, within himself, by reason of the majesty of his person, he was able to offer an atonement to God of infinite, boundless, inconceivable sufficiency.

What our Lord suffered none of us can tell. I am sure of this: I would not disparage or under-estimate his physical sufferings—the tortures he endured in his body—but I am equally sure that we can none of us exaggerate or over-value the sufferings of such a soul as his; they are beyond all conception. So pure and so perfect, so exquisitely sensitive, and so immaculately holy was he, that to be numbered with transgressors, to be smitten by his Father, to die (shall I say it?) the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers, was the very essence of bitterness, the consummation of anguish. "Yet it pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." His sorrows in themselves were what the Greek liturgy well calls them, "unknown sufferings, great griefs." Hence, too, their efficacy is boundless, without limit. Now, therefore, God is able to forgive sin. He has punished the sin on Christ; it becomes justice, as well as mercy, that God should blot out those debts which have been paid. It were unjust—I speak with reverence, but yet with holy boldness—it were unjust on the part of the infinite Majesty, to lay to my charge a single sin which was laid to the charge of my Substitute. If my Surety took my sin, he released me, and I am clear. Who shall resuscitate judgment against me when I have been condemned in the person of my Saviour? Who shall commit me to the flames of Gehenna, when Christ, my Substitute, has suffered the tantamount of hell for me? Who shall lay anything to my charge when Christ has had all my crimes laid to his charge, answered for them, expiated them, and received the token of quittance from them, in that he was raised from the dead that he might openly vindicate that justification in which by grace I am called and privileged to share? This is all very simple, it lies in a nutshell, but do we all receive it—have we all accepted it? Oh! my dear hearers, the text is full of warning to some of you. You may have an amiable disposition, an excellent character, a serious turn of mind, but you scruple at accepting

Christ; you stumble at this stumbling-stone; you split on this rock. How can I meet your hapless case? I shall not reason with you. I forbear to enter into any argument. I ask you one question. Do you believe this Bible to be inspired of God? Look, then, at that passage, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." What say you? Is it not plain, absolute, conclusive? Allow me to draw the inference. If you have not an interest in the blood-shedding, which I have briefly endeavoured to describe, is there any remission for you? Can there be? Your own sins are on your head now. Of your hand shall they be demanded at the coming of the great Judge. You may labour, you may toil, you may be sincere in your convictions, and quiet in your conscience, or you may be tossed about with your scruples; but as the Lord liveth, there is no pardon for you, except through this shedding of blood. Do you reject it? On your own head will lie the peril! God has spoken. It cannot be said that your ruin is designed by him when your own remedy is revealed by him.

He bids you take the way which he appoints, and if you reject it, you must die. Your death is suicide, be it deliberate, accidental, or through error of judgment. Your blood be on your own head. You are warned.

On the other hand, what a far-reaching consolation the text gives us! "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," but where there is the blood-shedding, there is remission. If thou hast come to Christ, thou art saved. If thou canst say from thy very heart:—

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin."

Then, your sin is gone. Where is that young man? where is that young woman? where are those anxious hearts that have been saying, "We would be pardoned now"? Oh! look, look, look, look to the crucified Saviour, and you are pardoned. Ye may go your way, inasmuch as you have accepted God's atonement. Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee. Son, rejoice, for thy transgressions are blotted out.

My last word shall be this. You that are teachers of others and trying to do good, cleave fast to this doctrine. Let this be the front, the centre, the pith, and the marrow of all you have to testify. I often preach it, but there is never a Sabbath in which I go to my bed with such inward content as when I have preached the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. Then I feel, "If sinners are lost, I have none of their blood upon me." This is the soul-saving doctrine; grip it, and you shall have laid hold of eternal life; reject it, and you reject it to your confusion. Oh! keep to this. Martin Luther used to say that every sermon ought to have the doctrine of justification by faith in it. True; but let it have the doctrine of atonement in it. He says he could not get the doctrine of justification by faith in to the Wurtembergers' heads, and he felt half inclined to take the book into the pulpit and fling it at their heads, in order to get it in. I am afraid he would not have succeeded if he had. But oh! how would I try to hammer again, and again, and again upon this one nail, "The blood is the life thereof." "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Christ giving up his life in pouring out his blood—it is this that gives pardon and peace to every one of you, if you will but look to him—pardon now, complete pardon; pardon for ever. Look away from all other confidences, and rely upon the sufferings and the death of the Incarnate God, who has gone into the heavens, and who lives today to plead before his Father's throne, the merit of the blood which, on Calvary, he poured forth for sinners. As I shall meet you all in that great day, when the crucified One shall come as the King and Lord of all, which day is hastening on apace, as I shall meet you then, I pray you bear me witness that I have striven to tell you in all simplicity what is the way of salvation; and if you reject it, do me this favour, to say that at least I have proffered to you in Jehovah's name this, his gospel, and have earnestly urged you to accept it, that you may be saved. But rather I would God that I might meet you there, all covered in the one atonement, clothed in the one righteousness, and accepted in the one Saviour, and then together will we sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood to receive honour, and power, and dominion for ever and ever." Amen.

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The Blood-Shedding

Without shedding of blood is no remission. - Hebrews 9:22

I will show you three fools. One is yonder soldier, who has been wounded on the field of battle, grievously wounded, well nigh unto death; the surgeon is by his side, and the soldier asks him a question. Listen, and judge of his folly. What question does he ask? Does he raise his eyes with eager anxiety and inquire if the wound be mortal, if the practitioner's skill can suggest the means of healing, or if the remedies are within reach and the medicine at hand? No, nothing of the sort; strange to tell, he asks, "Can you inform me with what sword I was wounded, and by what Russian I have been thus grievously mauled? I want," he adds, "to learn every minute particular respecting the origin of my wound." The man is delirious or his head is affected. Surely such questions at such a time are proof enough that he is bereft of his senses.

There is another fool. The storm is raging, the ship is flying impetuous before the gale, the dark scud moves swiftly over head, the masts are creaking, the sails are rent to rags, and still the gathering tempest grows more fierce. Where is the captain? Is he busily engaged on the deck, is he manfully facing the danger, and skilfully suggesting means to avert it? No sir, he has retired to his cabin, and there with studious thoughts and crazy fancies he is speculating on the place where this storm took its rise. "It is mysterious, this wind; no one ever yet" he says, "has been able to discover it." And, so reckless of the vessel, the lives of the passengers, and his own life, he is careful only to solve his curious questions. The man is mad, sir; take the rudder from his hand; he is clean gone mad! If he should ever run on shore, shut him up as a hopeless lunatic.

The third fool I shall doubtless find among yourselves. You are sick and wounded with sin, you are in the storm and hurricane of Almighty vengeance, and yet the question which you would ask of me, this

morning, would be, "Sir, what is the origin of evil?" You are mad, Sir, spiritually mad; that is not the question you would ask if you were in a sane and healthy state of mind; your question would be: "How can I get rid of the evil?" Not, "How did it come into the world?" but "How am I to escape from it?" Not, "How is it that hail descends from heaven upon Sodom?" but "How may I, like Lot, escape out of the city to a Zoar." Not, "How is it that I am sick?" but "Are there medicines that will heal me? Is there a physician to be found that can restore my soul to health?" Ah! you trifle with subtleties while you neglect certainties. More questions have been asked concerning the origin of evil than upon anything else. Men have puzzled their heads, and twisted their brains into knots, in order to understand what men can never know—how evil came into this world, and how its entrance is consistent with divine goodness? The broad fact is this, there is evil; and your question should be, "How can I escape from the wrath to come, which is engendered of this evil?" In answering that question this verse stands right in the middle of the way (like the angel with the sword, who once stopped Balaam on his road to Barak,) "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Your real want is to know how you can be saved; if you are aware that your sin must be pardoned or punished, your question will be, "How can it be pardoned?" and then point blank in the very teeth of your enquiry, there stands out this fact: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Mark you, this is not merely a Jewish maxim; it is a world-wide and eternal truth. It pertaineth not to the Hebrews only, but to the Gentiles likewise. Never in any time, never in any place, never in any person, can there be remission apart from shedding of blood. This great fact, I say, is stamped on nature; it is an essential law of God's moral government, it is one of the fundamental principles which can neither be shaken nor denied. Never can there be any exception to it; it stands the same in every place throughout all ages—"Without shedding of blood there is no remission." It was so with the Jews; they had no remission without the shedding of blood. Some things under the Jewish law might be cleansed by water or by fire, but in no case where absolute sin was concerned was there ever purification without blood—teaching this doctrine, that blood, and blood alone, must be applied for the remission of sin. Indeed the very heathen seem to have an inkling of this fact. Do not I see their knives gory with the blood of victims? Have I not heard horrid tales of human immolations, of

holocausts, of sacrifices; and what mean these, but that there lies deep in the human breast, deep as the very existence of man, this truth,—"that without shedding of blood there is no remission." And I assert once more, that even in the hearts and consciences of my hearers there is something which will never let them believe in remission apart from a shedding of blood. This is the grand truth of Christianity, and it is a truth which I will endeavour now to fix upon your memory; and may God by his grace bless it to your souls. "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

First, let me show you the blood-shedding, before I begin to dwell upon the text. Is there not a special blood-shedding meant? Yes, there was a shedding of most precious blood, to which I must forthwith refer you. I shall not tell you now of massacres and murders, nor of rivers of blood of goats and rams. There was a blood-shedding once, which did all other shedding of blood by far outvie; it was a man—a God—that shed his blood at that memorable season. Come and see it. Here is a garden dark and gloomy; the ground is crisp with the cold frost of midnight; between those gloomy olive trees I see a man, I hear him groan out his life in prayer; hearken, angels, hearken men, and wonder; it is the Saviour groaning out his soul! Come and see him. Behold his brow! O heavens! drops of blood are streaming down his face, and from his body; every pore is open, and it sweats! but not the sweat of men that toil for bread; it is the sweat of one that toils for heaven—he "sweats great drops of blood!" That is the blood-shedding, without which there is no remission. Follow that man further; they have dragged him with sacrilegious bands from the place of his prayer and his agony, and they have taken him to the hall of Pilate; they seat him in a chair and mock him; a robe of purple is put on his shoulders in mockery; and mark his brow—they have put about it a crown of thorns, and the crimson drops of gore are rushing down his cheeks! Ye angels! the drops of blood are running down his cheeks! But turn aside that purple robe for a moment. His back is bleeding. Tell me, demons who did this. They lift up the thongs, still dripping clots of gore; they scourge and tear his flesh, and make a river of blood to run down his shoulders! That is the shedding of blood without which there is no remission. Not yet have I done: they hurry him through the streets; they fling him on the ground; they nail his hands and feet to the transverse wood, they hoist it in the air, they dash it into its socket, it is fixed, and

there he hangs the Christ of God. Blood from his head, blood from his hands, blood from his feet! In agony unknown he bleeds away his life; in terrible throes he exhausts his soul. "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani." And then see! they pierce his side, and forthwith runneth out blood and water. This is the shedding of blood, sinners and saints; this is the awful shedding of blood, the terrible pouring out of blood, without which for you, and for the whole human race, there is no remission.

I have then, I hope, brought my text fairly out: without this shedding of blood there is no remission. Now I shall come to dwell upon it more particularly.

Why is it that this story doth not make men weep? I told it ill, you say. Ay, so I did; I will take all the blame. But, sirs, if it were told as ill as men could speak, were our hearts what they should be, we should bleed away our lives in sorrow. Oh! it was a horrid murder that! It was not an act of regicide; it was not the deed of a fratricide, or of a parricide; it was—what shall I say?—I must make a word—a deicide; the killing of a God; the slaying of him who became incarnate for our sins. Oh! if our hearts were but soft as iron, we must weep, if they were but tender as the marble of the mountains, we should shed great drops of grief; but they are harder than the nether millstone; we forget the griefs of him that died this ignominious death, we pity not his sorrows, nor do we account the interest we have in him as though he suffered and accomplished all for us. Nevertheless, here stands the principle—"Without shedding of blood is no remission."

Now, I take it, there are two things here. First, there is a *negative expressed*: "No remission without shedding of blood." And then there is a *positive implied*, forsooth, with shedding of blood there is remission.

I. First, I say, here is A NEGATIVE EXPRESSED: there is no remission without blood—without the blood of Jesus Christ. This is of divine authority; when I utter this sentence I have divinity to plead. It is not a thing which you may doubt, or which you may believe; it must be believed and received, otherwise you have denied the Scriptures and turned aside from God. Some truths I utter, perhaps, have little better basis than my

own reasoning and inference, which are of little value enough; but this I utter, not with quotations from God's Word to back up my assertion, but from the lips of God himself. Here it stands in great letters, "There is no remission." So divine its authority. Perhaps you will kick at it: but remember, your rebellion is not against me, but against God, If any of you reject this truth, I shall not controvert; God forbid I should turn aside from proclaiming his gospel, to dispute with men. I have God's irrevocable statute to plead now, here it stands: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." You may believe or disbelieve many things the preacher utters; but this you disbelieve at the peril of your souls. It is God's utterance: will you tell God to his face you do not believe it? That were impious. The negative is divine in its authority; bow yourselves to it, and accept its solemn warning.

But some men will say that God's way of saving men, by shedding of blood, is a cruel way, an unjust way, an unkind way; and all kinds of things they will say of it. Sirs, I have nothing to do with your opinion of the matter; it is so. If you have any faults to find with your Maker, fight your battles out with him at last. But take heed before you throw the gauntlet down; it will go ill with a worm when he fighteth with his Maker, and it will go ill with you when you contend with him. The doctrine of atonement when rightly understood and faithfully received, is delightful, for it exhibits boundless love, immeasurable goodness, and infinite truth; but to unbelievers it will always be a hated doctrine. So it must be sirs; you hate your own mercies; you despise your own salvation. I tarry not to dispute with you; I affirm it in God's name: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

And note *how decisive this is in its character*: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "But, sir, can't I get my sins forgiven by my repentance? if I weep, and plead, and pray, will not God forgive me for the sake of my tears?" "No remission," says the text, "without shedding of blood." "But, sir, if I never sin again, and if I serve God more zealously than other men, will he not forgive me for the sake of my obedience?" "No remission," says the text, "without shedding of blood." "But, sir, may I not trust that God is merciful, and will forgive me without the shedding of blood?" "No," says the text, "without shedding of blood there is no

remission;" none whatever. It cuts off every other hope. Bring your hopes here, and if they are not based in blood. and stamped with blood, they are as useless as castles in the air, and dreams of the night. "There is no remission," says the text, in positive and plain words; and yet men will be trying to get remission in fifty other ways, until their special pleading becomes as irksome to us as it is useless for them. Sirs, do what you like, say what you please, but you are as far off remission when you have done your best, as you were when you began, except you put confidence in the shedding of our Saviour's blood, and in the blood-shedding alone, for without it there is no remission.

And note again *how universal it is in its character*. "What! may not I get remission without blood-shedding?" says the king; and he comes with the crown on his head; "May not I in all my robes, with this rich ransom, get pardon without the blood-shedding?" "None," is the reply; "none." Forthwith comes the wise man, with a number of letters after his name—"Can I not get remission by these grand titles of my learning?" "None; none." Then comes the benevolent man—"I have dispersed my money to the poor, and given my bounty to feed them; shall not I get remission?" "None;" says the text, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." How this puts everyone on a level! My lord, you are no bigger than your coachman; Sir, squire, you are no better off than John that ploughs the ground; minister, your office does not serve you with any exemption—your poorest hearer stands on the very same footing. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." No hope for the best, any more than for the worst, without this shedding of blood. Oh! I love the gospel, for this reason among others, because it is such a levelling gospel. Some persons do not like a levelling gospel; nor would I, in some senses of the word. Let men have their rank, and their titles, and their riches, if they will; but I do like, and I am sure all good men like, to see rich and poor meet together and feel that they are on a level; the gospel makes them so. It says "Put up your money-bags, they will not procure you remission; roll up your diploma, that will not get you remission; forget your farm and your park, they will not get you remission; just cover up that escutcheon, that coat of arms will not get you remission. Come, you ragged beggars, filthy off-scourings of the world, penniless; come hither; here is remission as much for you, ill-bred and ill-mannered though ye be, as for the noble, the

honorable, the titled, and the wealthy. All stand on a level here; the text is universal: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

Mark too, *how perpetual my text is*. Paul said, "there is no remission;" I must repeat this testimony too. When thousands of years have rolled away, some minister may stand on this spot and say the same. This will never alter at all; it will always be so, in the next world as well as this: no remission without shedding of blood. "Oh! yes there is," says one, "the priest takes the shilling, and he gets the soul out of purgatory." That is a mere pretence; it never was in. But without shedding of blood there is no real remission. There may be tales and fancies, but there is no true remission without the blood of propitiation. Never, though you strained yourselves in prayer; never, though you wept yourselves away in tears; never, though you groaned and cried till your heart-strings break; never in this world, nor in that which is to come, can the forgiveness of sins be procured on any other ground than redemption by the blood of Christ, and never can the conscience be cleansed but by faith in that sacrifice. The fact is, beloved, there is no use for you to satisfy your hearts with anything less than what satisfied God the Father. Without the shedding of blood nothing would appease his justice; and without the application of that same blood nothing can purge your consciences.

II. But as there is no remission without blood-shedding, IT IS IMPLIED THAT THERE IS REMISSION WITHOUT IT. Mark it well, this remission is a present fact. The blood having been already shed, the remission is already obtained. I took you to the garden of Gethsemane and the mount of Calvary to see the bloodshedding. I might now conduct you to another garden and another mount to shew you the grand proof of the remission. Another garden, did I say? Yes, it is a garden, fraught with many pleasing and even triumphant reminiscences. Aside from the haunts of this busy world, in it was a new sepulchre, hewn out of a rock where Joseph of Arimathea thought his own poor body should presently be laid. But there they laid Jesus after his crucifixion.

He had stood surety for his people, and the law had demanded his blood; death had held him with strong grasp; and that tomb was, as it were, the dungeon of his captivity, when, as the good shepherd, he laid down his

life for the sheep. Why, then, do I see in that garden, an open, untenanted grave? I will tell you. The debts are paid, the sins are cancelled—, the remission is obtained. How, think you? That great Shepherd of the sheep hath been brought again from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and in him also we have obtained redemption through his blood. There, beloved, is proof the first.

Do you ask further evidence? I will take you to Mount Olivet. You shall behold Jesus there with his hands raised like the High Priest of old to bless his people, and while he is blessing them, he ascends, the clouds receiving him out of their sight. But why, you ask, oh why hath he thus ascended, and whither is he gone? Behold he entereth, not into the holy place made with hands, but he entereth into heaven itself with his own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us. Now, therefore, we have boldness to draw near by the blood of Christ. The remission is obtained, here is proof the second. Oh believer, what springs of comfort are there here for thee.

And now let me commend this remission by the shedding of blood to those who have not yet believed. Mr. Innis, a great Scotch minister, once visited an infidel who was dying. When he came to him the first time, he said, "Mr. Innis, I am relying on the mercy of God; God is merciful, and he will never damn a man for ever." When he got worse and was nearer death, Mr. Innis went to him again, and he said, " Oh! Mr. Innis, my hope is gone; for I have been thinking if God be merciful, God is just too; and what if, instead of being merciful to me, he should be just to me? What would then become of me? I must give up my hope in the mere mercy of God; tell me how to be saved!" Mr. Innis told him that Christ had died in the stead of all believers—that God could be just, and yet the justifier through the death of Christ. " Ah!" said he, " Mr. Innis, there is something solid in that; I can rest on that; I cannot rest on anything else;" and it is a remarkable fact that none of us ever met with a man who thought he had his sins forgiven unless it was through the blood of Christ. Meet a Mussulman; he never had his sins forgiven; he does not say so. Meet an Infidel; he never knows that his sins are forgiven. Meet a Legalist; he says, "I hope they will be forgiven;" but he does not pretend they are. No one ever gets even a fancied hope apart from this, that Christ, and Christ

alone, must save by the shedding of his blood.

Let me tell a story to show how Christ saves souls. Mr. Whitfield had a brother who had been like him, an earnest Christian, but he had backslidden; he went far from the ways of godliness; and one afternoon, after he had been recovered from his backsliding, he was sitting in a room in a chapel house. He had heard his brother preaching the day before, and his poor conscience had been cut to the very quick. Said Whitfield's brother, when he was at tea, "I am a lost man," and he groaned and cried, and could neither eat nor drink. Said Lady Huntingdon, who sat opposite, "What did you say, Mr. Whitfield?" "Madam," said he, "I said, I am a lost man." "I'm glad of it," said she; "I'm glad of it." "Your ladyship, how can you say so? It is cruel to say you are glad that I am a lost man." "I repeat it, sir," said she; "I am heartily glad of it." He looked at her, more and more astonished at her barbarity. "I am glad of it," said she, "because it is written, 'The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.' " With the tears rolling down his cheeks, he said, "What a precious Scripture; and how is it that it comes with such force to me ? Oh! madam," said he, "madam, I bless God for that; then he will save me; I trust my soul in his hands; he has forgiven me." He went outside the house, felt ill, fell upon the ground, and expired. I may have a lost man here this morning. As I cannot say much, I will leave you, good people; you do not want anything.

Have I got a lost man here? Lost man! Lost woman! Where are you? Do you feel yourself to be lost? I am so glad of it; for there is remission by the blood-shedding. O sinner, are there tears in your eyes? Look through them. Do you see that man in the garden? That man sweats drops of blood for you. Do you see that man on the cross? That man was nailed there for you. Oh! if I could be nailed on a cross this morning for you all, I know what you would do: you would fall down and kiss my feet, and weep that I should have to die for you. But sinner, lost sinner, Jesus died for you—for you; and if he died for you., you cannot be lost. Christ died in vain for no one. Are you, then, a sinner? Are you convinced of sin because you believe not in Christ? I have authority to preach to you. Believe in his name and you cannot be lost. Do you say you are no sinner? Then I do not know that Christ died for you. Do you say that you have no sins to repent

of? Then I have no Christ to preach to you. He did not come to save the righteous; he came to save the wicked. Are you wicked? Do you feel it? Are you lost? Do you know it? Are you sinful? Will you confess it? Sinner! if Jesus were here this morning, he would put out his bleeding hands, and say, "Sinner, I died for you, will you believe me?" He is not here in person; he has sent his servant to tell you. Won't you believe him? "Oh!" but you say, "I am such a sinner;" "Ah!" says he, "that is just why I died for you, because you are a sinner." "But," you say, "I do not deserve it." "Ah!" says he, "that is just why I did it." Say you, "I have hated him." "But," says he, "I have always loved you." "But, Lord, I have spat on thy minister, and scorned thy word." "It is all forgiven," says he, "all washed away by the blood which did run from my side. Only believe me; that is all I ask. And that I will give you. I will help you to believe." "Ah!" says one, "but I do not want a Saviour." Sir, I have nothing to say to you except this—"The wrath to come! the wrath to come!" But there is one who says, "Sir, you do not mean what you say! Do you mean to preach to the most wicked men or women in the place?" I mean what I say. There she is! She is a harlot, she has led many into sin, and many into hell, There she is; her own friends have turned her out of doors; her father called her a good-for-nothing hussey, and said she should never come to the house again. Woman I dost thou repent? Dost thou feel thyself to be guilty? Christ died to save thee, and thou shalt be saved. There he is. I can see him. He was drunk; he has been drunk very often. Not many nights ago I heard his voice in the street, as he went home at a late hour on Saturday night, disturbing everybody; and he beat his wife, too. He has broken the Sabbath; and as to swearing, if oaths be like soot, his throat must want sweeping bad enough, for he has cursed God often. Do you feel yourself to be guilty, my hearer? Do you hate your sins, and are you willing to forsake them? Then I bless God for you. Christ died for you. Believe! I had a letter a few days ago, from a young man who heard that during this week I was going to a certain town. Said he, "Sir, when you come, do preach a sermon that will fit me; for do you know, sir, I have heard it said that we must all think ourselves to be the wickedest people in the world, or else we cannot be saved. I try to think so, but I cannot, because I have not been the wickedest. I want to think so, but I cannot. I want to be saved, but I do not know how to repent enough." Now, if I have the pleasure of seeing him, I shall tell him, God does not require a man to

think himself the wickedest in the world, because that would sometimes be to think a falsehood; there are some men who are not so wicked as others are. What God requires is this, that a man should say, "I know more of myself than I do of other people; I know little about them, and from what I see of myself, not of my actions, but of my heart, I do think there can be few worse than I am. They may be more guilty openly, but then I have had more light, more privileges, more opportunities, more warnings, and therefore I am still guiltier." I do not want you to bring your brother with you, and say, "I am more wicked than he is;" I want you to come yourself, and say, "Father, I have sinned;" you have nothing to do with your brother William, whether he has sinned more or less; your cry should be, "Father, I have sinned;" you have nothing to do with your cousin Jane, whether or not she has rebelled more than you. Your business is to cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner!" That is all. Do you feel yourselves lost? Again, I say, -

"Come, and welcome, sinner, come!"

To conclude. There is not a sinner in this place who knows himself to be lost and ruined, who may not have all his sins forgiven, and "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." You may, though black as hell, be white as heaven this very instant. I know 'tis only by a desperate struggle that faith takes hold of the promise, but the very moment a sinner believes, that conflict is past. It is his first victory, and a blessed one. Let this verse be the language of your heart; adopt it, and make it your own:

"A guilty weak, and helpless worm.
In Christ's kind arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

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The Blood of the Everlasting Covenant

The blood of the everlasting covenant. - Hebrews 13:20

All God's dealings with men have had a covenant character. It hath so pleased Him to arrange it, that he will not deal with us except through a covenant, nor can we deal with Him except in the same manner. Adam in the garden was under a covenant with God and God was in covenant with Him. That covenant he speedily brake. There is a covenant still existing in all its terrible power - terrible I say, because it has been broken on man's part, and therefore God will most surely fulfill its solemn threatenings and sanctions. That is the covenant of works. By this he dealt with Moses, and in this doth he deal with the whole race of men as represented in the first Adam. Afterwards when God would deal with Noah, it was by a covenant; and when in succeeding ages he dealt with Abraham, he was still pleased to bind himself to him by a covenant. That covenant he preserved and kept, and it was renewed continually to many of his seed. God dealt not even with David, the man after his own heart, except with a covenant. He made a covenant with his anointed; and beloved, he dealeth with you and me this day still by covenant. When he shall come in all his terrors to condemn, he shall smite by covenant - namely, by the sword of the covenant of Sinai; and if he comes in the splendors of his grace to save, he still comes to us by covenant - namely, the covenant of Zion; the covenant which he has made with the Lord Jesus Christ, the head and representative of his people. And mark, whenever we come into close and intimate dealings with God, it is sure to be, on our part, also by covenant. We make with God, after conversion, a covenant of gratitude; we come to him sensible of what he has done for us, and we devote ourselves to him. We set our seal to that covenant when in baptism we are united with his church; and day by day, so often as we come around the table of the breaking of the bread, we renew the vow of our covenant, and thus we have personal intercourse with God. I cannot pray to him except through the covenant of grace; and I know that I am not his child unless I am his, first through the covenant whereby Christ purchased me, and secondly, through the covenant by which I have given up myself, and dedicated all that I am and all that I have to him. It is important, then, since the covenant is the only ladder which reaches from earth to heaven - since it is the only way in which God has intercourse with us, and by

which we can deal with him, that we should know how to discriminate between covenant and covenant; and should not be in any darkness or error with regard to what is the covenant of grace, and what is not. It shall be our endeavor, this morning, to make as simple and as plain as possible, the matter of the covenant spoken of in our text, and I shall thus speak - first upon the covenant of grace; secondly, its everlasting character; and thirdly, the relationship which the blood bears to it. "The blood of the everlasting covenant."

I. First of all, then, I have to speak this morning of THE COVENANT mentioned in the text; and I observe that we can readily discover at first sight what the covenant is not. We see at once that this is not the covenant of works, for the simple reason that this is an everlasting covenant. Now the covenant of works was not everlasting in any sense whatever. It was not eternal; it was first made in the garden of Eden. It had a beginning, it has been broken; it will be violated continually and will soon be wound up and pass away: therefore, it is not everlasting in any sense. The covenant of works cannot bear an everlasting title; but as the one in my text is an everlasting covenant, therefore it is not a covenant of works. God made a covenant first of all with the human race, which ran in this wise: "If thou, O man, wilt be obedient, thou shalt live and be happy, but if thou wilt be disobedient, thou shalt perish. In the day that thou disobey me thou shalt die. That covenant was made with all of us in the person of our representative, the first Adam. If Adam had kept that covenant, we believe we should everyone of us have been preserved. But inasmuch as he broke the covenant, you and I, and all of us, fell down and were considered henceforth as the heirs of wrath, as inheritors of sin as prone to every evil and subject to every misery. That covenant has passed away with regard to God's people; it has been put away through the new and better covenant which has utterly and entirely eclipsed it by its gracious glory.

Again, I may remark that the covenant here meant is not the covenant of gratitude which is made between the loving child of God and his Saviour. Such a covenant is very right and proper. I trust all of us who know the Saviour have said in our very hearts: -

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

We have given up everything to him. But that covenant is not the one in the text, for the simple reason that the covenant in our text is an everlasting one. Now ours was only written out some few years ago. It would have been despised by us in the earlier parts of our life, and cannot at the very utmost be so old as ourselves.

Having thus readily shown what this covenant is not, may I observe what this covenant is. And here it will be necessary for me to subdivide this head again and to speak of it thus: To understand a covenant, you must know who are the contracting parties; secondly, what are the stipulations of the contract; thirdly, what are the objects of it; and then, if you would go still deeper, you must understand something of the motives which lead the contracting parties to form the covenant between themselves.

1. Now, in this covenant of grace, we must first of all observe the high contracting parties between whom it was made. The covenant of grace was made before the foundation of the world between God the Father, and God the Son; or to put it in a yet more scriptural light, it was made mutually between the three divine persons of the adorable Trinity. This covenant was not made mutually between God and man. Man did not at that time exist; but Christ stood in the covenant as man's representative. In that sense we will allow that it was a covenant between God and man, but not a covenant between God and any man personally and individually. It was a covenant between God with Christ, and through Christ indirectly with all the blood-bought seed who were loved of Christ from the foundation of the world. It is a noble and glorious thought, the very poetry of that old Calvinistic doctrine which we teach, that long ere the day-star knew its place, before God had spoken existence out of nothing, before angel's wing had stirred the un navigated ether, before a solitary song had distributed the solemnity of the silence in which God reigned supreme, he had entered into solemn council with himself, with his Son, and with his Spirit, and had in that council decreed, determined, proposed, and predestinated the salvation of his people. He had, moreover, in the covenant arranged the ways and means, and fixed and

settled everything which should work together for the effecting of the purpose and the decree. My soul flies back now, winged by imagination and by faith, and looks into that mysterious council-chamber, and by faith I behold the Father pledging himself to the Son, and the Son pledging himself to the Father, while the Spirit gives his pledge to both, and thus that divine compact, long to be hidden in darkness, is completed and settled - the covenant which in these latter days has been read in the light of heaven, and has become the joy, and hope, and boast of all the saints.

2. And now, what were the stipulations of this covenant? They were somewhat in the wise. God has foreseen that man after creation would break the covenant of works; that however mild and gentle the tenure upon which Adam had possession of Paradise, yet that tenure would be too severe for him, and he would be sure to kick against it, and ruin himself. God had also foreseen that his elect ones, whom he had chosen out of the rest of mankind would fall by the sin of Adam, since they, as well as the rest of mankind, were represented in Adam. The covenant therefore had for its end the restoration of the chosen people. And now we may readily understand what were the stipulations. On the Father's part, thus run the covenant. I cannot tell you it in the glorious celestial tongue in which it was written: I am fain to bring it down to the speech which suiteth to the ear of flesh, and to the heart of the mortal. Thus, I say, run the covenant, in ones like these: "I, the Most High Jehovah, do hereby give unto my only begotten and well-beloved Son, a people, countless beyond the number of stars, who shall be by him washed from sin, by him preserved, and kept, and led, and by him, at last, presented before my throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. I covenant by oath, and swear by myself, because I can swear by no greater, that these whom I now give to Christ shall be for ever the objects of my eternal love. Them I will forgive through the merit of the blood. To these will I give a perfect righteousness; these will I adopt and make my sons and daughters, and these shall reign with me through Christ eternally." Thus run that glorious side of the covenant. The Holy Spirit also, as one of the high contracting parties on this side of the covenant, gave his declaration, "I hereby covenant," saith he, "that all whom the Father giveth to the Son, I will in due time quicken. I will show them their need of redemption; I

will cut off from them all groundless hope, and destroy their refuges of lies. I will bring them to the blood of sprinkling; I will give them faith whereby this blood shall be applied to them, I will work in them every grace; I will keep their faith alive; I will cleanse them and drive out all depravity from them, and they shall be presented at last spotless and faultless." This was the one side of the covenant, which is at this very day being fulfilled and scrupulously kept. As for the other side of the covenant this was the part of it, engaged and covenanted by Christ. He thus declared, and covenanted with his Father: "My Father, on my part I covenant that in the fullness of time I will become man. I will take upon myself the form and nature of the fallen race. I will live in their wretched world, and for my people I will keep the law perfectly. I will work out a spotless righteousness, which shall be acceptable to the demands of thy just and holy law. In due time I will bear the sins of all my people. Thou shalt exact their debts on me; the chastisement of their peace I will endure, and by my stripes they shall be healed. My Father, I covenant and promise that I will be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. I will magnify thy law, and make it honourable. I will suffer all they ought to have suffered. I will endure the curse of thy law, and all the vials of thy wrath shall be emptied and spent upon my head. I will then rise again; I will ascend into heaven; I will intercede for them at thy right hand; and I will make myself responsible for every one of them, that not one of those whom thou hast given me shall ever be lost, but I will bring all my sheep of whom, by thy blood, thou hast constituted me the shepherd - I will bring every one safe to thee at last." Thus ran the covenant; and now, I think, you have a clear idea of what it was and how it stands - the covenant between God and Christ, between God the Father and God the Spirit, and God the Son as the covenant head and representative of all Gods elect. I have told you, as briefly as I could what were the stipulations of it. You will please to remark, my dear friends, that the covenant is, on one side, perfectly fulfilled. God the Son has paid the debts of all the elect. He has, for us men and for our redemption, suffered the whole of wrath divine. Nothing remaineth now on this side of the question except that he shall continue to intercede, that he may safely bring all his redeemed to glory.

On the side of the Father this part of the covenant has been fulfilled to

countless myriads. God the Father and God the Spirit have not been behindhand in their divine contract. And mark you, this side shall be as fully and as completely finished and carried out as the other. Christ can say of what he promised to do. "It is finished!" and the like shall be said by all the glorious covenanters. All for whom Christ died shall be pardoned, all justified, all adopted. The Spirit shall quicken them all, shall give them all faith, shall bring them all to heaven, and they shall, every one of them, without let or hindrance, stand accepted in the beloved, in the day when the people shall be numbered, and Jesus shall be glorified.

3. And now having seen who were the high contracting parties, and what were the terms of the covenant made between them, let us see what were the objects of this covenant Was this covenant made for every man of the race of Adam? Assuredly not; we discover the secret by the visible. That which is in the covenant is to be seen in due time by the eye and to be heard with the ear. I see multitudes of men perishing, continuing wantonly in their wicked ways, rejecting the offer of Christ which is presented to them in the Gospel day after day, treading under foot the blood of the Son of Man, defying the Spirit who strives with them; I see these men going on from bad to worse at last perishing in their sins. I have not the folly to believe that they have any part in the covenant of grace. Those who die impenitent, the multitudes who reject the Saviour, are clearly proved to have no part and no lot in the sacred covenant of divine grace; for if they were interested in that, there would be certain marks and evidences which would show us this. We should find that in due time in this life they would be brought to repentance, would be washed in the Saviour's blood, and would be saved. The covenant - to come at once straight to the matter, however offensive the doctrine may be - the covenant has relationship to the elect and none besides. Does this offend you? Be ye offended ever more. What said Christ? "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me: for they are thine." If Christ prayeth for none but for the chosen, why should ye be angry that ye are also taught from the Word of God that in the covenant there was provision made for the like persons, that they might receive eternal life. As many as shall believe, as many as shall trust in Christ, as many as shall persevere unto the end, as many as shall enter

into the eternal rest, so many and no more are interested in the covenant of divine grace.

4. Furthermore, we have to consider what were the motives of this covenant. Why was the covenant made at all? There was no compulsion or constraint on God. As yet there was no creature. Even could the creature have an influence on the Creator, there was none existing in the period when the covenant was made. We can look nowhere for God's motive in the covenant except it be in himself, for of God it could be said literally in that day, "I am, and there is none beside me." Why then did he make the covenant? I answer, absolute sovereignty dictated it. But why were certain men the objects of it and why not others? I answer, sovereign grace guided the pen. It was not the merit of man, it was nothing which God foresaw in us that made him choose many and leave others to go on in their sins. It was nothing in them, it was sovereignty and grace combined that made the divine choice. If you, my brethren and sisters, have a good hope that you are interested in the covenant of grace, you must sing that song -

"What was there in me to merit esteem, or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so Father I ever sing, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

"He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy," "for it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." His sovereignty elected, and his grace distinguished, and immutability decreed. No motive dictated the election of the individuals, except a motive in himself of love and of divine sovereignty. Doubtless the grand intention of God in making the covenant at all was his own glory; any motive inferior to that would be beneath his dignity. God must find his motives in himself: he has not to look to moths and worms for motives for his deeds. He is the "I AM."

"He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be."

He doth as he wills in the armies of heaven. Who can stay his hand and say unto him, "What doest thou?" Shall the clay ask the potter for the

motive for his making it into a vessel? Shall the thing formed before its creation dictate to its Creator? No, let God be God, and let man shrink into his native nothingness, and if God exalt him, let him not boast as though God found a reason for the deed in man. He finds his motives in himself. He is self-contained, and findeth nothing beyond nor needeth anything from any but himself. Thus have I, as fully as time permits this morning, discussed the first point concerning the covenant. May the Holy Spirit lead us into this sublime truth.

II. But now, in the second place, we come to notice ITS EVERLASTING CHARACTER. It is called an everlasting covenant. And here you observe at once its antiquity. The covenant of grace is the oldest of all things. It is sometimes a subject of great joy to me to think that the covenant of grace is older than the covenant of works. The covenant of works had a beginning, but the covenant of grace had not; and blessed be God the covenant of works has its end, but the covenant of grace shall stand fast when heaven and earth shall pass away. The antiquity of the covenant of grace demands our grateful attention. It is a truth which tends to elevate the mind. I know of no doctrine more grand than this. It is the very soul and essence of all poetry, and in sitting down and in sitting down and meditating upon it. I do confess my spirit has sometimes been ravished with delight. Can you conceive the idea that before all things God thought of you? That when as yet he had not made his mountains, he had thought of thee, poor puny worm? Before the magnificent constellations began to shine, and ere the great centre of the world had been fixed, and all the mighty planets and divers worlds had been made to revolve around it, then had God fixed the centre of his covenant, and ordained the number of those lesser stars which should revolve round that blessed centre, and derive light therefrom. Why, when one is taken up with some grand conceptions of the boundless universe, when with the astronomers we fly through space, when with we find it without end, and the starry hosts without number, does it not seem marvelous that God should give poor insignificant man the preference beyond even the whole universe besides? Oh this cannot make us proud, because it is a divine truth, but it must make us feel happy. Oh believer, you think yourself nothing, but God does not think so of you. Men despise you but God remembered you before he made anything. The covenant of love which he made with his

Son on your behalf is older than the hoary ages, and if ye fly back when as yet time had not begun, before those massive rocks that bear the marks of gray old age upon them, had begun to be deposited, he had loved and chosen you, and made a covenant on your behalf. Remember well these ancient things of the eternal hills.

Then, again, it is an everlasting covenant from its sureness. Nothing is everlasting which is not secure. Man may erect his structures and think they may last for ever, but the Tower of Babel has crumbled, and the very Pyramids bear signs of ruin. Nothing which man has made is everlasting, because he cannot ensure it against decay. But as for the covenant of grace, well David say of it, "It is ordered in all things and sure." It is

"Signed, and sealed, and ratified,
In all things ordered well."

There is not an "if" or a "but" in the whole of it from beginning to end. Free-will hates God's "shalls" and "wills," and likes man's "ifs" and "buts," but there are no "ifs" and "buts" in the covenant of grace. Thus the tenure runs: "I will" and "they shall." Jehovah swears it and the Son fulfills it. It is - it must be true. It must be sure, for "I AM" determines. "Hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" It is a sure covenant. I have sometimes said, if any man were about to build a bridge or a house if he would leave me just one single stone or one timber to put where I liked, I would undertake that his house would fall down. Let me if there is anyone about to construct a bridge, have just simply the placing of one stone - I will select which stone it shall be and I will defy him to build a bridge that shall stand. I should simply select the key-stone and then he might erect whatever he pleased and it should soon fall. Now, the Armenian's covenant is one that cannot stand because there are one or two bricks in it (and that is putting it in the slightest form; I might have said, "because every stone in it," and that would be nearer the mark) that are dependent on the will of man. It is left to the will of the creator whether he will be saved or not. If he will not, there is no constraining influence that can master and overcome his will. There is no promise that any influence shall be strong enough to overcome him, according to the Armenian. So the question is left to man, and God the

mighty Builder - though he put stone on stone massive as the universe - yet may be defeated by this creature. Out upon such blasphemy! The whole structure, from beginning to end, is in the hand of God. The very terms and conditions of that covenant are become its seals and guarantees, seeing that Jesus has fulfilled them all. Its full accomplishment in every jot and tittle is sure, and must be fulfilled by Christ Jesus, whether man will or man will not. It is not the creature's covenant, it is the Creator's. It is not man's covenant, it is the Almighty's covenant, and he will carry it out and perform it, the will of man notwithstanding. For this is the very glory of grace - that man hates to be saved - that he is enmity to him, yet God will have him redeemed - that God's consensus is. "You shall," and man's intention is "I will not, and God's "shall" conquers man's "I will not." Almighty grace rides victoriously over the neck of free will and leads it captive in glorious captivity to the all-conquering power of irresistible grace and love. It is a sure covenant, and therefore deserves the title of everlasting.

Furthermore, it is not only sure, but it is immutable. If it were not immutable, it could not be everlasting. That which changes passes away. We may be quite sure that anything that has the word "change" on it, will sooner or later die, and be put away as a thing of nought. But in the covenant, everything is immutable. Whatever God has established must come to pass, and not word, or line, or letter, can be altered. Whatever the Spirit voweth shall be done, and whatever God the Son promised hath been fulfilled, and shall be consummated at the day of his appearing. Oh if we could believe that the sacred lines could be erased - that the covenant could be blotted and blurred, why then my dear friends, we might lie down and despair. I have heard it said by some preachers, that when the Christian is holy, he is in the covenant; that when he sins, he is crossed out again; that when he repents, he is put in again, and if he fails he is scratched out once more; and so he goes in and out of the door, as he would in and out of his own house. He goes in at one door and out of another. He is sometimes the child of God, and sometimes the child of the devil - sometimes an heir of heaven, and anon an heir of hell. And I know one man who went so far as to say that although a man might have persevered through grace for sixty years, yet should he fall away the last year of his life - if he should sin and die so, he would perish everlastingly,

and all his faith, and all the love which God had manifested to him in the day's gone by would go for nothing. I am very happy to say that such a notion of God is just the very notion I have of the devil. I could not believe in such a God, and could not bow down before him. A god that loves today and hates tomorrow; a God that gives a promise, and yet foreknows after all that man shall not see the promise fulfilled; a God that forgives and punishes - that justifies and afterwards executes - is a God that I cannot endure. He is not the God of the Scriptures I am certain, for he is immutable, just, holy, and true, and having loved his own, he will love them to the end, and if he hath given a promise to any man, the promise shall be kept, and that man once in grace, is in grace forever, and shall without fall by-and-by enter into glory.

And then to finish up this point. The covenant is everlasting because it will never run itself out. It will be fulfilled but it will stand firm. When Christ hath completed all, and brought every believer to heaven; when the Father hath seen all his people gathered in - the covenant it is true, will come to a consummation, but not to a conclusion, for thus the covenant runs: The heirs of grace shall be blessed for ever, and as long as "for ever" lasts, this everlasting covenant will demand the happiness, the security, the glorification, of every object of it.

III. Having thus noticed the everlasting character of the covenant, I conclude by the sweetest and most precious portion of the doctrine - the relation which the blood bears to it - **THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT**. The blood of Christ stands in a fourfold relationship to the covenant. With regard to Christ, his precious blood shed in Gethsemane, in Gabbatha and Golgotha, is the fulfillment of the covenant. By this blood sin is canceled; by Jesus' agonies justice is satisfied; by his death the law is honoured; and by that precious blood in all its mediatorial efficacy, and in all its cleansing power, Christ fulfills all that He stipulated to do on the behalf of his people towards God. Oh, believer, look to the blood of Christ, and remember that there is Christ's part of the covenant carried out. And now, there remains nothing to be fulfilled but God's part, there is nothing for thee to do; Jesus has done it all; there is nothing for free will to supply; Christ has done everything that God can demand. The blood is the fulfillment of the debtor's side of

the covenant, and now God becometh bound by his own solemn oath to show grace and mercy to all whom Christ has redeemed by his blood. With regard to the blood in another respect, it is to God the Father the bond of the covenant. When I see Christ dying on the cross, I see the everlasting God from that time, if I may use the term of him who ever must be free, bound by his own oath and covenant to carry out every stipulation. Does the covenant say, "A new heart will I give thee, and a right spirit will I put within thee?" It must be done, for Jesus died, and Jesus' death is the seal of the covenant. Does it say, "I will sprinkle pure water upon them and they shall be clean; from all their iniquities will I cleanse them?" Then it must be done, for Christ has fulfilled his part. And, therefore, now we can present the covenant no more as a thing of doubt; but as our claim on God through Christ, and coming humbly on our knees, pleading that covenant, our heavenly Father will not deny the promises contained therein, but will make every one of them yea and amen to us through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Then, again, the blood of the covenant has relation to us as the objects of the covenant, and that is its third light; it is not only a fulfillment as regards Christ, and a bond as regards his Father, but it is an evidence as regards ourselves. And here, dear brothers and sisters, let me speak affectionately to you. Are you relying wholly upon the blood? Has his blood - the precious blood of Christ - been laid to your conscience? Have you seen your sins pardoned, through his blood? Have you received forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus? Are you glorying in his sacrifice, and is his cross your only hope and refuge? Then you are in the covenant. Some men want to know whether they are elect. We cannot tell them unless they will tell us this. Dost thou believe? Is thy faith fixed on the precious blood? Then thou art in the covenant. And oh, poor sinner, if thou hast nothing to recommend thee; if thou art standing back, and saying "I dare not come! I am afraid! I am not in the covenant!" still Christ bids thee come. "Come unto me," saith he. "If thou canst not come to the covenant Father, come to the covenant Surety. Come unto me and I will give thee rest." And when thou hast come to him, and his blood has been applied to thee doubt not, but that in the red roll of election stands thy name. Canst thou read thy name in the bloody characters of a Saviour's atonement? Then shalt thou read it one day in the golden letters

of the Father's election. He that believeth is elected. The blood is the symbol, the token, the earnest, the surety, the seal of the covenant of grace to thee. It must ever be the telescope through which thou canst look to see the things that are afar off. Thou canst not see they election with the naked eye, but through the blood of Christ thou canst see it clear enough. Trust thou in the blood, poor sinner, and then the blood of the everlasting covenant is a proof that thou are an heir of heaven. Lastly, the blood stands in a relationship to all three, and here I may add that the blood is the glory of all. To the Son it is the fulfillment, to the Father the bond, to the sinner the evidence, and to all - To Father, Son, and sinner - it is the common glory and the common boast. In this the Father is well pleased; in this the Son also, with joy, looks down and sees the purchase of his agonies; and in this must the sinner ever find his comfort and his everlasting song, - "Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, are my glory, my song, for ever and ever!"

And now, my dear hearers, I have one question to ask, and I have done. Have you the hope that you are in the covenant? Have you put your trust in the blood? Remember, though you imagine, perhaps, from what I have been saying, that the gospel is restricted, that the gospel is freely preached to all. The decree is limited, but the good news is as wide as the world. The good spell, the good news, is as wide as the universe. I tell it to every creature under heaven, because I am told to do so. The secret of God, which is to deal with the application, that is restricted to God's chosen ones, but not the message, for that is to be proclaimed to all nations. Now thou hast heard the gospel many and many a time in thy life. It runs thus: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Dost thou believe that? And this is thy hope - something like this: "I am a sinner. I trust Christ has died for me; I put my trust in the merit of his blood, and sink or swim, I have no other hope but this.

'Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling'"

Thou hast heard it; hast thou received it in thy heart, and laid hold on it; then thou art one of those in the covenant. And why should election

frighten thee? If thou hast chosen Christ, depend upon it he has chosen thee. If thy tearful eye is looking to him, then his omniscient eye has long looked on thee; if thy heart lovest him, his heart loves thee better than ever thou canst love, and if now thou art saying, "My father, thou shalt be the guide of my youth," I will tell thee a secret - he has been thy guide, and has brought thee to be what thou now art, a humble seeker, and he will be thy guide and bring thee safe at last. But art thou a proud, boastful, free-willer, saying, "I will repent and believe whenever I choose; I have as good a right to be saved as anybody, for I do my duty as well as others, and I shall doubtless get my reward" - if you are claiming a universal atonement, which is to be received at the option of man's will, go and claim it, and you will be disappointed in your claim. You will find God will not deal with you on that ground at all, but will say, "Get thee hence, I never knew thee. He that cometh not to me through the Son cometh not at all." I believe the man who is not willing to submit to the electing love and sovereign grace of God, has great reason to question whether he is a Christian at all, for the spirit that kicks against that is the spirit of the devil, and the spirit of the unhumiliated, unrenewed heart. May God take away the enmity out of your heart to his own precious truth, and reconcile you to himself through THE BLOOD of his Son, which is the bond and seal of the everlasting covenant.

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The Blood

"When I see the blood, I will pass over you."—Exodus 12:13.

God's people are always safe. "All the saints are in his hand;" and the hand of God is a place for safety, as well as a place of honour. Nothing can hurt the man who has made his refuge God. "Thou hast given commandment to save me," said David; and every believing child of God may say the same. Plague, famine, war, tempest,—all these have received commandment of God to save his people. Though the earth should rock beneath the feet of man, yet the Christian, may stand fast, and though the

heavens should be rolled up, and the firmament should pass away like a scroll that is burned by fervent heat, yet need not a Christian fear; God's people shall be saved: if they cannot be saved under the heavens, they shall be saved in the heavens; if there be no safety for them in the time of trouble upon this solid earth, they shall be "caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall they be ever with the Lord," and ever safe.

Now, at the time of which this Book of Exodus speaks, Egypt was exposed to a terrible peril. Jehovah himself was about to march through the streets of all the cities of Egypt. It was not merely a destroying angel, but Jehovah himself; for thus it is written, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast." No one less than I AM, the great God, had vowed to "cut Rahab" with the sword of vengeance. Tremble, ye inhabitants of the earth, for God has come down among you, provoked, incensed, and at last awakened from his seeming sleep of patience. He has girded on his terrible sword, and he has come to smite you. Quake for fear, all ye that have sin within you, for when God walks through the streets, sword in hand, will he not smite you all? But hark! the voice of covenant mercy speaks, God's children are safe, even though an angry God be in the streets. As they are safe from the rod of the wicked, so are they safe from the sword of justice—always and ever safe; for there was not a hair of the head of an Israelite that was so much as touched; Jehovah kept them safe beneath his wings. While he did rend his enemies like a lion, yet did he protect his children, every one of them. But, beloved, while this is always true, that God's people are safe, there is another fact that is equally true, namely, that God's people are only safe through the blood. The reason why God spares his people in the time of calamity is, because he sees the blood-mark on their brow. What is the basis of that great truth, that all things work together for good to them that love God? What is the cause that all things so produce good to them, but this, that they are bought with the precious blood of Christ? Therefore it is that nothing can hurt them, because the blood is upon them, and every evil thing must pass them by. It was so that night in Egypt. God himself was abroad with his sword; but he spared them, because he saw the blood-mark on the lintel and on the two sideposts. And so it is with us. In the day when God in his fierce anger shall come forth from his dwelling place, to affright the earth

with terrors and to condemn the wicked, we shall be secure, if covered with the Saviour's righteousness, and sprinkled with his blood, we are found in him.

Do I hear some one say, that I am now coming to an old subject? This thought struck me when I was preparing for preaching, that I should have to tell you an old story over again; and just as I was thinking of that, happening to turn over a book, I met with an anecdote of Judson the missionary to Burmah. He had passed through unheard-of hardships, and had performed dangerous exploits for his Master. He returned, after thirty years' absence, to America. "Announced to address an assembly in a provincial town, and a vast concourse having gathered from great distances to hear him, he rose at the close of the usual service, and, as all eyes were fixed and every year attent, he spoke for about fifteen minutes, with much pathos, of the precious Saviour, of what he had done for us, and of what we owed to him; and he sat down, visibly affected. "The people are very much disappointed," said a friend to him on their way home; "they wonder you did not talk of something else." "Why what did they want?" he replied: "I presented, to the best of my ability, the most interesting subject in the world." "But they wanted something different—a story" "Well, I am sure I gave them a story—the most thrilling one that can be conceived of." "But they had heard it before. They wanted something new of a man who had just come from the antipodes." "Then I am glad they have it to say, that a man coming from the antipodes had nothing better to tell than the wondrous story of the dying love of Jesus. My business is to preach the gospel of Christ; and when I can speak at all, I dare not trifle with my commission. When I looked upon those people to-day, and remembering where I should next meet them, how could I stand up and furnish food to vain curiosity—tickle their fancy with amusing stories, however decently strung together on a thread of religion? That is not what Christ meant by preaching the gospel. And then how could I hereafter meet the fearful charge, 'I gave you one opportunity to tell them of ME; you spent it in describing your own adventures!'" So I thought. Well, if Judson told the old story after he had been thirty years away, and could not find anything better, I will just go back to this old subject, which is always new and always fresh to us—the precious blood of Christ, by which we are saved.

First, then, the blood; secondly, its efficacy; thirdly, the one condition appended to it;—"When I see the blood;" and fourthly, the practical lesson.

I. First, then, THE BLOOD ITSELF. In the case of the Israelites it was the blood of the Paschal Lamb. In our case, beloved, it is the blood of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.

1. The blood of which I have solemnly to speak this morning, is, first of all, the blood of a divinely appointed victim. Jesus Christ did not come into this world unappointed. He was sent here by his Father. This indeed is one of the underlying ground-works of the Christian's hope. We can rely upon Jesus Christ's acceptance by his Father, because his Father ordained him to be our Saviour from before the foundation of the world. Sinner! when I preach to thee the blood of Christ this morning, I am preaching something that is well pleasing to God; for God himself did choose Christ to be the Redeemer; he himself set him apart from before the foundation of the world, and he himself, even Jehovah the Father, did lay upon him the iniquity of us all. The sacrifice of Christ is not brought to you without warrant; it is not a something which Christ did surreptitiously and in secret; it was written in the great decree from all eternity, that he was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. As he himself said, "Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will O God." It is God's will that the blood of Jesus should be shed. Jesus is God's chosen Saviour for men; and here, when addressing the ungodly, here, I say, is one potent argument with them. Sinner! You may trust in Christ, that he is able to save you from the wrath of God, for God himself has appointed him to save.

2. Christ Jesus, too, like the lamb, was not only a divinely appointed victim, but he was spotless. Had there been one sin in Christ, he had not been capable of being our Saviour; but he was without spot or blemish—without original sin, without any practical transgression. In him was no sin, though he was "tempted in all points like as we are." Here, again, is the reason why the blood is able to save, because it is the blood of an innocent victim, a victim the only reason for whose death lay in us, and not in himself. When the poor innocent lamb was put to death, by the

head of the household of Egypt, I can imagine that thoughts like these ran through his mind. "Ah" he would say, as he struck the knife into the lamb, "This poor creature dies, not for any guilt that it has ever had, but to show me that I am guilty, and that I deserved to die like this." Turn, then, your eye to the cross, and see Jesus bleeding there and dying for you. Remember,

"For sins not his own, he died to atone;"

Sin had no foothold in him, never troubled him. The prince of this world came and looked, but he said, "I have nothing in Christ; there is no room for me to plant my foot—no piece of corrupt ground, which I may call my own." O sinner, the blood of Jesus is able to save thee, because he was perfectly innocent himself, and "he died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

But some will say, "Whence has the blood of Christ such power to save?" My reply is, not only because God appointed that blood, and because it was the blood of an innocent and spotless being, but because Christ himself was God. If Christ were a mere man, my hearers, you could not be exhorted to trust him; were he ever so spotless and holy, there would be no efficacy in his blood to save; but Christ was "very God of very God;" the blood that Jesus shed was Godlike blood. It was the blood of man, for he was man like ourselves; but the divinity was so allied with the manhood, that the blood derived efficacy from it. Can you imagine what must be the value of the blood of God's own dear Son? No, you cannot put an estimate upon it that should so much as reach to a millionth part of its preciousness. I know you esteem that blood as beyond all price if you have been washed in it; but I know also that you do not esteem it enough. It was the wonder of angels that God should condescend to die; it will be the wonder of all wonders, the unceasing wonder of eternity, that God should become man to die. Oh! when we think that Christ was Creator of the world, and that on his all-sustaining shoulders did hang the universe, we cannot wonder that his death is mighty to redeem, and that his blood should cleanse from sin. Come hither saints and sinners; gather in and crowd around the cross, and see this man, overcome with weakness,

fainting, groaning, bleeding, and dying. This man is also "God over all, blessed for ever," Is there not power to save? Is there not efficacy in blood like that? Can you imagine any stretch of sin which shall out-measure the power of divinity—any height of iniquity that shall overtop the topless steeps of the divine? Can I conceive a depth of sin that shall be deeper than the infinite? or a breadth of iniquity that shall be broader than the Godhead? Because he is divine, he is "able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him." Divinity appointed, spotless, and divine, his blood is the blood whereby ye may escape the anger and the wrath of God.

4. Once more; the blood of which we speak today, is blood once shed for many for the remission of sin. The paschal lamb was killed every year; but now Christ hath appeared to take away sin by the offering up of himself and there is now no more mention of sin, for Christ once for all hath put away sin, by the offering of himself. The Jew had the lamb every morning and every evening, for there was a continual mention of sin; the blood of the lamb could not take it away. The lamb availed for to-day, but there was the sin of to-morrow, what was to be done with that? Why, a fresh victim must bleed. But oh, my hearer, our greatest joy is, that the blood of Jesus has been once shed, and he has said, "It is finished." There is no more need of the blood of bulls or of goats, or of any other sacrifice; that one sacrifice hath "perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Trembling sinner! come to the cross again; thy sins are heavy, and many; but the atonement for them is completed by the death of Christ. Look then to Jesus, and remember that Christ needs nothing to supplement his blood. The road between God and man is finished and open; the robe to cover thy nakedness is complete, without a rag of thine; the bath in which thou art to be washed is full, full to the brim, and needs nothing to be added thereunto. "It is finished!" Let that ring in thy ears. There is nothing now that can hinder thy being saved, if God hath made thee willing now to believe in Jesus Christ. He is a complete Saviour, full of grace for an empty sinner.

5. And yet I must add one more thought, and then leave this point. The blood of Jesus Christ is blood that hath been accepted. Christ died—he was buried; but neither heaven nor earth could tell whether God had

accepted the ransom. There was wanted God's seal upon the great Magna Charta of man's salvation, and that seal was put, my hearer, in that hour when God summoned the angel, and bade him descend from heaven and roll away the stone. Christ was put in durance vile in the prison house of the grave, as a hostage for his people. Until God had signed the warrant for acquittal of all his people, Christ must abide in the bonds of death. He did not attempt to break his prison; he did not come out illegally, by wrenching down the bars of his dungeon; he waited: he wrapt up the napkin, folding it by itself: he laid the grave-clothes in a separate place; he waited, waited patiently; and at last down from the skies, like the flash of a meteor, the angel descended, touched the stone and rolled it away; and when Christ came out, rising from the dead in the glory of his Father's power, then was the seal put upon the great charta of our redemption. The blood was accepted, and sin was forgiven. And now, soul, it is not possible for God to reject thee, if thou comest this day to him, pleading the blood of Christ. God cannot—and here we speak with reverence too—the everlasting God cannot reject a sinner who pleads the blood of Christ: for if he did so, it were to deny himself, and to contradict all his former acts. He has accepted blood, and he will accept it; he never can revoke that divine acceptance of the resurrection; and if thou goest to God, my hearer, pleading simply and only the blood of him that did hang upon the tree, God must un-God himself before he can reject thee, or reject that blood.

And yet I fear that I have not been able to make you think of the blood of Christ. I beseech you, then, just for a moment try to picture to yourself Christ on the cross. Let your imagination figure the motley crew assembled round about that little hill of Calvary. Lift now your eyes, and see the three crosses put upon that rising knoll. See in the centre the thorn-crowned brow of Christ. Do you see the hands that have always been full of blessing nailed fast to the accursed wood! See you his dear face, more marred than that of any other man? Do you see it now, as his head bows upon his bosom in the extreme agonies of death? He was a real man, remember. It was a real cross. Do not think of these things as figments, and fancies, and romances. There was such a being, and he died as I describe it. Let your imagination picture him, and then sit still a moment and think over this thought: "The blood of that man, whom now

I behold dying in agony, must be my redemption; and if I would be saved, I must put my only trust in what he suffered for me, when he himself did "bear our sins in his own body on the tree." If God the Holy Spirit should help you, you will then be in a right state to proceed to the second point.

II. THE EFFICACY OF THIS BLOOD. "When I see the blood I will pass over you."

1. The blood of Christ hath such a divine power to save, that nothing but it can ever save the soul. If some foolish Israelite had despised the command of God, and had said, "I will sprinkle something else upon the doorposts," or, "I will adorn the lintel with jewels of gold and silver," he must have perished; nothing could save his household but the sprinkled blood. And now let us all remember, that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ," for "there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved." My works, my prayers, my tears, cannot save me; the blood, the blood alone, has power to redeem. Sacraments, however well they may be attended to, cannot save me. Nothing but thy blood, O Jesus, can redeem me from the guilt of sin. Though I should give rivers of oil, and ten thousand of the fat of fed beasts; yea, though I should give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul, all would be useless. Nothing but the blood of Jesus has in it the slightest saving-power. Oh! you that are trusting in your infant baptism, your confirmation, and your Lord's Supper, you are trusting in a lie. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can save. I care not how right the ordinance, how true the form, how scriptural the practice, it is all a vanity to you if you rely in it. God forbid I should say a word against ordinances, or against holy things; but keep them in their places. If you make then the basis of your soul's salvation, they are lighter than a shadow, and when you need them most you shall find them fail you. There is not, I repeat it again, the slightest atom of saving-power anywhere but in the blood of Jesus. That blood has the only power to save, and aught else that you rely upon shall be a refuge of lies. This is the rock, and this is the work that is perfect; but all other things are day dreams; they must be swept away in the day when God shall come to try our work of what sort it is. THE BLOOD stands out in solitary majesty, the only rock of our salvation.

2. This blood is not simply the only thing that can save, but it must save alone. Put anything with the blood of Christ, and you are lost; trust to anything else with this and you perish. "It is true," says one, that the Sacrament cannot save me, but I will trust in that, and in Christ too." You are a lost man, then. So jealous is Christ of his honour, that anything you put with him, however good it is, becomes, from the fact of your putting it with him, an accursed thing. And what is it that thou wouldst put with Christ? Thy good works? What! wilt thou yoke a reptile with an angel—yoke thyself to the chariot of salvation with Christ? What are thy good works? Thy righteousnesses are "as filthy rags;" and shall filthy rags be joined to the spotless celestial righteousness of Christ? It must not, and it shall not be. Rely on Jesus only, and thou canst not perish; but rely on anything with him, and thou art as surely damned as if thou shouldst rely upon thy sins. Jesus only—Jesus only—Jesus only—this is the rock of our salvation.

And here let me stop, and combat a few forms and shapes which our self-righteousness always takes. "Oh," says one, "I could trust in Christ if I felt my sins more." Sir, that is a damning error. Is thy repentance, thy sense of sin, to be a part-Saviour? Sinner! the blood is to save thee, not thy tears, Christ's death, not thy repentance. Thou art bidden this day to trust in Christ; not in thy feelings, not in thy pangs on account of sin. Many a man has been brought into great soul distress, because he has looked more at his repentance than at the obedience of Christ—

"Could thy tears for ever flow,
Could thy zeal no respite know;
All for sin could not atone,
Christ must save and Christ alone."

"Nay," says another, "but I feel that I do not value the blood of Christ as I ought, and therefore I am afraid to believe." My friend, that is another insidious form of the same error. God does not say, "When I see your estimate of the blood of Christ, I will pass over you; no, but when I see the blood." It is not your estimate of that blood, it is the blood that saves you. As I said before, that magnificent, solitary blood, must be alone.

"Nay," says another, "but if I had more faith then I should have hope."

That, too, is a very deadly shape of the same evil. You are not to be saved by the efficacy of your faith, but by the efficacy of the blood of Christ. It is not your believing, it is Christ's dying. I bid you believe, but I bid you not to look to your believing as the ground of your salvation. No man will go to heaven if he trusts to his own faith; you may as well trust to your own good works as trust to your faith. Your faith must deal with Christ not with itself. The world hangs on nothing; but faith cannot hang upon itself, it must hang on Christ. Sometimes, when my faith is vigorous, I catch myself doing this. There is joy flowing into my heart, and after awhile I begin to find that my joy suddenly departs. I ask the causes, and I find that the joy came because I was thinking of Christ; but when I begin to think about my joy, then my joy fled. You must not think of your faith but of Christ. Faith comes from meditation upon Christ. Turn, then, your eye, not upon faith but upon Jesus. It is not your hold of Christ that saves you; it is his hold of you. It is not the efficacy of your believing in him; it is the efficacy of his blood applied to you through the Spirit.

I do not know how sufficiently to follow Satan in all his windings into the human heart, but this, I know, he is always strying to keep back this great truth—the blood, and the blood alone has power to save. "Oh," says another, "if I had such-and-such an experience then I could trust." Friend, it is not thine experience, it is the blood. God did not say, "When I see your experience," but "When I see the blood of Christ." "Nay," says one, "but if I had such-and-such graces, I could hope." Nay, but he did not say, "When I see your graces," but "When I see the blood." Get grace, get as much as you can of faith, and love, and hope, but oh, do not put them where Christ's blood ought to be. The only pillar of your hope must be the Cross, and aught else that you put to buttress up the cross of Christ is obnoxious to God, and ceases to have any virtue in it, because it is an anti-Christ. The blood of Christ, then alone, saves; but anything with it, and it does not save.

3. Yet again we may say of the blood of Christ, it is all-sufficient. There is no case which the blood of Christ cannot met; there is no sin which it cannot wash away. There is no multiplicity of sin which it cannot cleanse, no aggravation of guilt which it cannot remove. Ye may be double-dyed like scarlet, ye may have lain in the lye of your sins these seventy years,

but the blood of Christ can take out the stain. You may have blasphemed him almost as many times as you have breathed, you may have rejected him as often as you have heard his name; you may have broken his Sabbath, you may have denied his existence, you may have doubted his Godhead, you may have persecuted his servants, you may have trampled on his blood; but all this the blood can wash away. You may have committed whoredoms without number, nay, murder itself may have defiled your hands, but this fountain filled with blood can wash all the stains away. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. There is no sort of a man, there is no abortion of mankind, no demon in human shape that this blood cannot wash. Hell may have sought to make a paragon of iniquity, it may have striven to put sin, and sin, and sin together, till it has made a monster in the shape of man, a monster abhorred of mankind, but the blood of Christ can transform that monster. Magdalen's seven devils it can cast out, the madness of the demoniac it can ease, the deep-seated leprosy it can cure, the wound of the maimed, yea, the lost limb it can restore. There is no spiritual disease which the great Physician cannot heal. This is the great Catholicon, the medicine for all diseases. No case can exceed its virtue, be it never so black or vile; all-sufficient, all-sufficient blood.

4. But go further. The blood of Christ saves surely. Many people say, "Well, I hope I shall be saved through the blood of Christ;" and perhaps, says one here, who is believing in Christ, "Well, I hope it will save." My dear friend, that is a slur upon the honour of God. If any man gives you a promise, and you say, "Well, I hope he will fulfil it;" is it not implied that you have at least some small doubt as to whether he will or not. Now, I do not hope that the blood of Christ will wash away my sin. I know it is washed away by his blood; and that is true faith which does not hope about Christ's blood, but says, "I know it is so; that blood does cleanse. The moment it was applied to my conscience it did cleanse, and it does cleanse still." The Israelite, if he was true to his faith, did not go inside, and say, "I hope the destroying angel will pass by me;" but he said, "I know he will; I know God cannot smite me; I know he will not. There is the blood-mark there, I am secure beyond a doubt; there is not the shadow of a risk of my perishing. I am, I must be saved." And so I preach a sure gospel this morning: "Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall

not perish but have everlasting life." "I give unto my sheep eternal life," said he, "and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." O, sinner, I have not the shadow of a doubt as to whether Christ will save you if you trust in his blood. O no, I know he will. I am certain his blood can save; and I beg you, in Christ's name, believe the same; believe that that blood is sure to cleanse, not only that it may cleanse, but that it must cleanse, "whereby we must be saved," says the Scripture. If we have that blood upon us we must be saved, or else we are to suppose a God unfaithful and a God unkind; in fact, a God transformed from everything that is God-like into everything that is base.

5. And yet again, he that hath this blood sprinkled upon him is saved completely. Not the hair of the head of an Israelite was disturbed by the destroying angel. They were completely saved; so he that believeth in the blood is saved from all things. I like the old translation of the chapter in the Romans. There was a martyr once summoned before Bonner; and after he had expressed his faith in Christ, Bonner said "You are a heretic and will be damned." "Nay" said he, quoting the old version, "There is therefore now no damnation to them that believe in Christ Jesus." And that brings a sweet thought before us; there is no damnation to the man who has the blood of Christ upon him; he cannot be condemned of God anyhow. It were impossible. There is no such a thing; there can be no such thing. There is no damnation. He cannot be damned; for there is no damnation to him that is in Christ Jesus. Let the blood be applied to the lintel, and to the door-post, there is no destruction. There is a destroying angel for Egypt, but there is none for Israel. There is a hell for the wicked, but none for the righteous. And if there is none, they cannot be put there. If there is no damnation they cannot suffer it. Christ saves completely; every sin is washed, every blessing ensured, perfection is provided, and glory everlasting is the sure result.

I think then, I have dwelt sufficiently long upon the efficacy of his blood; but no tongue of seraph can ever speak its worth. I must go home to my chamber, and weep because I am powerless to tell this story, and yet I have laboured to tell it simply, so that all can understand; and I pray, therefore, that God the Spirit may lead some of you to put your trust simply, wholly, and entirely, on the blood of Jesus Christ.

III. This brings us to the third point, upon which I must be very brief, and the third point is—THE ONE CONDITION. What says one "Do you preach a conditional salvation?" Yes I do, there is the one condition "Where I see the blood I will pass over you." What a blessed condition! it does not say, when you see the blood, but when I see it. Thine eye of faith may be so dim, that thou canst not see the blood of Christ. Ay, but God's eye is not dim: He can see it, yea he must see it; for Christ in heaven is always presenting his blood before his Father's face. The Israelite could not see the blood; he was inside the house; he could not see what was on the lintel and the doorpost; but God could see it; and this is the only condition of the sinner's salvation—God's seeing the blood; not your seeing it. O how safe, then, is every one that trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not his faith that is the condition, not his assurance; it is the simple fact, that Calvary is set perpetually before the eyes of God in a risen and ascended Saviour. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Fall on your knees then in prayer, ye doubting souls, and let this be your plea:—"Lord, have mercy upon me for the blood's sake. I cannot see it as I could desire, but Lord thou seest it, and thou hast said, 'When I see it, I will pass over you.' Lord, thou seest it this day, pass over my sin, and forgive me for its dear sake alone."

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT IS THE LESSON. The lesson of the text is to the Christian this. Christian, take care that thou dost always remember, that nothing but the blood of Christ can save thee. I preach to myself to-day what I preach to you. I often find myself like this:—I have been praying that the Holy Spirit might rest in my heart and cleanse out an evil passion, and presently I find myself full of doubts and fears, and when I ask the reason, I find it is this:—I have been looking to the Spirit's work until I put the Spirit's work where Christ's work ought to be. Now, it is a sin to put your own works where Christ's should be; but it is just as much a sin to put the Holy Spirit's work there. You must never make the Spirit of God an anti-Christ, and you virtually do that when you put the Spirit's work as the groundwork of your faith. Do you not often hear Christian men say, "I cannot believe in Christ to-day as I could yesterday, for yesterday I felt such sweet and blessed enjoyments." Now, what is that but putting your frames and feelings where Christ ought to be. Remember, Christ's blood is no more able to save you in a good frame

than in a bad frame. Christ's blood must be your trust, as much when you are full of joy as when you are full of doubt. And here it is that your happiness will be in danger, by beginning to put your good frames and good feelings in the room of the blood of Christ. O, brethren, if we could always live with a single eye fixed on the Cross, we should always be happy; but when we get a little peace, and a little joy, we begin to prize the joy and peace so much, that we forget the source whence they come. As Mr. Brooks says, "A husband that loves his wife will, perhaps, often give her jewels and rings; but suppose she should sit down and begin to think of her jewels and rings so much that she should forget her husband, it would be a kind husband's business to take them away from her so that she might fix her affections entirely on him." And it is so with us. Jesus gives us jewels of faith and love, and we get trusting to them, and he takes them away in order that we may come again as guilty, helpless sinners, and put our trust in Christ. To quote a verse I often repeat—I believe the spirit of a Christian should be, from his first hour to his last, the spirit of these two lines:—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."
That is the lesson to the saint.

But another minute; there is a lesson here to the sinner. Poor, trembling, guilty self-condemned sinner, I have a word from the Lord for thee. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us," that is you and me, "cleanseth us from all sin." That "us" includes you, if now you are feeling your need of a Saviour. Now that blood is able to save you, and you are bidden simply to trust that blood, and you shall be saved. But I hear you say, "Sir," you said, "If I feel my need. Now I feel that I do not feel, I only wish I did feel my need enough." Well do not bring your feelings then, but trust only in the blood. If you can rely simply on the blood of Christ, whatever your feelings may be, or may not be, that blood is able to save. But you are saying, "How am I to be saved? What must I do?" Well there is nothing that you can do. You must leave off doing altogether, in order to be saved. There must be a denial of all your doings. You must get Christ first, and then you may do as much as you like. But you must not trust in your doings. Your business is now to lift up your heart in prayer like this:

—"Lord, thou hast shown me something of myself, show me something of my Saviour." See the Saviour hanging on the cross, turn your eye to him, and say, "Lord, I trust thee I have nothing else to trust to, but I rely on thee; sink or swim, my Saviour, I trust thee." And as surely sinner, as thou canst put thy trust in Christ, thou art as safe as an apostle or prophet. Not death nor hell can slay that man whose firm reliance is at the foot of the cross. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." He that believeth shall be saved, be his sins never so many; he that believeth not shall be damned, be his sins never so few, and be his virtues never so many. Trust in Jesus now! Sinner, trust in Jesus only.

"Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they."

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The Voice of the Blood of Christ

"The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."—Hebrews 12:24.

If all substances blood is the most mysterious, and in some senses the most sacred. Scripture teacheth us,—and after all there is very much philosophy in Scripture,—that "the blood is the life thereof,"—that the life lieth in the blood. Blood, therefore, is the mysterious link between matter and spirit. How it is that the soul should in any degree have an alliance with matter through blood, we cannot understand; but certain it is that

this is the mysterious link which unites these apparently dissimilar things together, so that the soul can inhabit the body, and the life can rest in the blood. God has attached awful sacredness to the shedding of blood. Under the Jewish dispensation, even the blood of animals was considered as sacred. Blood might never be eaten by the Jews; it was too sacred a thing to become the food of man. The Jew was scarcely allowed to kill his own food: certainly he must not kill it except he poured out the blood as a sacred offering to Almighty God. Blood was accepted by God as the symbol of the atonement. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, because, I take it, blood hath such an affinity with life, that inasmuch as God would accept nought but blood, be signified that there must be a life offered to him, and that his great and glorious Son must surrender his life as a sacrifice for his sheep.

Now, we have in our text "blood" mentioned—two-fold blood. We have the blood of murdered Abel, and the blood of murdered Jesus. We have also two things in the text:—a comparison between the blood of sprinkling, and the blood of Abel; and then a certain condition mentioned. Rather, if we read the whole verse in order to get its meaning, we find that the righteous are spoken of as coming to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel; so that the condition which will constitute the second part of our discourse, is coming to that blood of sprinkling for our salvation and glory.

I. Without further preface I shall at once introduce to you the **CONTRAST AND COMPARISON IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.** "The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." I confess I was very much astonished when looking at Dr. Gill and Albert Barnes, and several of the more eminent commentators, while studying this passage, to find that they attach a meaning to this verse which had never occurred to me before. They say that the meaning of the verse is not that the blood of Christ is superior to the blood of murdered Abel, although that is certainly a truth, but that the sacrifice of the blood of Christ is better, and speaketh better things than the sacrifice which Abel offered. Now, although I do not think this is the meaning of the text and I have my reasons for believing that the blood here contrasted with that of the Saviour, is the blood of the murdered man Abel, yet on looking to the

original there is so much to be said on both sides of the question, that I think it fair in explaining the passage to give you both the meanings. They are not conflicting interpretations; there is indeed a shade of difference but still they amount to the same idea.

First, then, we may understand here a comparison between the offerings Abel presented, and the offerings Jesus Christ presented, when he gave his blood to be a ransom for the flock.

Let me describe Abel's offering. I have no doubt Adam had from the very first of his expulsion from the garden of Eden offered a sacrifice to God; and we have some dim hint that this sacrifice was of a beast, for we find that the Lord God made Adam and Eve skins of beasts to be their clothing, and it is probable that those skins were procured by the slaughter of victims offered in sacrifice. However, that is but a dim hint: the first absolute record that he have of an oblatory sacrifice is the record of the sacrifice offered by Abel. Now, it appears that very early there was a distinction among men. Cain was the representative of the seed of the serpent, and Abel was the representative of the seed of the woman. Abel was God's elect, and Cain was one of those who rejected the Most High. However, both Cain and Abel united together in the outward service of God. They both of them brought on a certain high day a sacrifice. Cain took a different view of the matter of sacrifice from that which presented itself to the mind of Abel. Cain was proud and haughty: he said "I am ready to confess that the mercies which we receive from the soil are the gift of God, but I am not ready to acknowledge that I am a guilty sinner, deserving God's wrath, therefore," said he, "I will bring nothing but the fruit of the ground." "Ah, but" said Abel, "I feel that while I ought to be grateful for temporal mercies, at the same time I have sins to confess, I have iniquities to be pardoned, and I know that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin; therefore," said he, "O Cain, I will not be content to bring an offering of the ground, of the ears of corn, or of first ripe fruits, but I will bring of the firstlings of my flock, and I will shed blood upon the altar, because my faith is, that there is to come a great victim who is actually to make atonement for the sins of men, and by the slaughter of this lamb, I express my solemn faith in him." Not so Cain; he cared nothing for Christ; he was not willing to confess his sin; he had no

objection to present a thank-offering, but a sin-offering he would not bring. He did not mind bringing to God that which he thought might be acceptable as a return for favors received, but he would not bring to God an acknowledgment of his guilt, or a confession of his inability to make atonement for it, except by the blood of a substitute. Cain, moreover, when he came to the altar, came entirely without faith. He piled the unhewn stones, as Abel did, he laid his sheaves of corn upon the altar, and there he waited, but it was to him a matter of comparative indifference whether God accepted him or not. He believed there was a God, doubtless, but he had no faith in the promises of that God. God had said that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head—that was the gospel as revealed to our first parents; but Cain had no belief in that gospel—whether it were true or not, he cared not—it was sufficient for him that he acquired enough for his own sustenance from the soil; he had no faith. But holy Abel stood by the side of the altar, and while Cain the infidel perhaps laughed and jeered at his sacrifice, he boldly presented there the bleeding lamb as a testimony to all men, both of that time and all future times, that he believed in the seed of the woman—that he looked for him to come who should destroy the serpent, and restore the ruins of the fall. Do you see holy Abel, standing there, ministering as a priest at God's altar? Do you see the flush of joy which comes over his face, when he sees the heavens opened, and the living fire of God descend upon the victims? Do you note with what a grateful expression of confident faith he lifts to heaven his eye which had been before filled with tears, and cries, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast accepted my sacrifice, inasmuch as I presented it through faith in the blood of thy Son, my Saviour, who is to come."

Abel's sacrifice, being the first on record, and being offered in the teeth of opposition, has very much in it which puts it ahead of many other of the sacrifices of the Jews. Abel is to be greatly honored for his confidence and faith in the coming Messiah. But compare for a moment the sacrifice of Christ with the sacrifice of Abel, and the sacrifice of Abel shrinks into insignificance. What did Abel bring? He brought a sacrifice which showed the necessity of blood-shedding but Christ brought the blood-shedding itself. Abel taught the world by his sacrifice that he looked for a victim, but Christ brought the actual victim. Abel brought but

the type and the figure, the Lamb which was but a picture of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; but Christ was that Lamb. He was the substance of the shadow, the reality of the type. Abel's sacrifice had no merit in it apart from the faith in the Messiah with which he presented it; but Christ's sacrifice had merit of itself; it was in itself meritorious. What was the blood of Abel's lamb? It was nothing but the blood of a common lamb that might have been shed anywhere, except that he had faith in Christ the blood of the lamb was but as water, a contemptible thing; but the blood of Christ was a sacrifice indeed, richer far than all the blood of beasts that ever were offered upon the altar of Abel, or the altar of all the Jewish high priests. We may say of all the sacrifices that were ever offered, however costly they might be, and however acceptable to God, though they were rivers of oil and tens of thousands of fat beasts, yet they were less than nothing, and contemptible, in comparison with the one sacrifice which our high priest hath offered once for all, whereby he hath eternally perfected them that are sanctified.

We have thus found it very easy to set forth the difference between the blood of Christ's sprinkling and the blood which Abel sprinkled. But now I take it that there is a deeper meaning than this, despite what some commentators have said. I believe that the allusion here is to the blood of murdered Abel. Cain smote Abel, and doubtless his hands and the altar were stained with the blood of him who had acted as a priest. "Now," says our apostle, "that blood of Abel spoke." We have evidence that it did, for God said to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," and the apostle's comment upon that in another place is—"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh," speaketh through his blood, his blood crying unto God from the ground. Now, Christ's blood speaks too. What is the difference between the two voices?—for we are told in the text that it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Abel's blood spoke in a threefold manner. It spoke in heaven; it spoke to the sons of men; it spoke to the conscience of Cain. The blood of Christ speaks in a like threefold manner, and it speaks better things.

First, the blood of Abel spoke in heaven. Abel was a holy man, and all that Cain could bring against him was, "His own works were evil, and his brother's were righteous." You see the brothers going to the sacrifice together. You mark the black scowl upon the brow of Cain, when Abel's sacrifice is accepted while his remains untouched by the sacred fire. You note how they begin to talk together—how quietly Abel argues the question, and how ferociously Cain denounces him. You note again how God speaks to Cain, and warns him of the evil which he knew was in his heart; and you see Cain, as he goes from the presence chamber of the Most High, warned and forewarned; but yet with the dreadful thought in his heart that he will imbrue his hands in his brother's blood. He meets his brother; he talks friendly with him: he gives him, as it were, the kiss of Judas; he entices him into the field where he is alone; he takes him unawares; he smites him, and smites him yet again, till there lies the murdered bleeding corpse of his brother. O earth! earth! earth! cover not his blood. This is the first murder thou hast ever seen; the first blood of man that ever stained thy soil. Hark! there is a cry heard in heaven, the angels are astonished; they rise up from their golden seats, and they enquire, "What is that cry?" God looketh upon them, and he saith, "It is the cry of blood, a man hath been slain by his fellow; a brother by him who came from the bowels of the self-same mother has been murdered in cold blood, through malice. One of my saints has been murdered, and here he comes, And Abel entered into heaven blood-red, the first of God's elect who had entered Paradise, and the first of God's children who had worn the blood red crown of martyrdom. And then the cry was heard, loud and clear and strong; and thus it spoke—"Revenge! revenge! revenge!" And God himself, upstarting from his throne, summoned the culprit to his presence, questioned him, condemned him out of his own mouth, and made him henceforth a fugitive and a vagabond, to wander over the surface of the earth, which was to be sterile henceforth to his plough.

And now, beloved, just contrast with this the blood of Christ. That is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God; he hangs upon a tree; he is murdered—murdered by his own brethren. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not, but his own led him out to death." He bleeds; he dies; and then is heard a cry in heaven. The astonished angels again

start from their seats, and they say, "What is this? What is this cry that we hear?" And the Mighty Maker answers yet again, "It is the cry of blood; it is the cry of the blood of my only-begotten and well-beloved Son!" And God, uprising from his throne, looks down from heaven and listens to the cry. And what is the cry? It is not revenge; but the voice crieth, "Mercy! mercy! mercy!" Did you not hear it? It said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Herein, the blood of Christ "speaketh better things than that of Abel," for Abel's blood said, "Revenge!" and made the sword of God start from its scabbard; but Christ's blood cried "Mercy!" and sent the sword back again, and bade it sleep for ever.

"Blood hath a voice to pierce the skies,
'Revenge!' the blood of Abel cries;
But the rich blood of Jesus slain,
Speaks peace as loud from every vein."

You will note too that Abel's blood cried for revenge upon one man only—upon Cain; it required the death of but one man to satisfy for it, namely. the death of the murderer. "Blood for blood!" The murderer must die the death. But what saith Christ's blood in heaven? Does it speak for only one? Ah! no, beloved; "the free gift hath come upon many." Christ's blood cries mercy! mercy! mercy! not on one, but upon a multitude whom no man can number—ten thousand times ten thousand.

Again: Abel's blood cried to heaven for revenge, for one transgression of Cain that for ought that Cain had done, worthless and vile before, the blood of Abel did not demand any revenge: it was for the one sin that blood clamoured at the throne of God, and not for many sins. Not so the voice of the blood of Christ. It is "for many offenses unto justification." Oh, could ye hear that cry, that all-prevailing cry, as now it comes up from Calvary's summit—"Father, forgive them!" not one, but many. "Father, forgive them." And not only forgive them this offense, but forgive them all their sins, and blot out all their iniquities. Ah! beloved, we might have thought that the blood of Christ would have demanded vengeance at the hands of God. Surely, if Abel be revenged seven fold, then must Christ be revenged seventy times seven. If the earth would not swallow up the

blood of Abel, till it had had its fill, surely we might have thought that the earth never would have covered the corpse of Christ, until God had struck the world with fire and sword, and banished all men to destruction. But, O precious blood! thou sayest not one word of vengeance! All that this blood cries is peace! pardon! forgiveness! mercy! acceptance! Truly it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Again: Abel's blood had a second voice. It spoke to the whole world. "He being dead yet speaketh"—not only in heaven, but on earth. God's prophets are a speaking people. They speak by their acts and by their words as long as they live, and when they are buried they speak by their example which they have left behind. Abel speaks by his blood to us. And what does it say? When Abel offered up his victim upon the altar he said to us, "I believe in a sacrifice that is to be offered for the sins of men," but when Abel's own blood was sprinkled on the altar he seemed to say, "Here is the ratification of my faith; I seal my testimony with my own blood; you have now the evidence of my sincerity, for I was prepared to die for the defense of this truth which I now witness unto you." It was a great thing for Abel thus to ratify his testimony with his blood. We should not have believed the martyrs half so easily if they had not been ready to die for their profession. The Gospel in ancient times would never have spread at such a marvellous rate, if it had not been that all the preachers of the gospel were ready at any time to attest their message with their own blood. But Christ's blood "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Abel's blood ratified his testimony, and Christ's blood has ratified his testimony too; but Christ's testimony is better than that of Abel. For what is the testimony of Christ? The covenant of grace—that everlasting covenant. He came into this world to tell us that God had from the beginning chosen his people—that he had ordained them to eternal life, and that he had made a covenant with his son Jesus Christ that if he would pay the price they should go free—if he would suffer in their stead they should be delivered. And Christ cried e'er "he bowed his head and gave up the ghost"—"It is finished." The covenant purpose is finished. That purpose was "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Such was the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, as his own blood gushed from his heart, to be the diestamp, and seal, that the

covenant was ratified. When I see Abel die I know that his testimony was true; but when I see Christ die I know that the covenant is true.

"This covenant, O believer, stands
Thy rising fears to quell;
'Tis signed and sealed and ratified,
In all things ordered well."

When he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, he did as much as say, "All things are made sure unto the seed by my giving myself a victim." Come, saint, and see the covenant all blood-bestained, and know that it is sure. He is "the faithful and true witness, the prince of the kings of the earth." First of martyrs, my Lord Jesus, thou hadst a better testimony to witness than they all, for thou hast witnessed to the everlasting covenant; thou hast witnessed that thou art the shepherd and bishop of souls; thou hast witnessed to the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of thyself Again: I say, come, ye people of God, and read over the golden roll. It begins in election—it ends in everlasting life, and all this the blood of Christ crieth in your ears. All this is true; for Christ's blood proves it to be true, and to be sure to all the seed. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Now we come to the third voice, for the blood of Abel had a three-fold sound. It spoke in the conscience of Cain. Hardened though he was, and like a very devil in his sin, yet he was not so deaf in his conscience that he could not hear the voice of blood. The first thing that Abel's blood said to Cain was this: Ah! guilty wretch, to spill thy brother's blood! As he saw it trickling from the wound and flowing down in streams, he looked at it, and as the sun shone on it, and the red glare came into his eye, it seemed to say, "Ah! cursed wretch, for the son of thine own mother thou hast slain. Thy wrath was vile enough, when thy countenance fell, but to rise up against thy brother and take away his life, Oh! how vile!" It seemed to say to him, "What had he done that thou shouldst take his life? Wherein had he offended thee? Was not his conduct blameless, and his conversation pure? If thou hadst smitten a villain or a thief, men might not have blamed thee; but this blood is pure, clean, perfect blood; how couldest thou kill such a man as this?" And Cain put his hand across his brow, and felt there was a sense of guilt there that he had never felt

before. And then the blood said to him again, "Why, whither wilt thou go? Thou shalt be a vagabond as long as thou livest." A cold chill ran through him, and he said, "Whosoever findeth me will kill me." And though God promised him he should live, no doubt he was always afraid. If he saw a company of men together, he would hide himself in a thicket, or if in his solitary wanderings he saw a man at a distance, he started back, and sought to bury his head, so that none should observe him. In the stillness of the night he started up in his dreams. It was but his wife that slept by his side; but he thought he felt some one's hands gripping his throat, and about to take away his life. Then he would sit up in his bed and took around at the grim shadows, thinking some fiend was haunting him and seeking after him. Then, as he rose to go about his business, he trembled. He trembled to be alone, he trembled to be in company. When he was alone he seemed not to be alone; the ghost of his brother seemed staring him in his face; and when he was in company he dreaded the voice of men, for he seemed to think every one cursed him, and he thought every one knew the crime he had committed, and no doubt they did, and every man shunned him. No man would take his hand, for it was red with blood, and his very child upon his knee was afraid to look up into his father's face, for there was the mark which God had set upon him. His very wife could scarcely speak to him,—for she was afraid that from the lips of him who had been cursed of God some curse might fall on her. The very earth cursed him. He no sooner put his foot upon the ground, than where it had been a garden before it suddenly turned into a desert, and the fair rich soil became hardened into an arid rock. Guilt, like a grim chamberlain, with fingers bloody red, did draw the curtain of his bed each night. His crime refused him sleep. It spoke in his heart, and the walls of his memory reverberated the dying cry of his murdered brother. And no doubt that blood spoke one more thing to Cain. It said, "Cain, although thou mayest now be spared there is no hope for thee; thou art a man accursed on earth, and accursed for ever, God hath condemned thee here, and he will damn thee hereafter." And so wherever Cain went, he never found hope. Though he searched for it in the mountain top, yet he found it not there. Hope that was left to all men, was denied to him: a hopeless, houseless, helpless vagabond, he wandered up and down the surface of the earth. Oh! Abel's brood had a terrible voice indeed.

But now see the sweet change as ye listen to the blood of Christ. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Friend! hast thou ever heard the blood of Christ in thy conscience? I have, and I thank God I ever heard that sweet soft voice.

Once a sinner near despair;
Sought the mercy seat by prayer."

He prayed: he thought he was praying in vain. The tears gushed from his eyes; his heart was heavy within him; he sought, but he found no mercy. Again, again, and yet again, he besieged the throne of the heavenly grace and knocked at mercy's door Oh! who can tell the mill-stone that lay upon his beating heart, and the iron that did eat into his soul. He was a prisoner in sore bondage; deep, as he thought, in the bondage of despair was he chained, to perish for ever. That prisoner one day heard a voice, which said to him, "Away, away to Calvary!" Yet he trembled at the voice, for he said, "Why should I go thither, for there my blackest sin was committed; there I murdered the Saviour by my transgressions? Why should I go to see the murdered corpse of him who became my brother born for adversity?" But mercy beckoned, and she said, "Come, come away, sinner!" And the sinner followed. The chains were on his legs and on his hands, and he could scarcely creep along. Still the black vulture Destruction seemed hovering in the air. But he crept as best he could, till he came to the foot of the hill of Calvary. On the summit he saw a cross; blood was distilling from the hands, and from the feet, and from the side, and mercy touched his ears and said, "Listen!" and he heard that blood speak; and as it spoke the first thing it said was, "Love!" And the second thing it said was, "Mercy!" The third thing it said was, "Pardon." The next thing it said was, "Acceptance." The next thing it said was, "Adoption." The next thing it said was, "Security." And the last thing it whispered was, "Heaven." And as the sinner heard that voice, he said within himself, "And does that blood speak to me?" And the Spirit said, "To thee—to thee it speaks." And he listened, and oh what music did it seem to his poor troubled heart, for in a moment all his doubts were gone. He had no sense of guilt. He knew that he was vile, but he saw that his vileness was all washed away; he knew that he was guilty, but he saw his guilt all atoned for, through the precious blood that was flowing there. He had

been full of dread before; he dreaded life, he dreaded death; but now he had no dread at all; a joyous confidence took possession of his heart. He looked to Christ, and he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" he clasped the Saviour in his arms, and he began to sing:—"Oh! confident am I; for this blest blood was shed for me." And then Despair fled and Destruction was driven clean away. and instead thereof came the bright white-winged angel of Assurance, and she dwelt in his bosom, saying evermore to him, "Thou art accepted in the Beloved: thou art chosen of God and precious: thou art his child now, and thou shalt be his favourite throughout eternity." "The blood of Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel."

And now I must have you notice that the blood of Christ bears a comparison with the blood of Abel in one or two respects, but it excelleth in them all.

The blood of Abel cried "Justice!" It was but right that the blood should be revenged. Abel had no private pique against Cain; doubtless could Abel have done so, he would have forgiven his brother; but the blood spoke justly, and only asked its due when it shouted "Vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!" And Christ's blood speaketh justly, when it saith, "Mercy!" Christ has as much right to demand mercy upon sinners, as Abel's blood had to cry vengeance against Cain. When Christ saves a sinner, he does not save him on the sly, or against law or justice, but he saves him justly. Christ has a right to save whom he will save, to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, for he can do it justly, he can be just, and yet be the justifier of the ungodly.

Again, Abel's blood cried effectively. It did not cry in vain. It said, "Revenge!" and revenge it had. And Christ's blood, blessed be his name, never cries in vain. It saith, "Pardon;" and pardon every believer shall have it saith, "Acceptance," and every penitent is accepted in the Beloved. If that blood cry for me, I know it cannot cry in vain. That all-prevailing blood of Christ shall never miss its due; it must, it shall be heard. Shall Abel's blood startle heaven, and shall not the blood of Christ reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth?

And again, Abel's blood cries continually, there is the mercy-seat,

and there is the cross, and the blood is dropping on the mercy-seat. I have sinned a sin. Christ says, "Father, forgive him." There is one drop. I sin again: Christ intercedes again. There is another drop. In fact, it is the drop that intercedes, Christ need not speak with his mouth; the drops of blood as they fall upon the mercy-seat, each seemeth to say, "Forgive him! forgive him! forgive him!"

Dear friend, when thou hearest the voice of conscience, stop and try to hear the voice of the blood too. Oh! what a precious thing it is to hear the voice of the blood of Christ. You who do not know what that means, do not know the very essence and joy of life; but you who understand that, can say, "The dropping of the blood is like the music of heaven upon earth." Poor sinner! I would ask thee to come and listen to that voice that distils upon thy ears and thy heart to-day. Thou art full of sin; the Saviour bids thee lift thine eyes to him. See, there, his blood is flowing from his head, his hands, his feet, and every drop that falls, still cries, "Father, O forgive them! Father, O forgive them." And each drop seems to cry also as it falls, "It is finished: I have made an end of sin, I have brought in everlasting righteousness." Oh! sweet, sweet language of the dropping of the blood of Christ" It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

II. Having thus, I trust, sufficiently enlarged upon this subject I shall now close by addressing you with a few earnest words concerning the second point.—The **CONDITION INTO WHICH EVERY CHRISTIAN IS BROUGHT**. He is said to be "come to the blood of sprinkling." I shall make this a very brief matter, but a very solemn and pointed one. My hearers, have you come to the blood of Christ? I do not ask you whether you have come to a knowledge of doctrine, or of an observance of ceremonies, or of a certain form of experience; but I ask you if you have come to the blood of Christ. If you have, I know how you come. You must come to the blood of Christ with no merits of your own. Guilty, lost, and helpless, you must come to that blood, and to that blood alone, for your hopes; you come to the cross of Christ and to that blood too, I know, with a trembling and an aching heart. Some of you remember how you first came, cast down and full of despair; but that blood recovered you. And this one thing I know: if you have come to that blood once, you will come to it every day. Your life will be just this—"Looking unto Jesus." And your

whole conduct will be epitomized in this—"To whom coming as unto a living stone." Not to whom I have come, but to whom I am always coming. If thou hast ever come to the blood of Christ thou wilt feel thy need of coming to it every day. He that does not desire to wash in that fountain every day, has never washed in it at all. I feel it every day to be my joy and my privilege that there is still a fountain opened. I trust I came to Christ years ago but ah! I could not trust to that, unless I could come again to-day. Past experiences are doubtful things to a Christian; it is present coming to Christ that must give us joy and comfort. Did you not, some of you, sing twenty years ago that hymn,

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

Why, beloved you can sing it as well to-day as you did then. I was reading the other day some book, in which the author states, that we are not to come to Christ as sinners as long as we live; he says we are to grow into saints. Ah! he did not know much, I am sure; for saints are sinners still, and they have always to come to Christ as sinners. If ever I go to the throne of God as a saint, I get repulsed; but when I go just as a poor humble seeking sinner, relying upon nothing but thy blood, O Jesus, I never can get a repulse, I am sure. To whom coming as unto "blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Let this be our experience every day.

But there are some here who confess that they never did come. I cannot exhort you, then, to come every day, but I exhort you to come now for the first time. But you say, "May I come?" Yes, if thou art wishing to come thou mayest come; if thou feelest that thou hast need to come thou mayest come.

"All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him;"

And even

This he gives you,
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

But you say, "I must bring some merits." Hark to the blood that speaks! It says, "Sinner, I am full of merit: why bring thy merits here?" "Ah! but," thou sayest "I have too much sin." Hark to the blood: as it falls, it cries, "Of many offenses unto justification of life." "Ah! but," thou sayest, "I know I am too guilty." Hark to the blood! "Though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." "Nay," says one, "but I have such a poor desire, I have such a little faith." Hark to the blood! "The bruised reed I will not break, and smoking flax I will not quench." "Nay, but," thou sayest, "I know he will cast me out, if I do come." Hark to the blood! "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Nay, but," sayest thou, "I know I have so many sins that I cannot be forgiven." Now, hear the blood once more, and I have done. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." That is the blood's testimony, and its testimony to thee. "There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood;" and behold the blood's witness is—"The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Come, poor sinner, cast thyself simply on that truth. Away with your good works and all your trustings! Lie simply flat on that sweet word of Christ. Trust his blood; and if thou canst put thy trust alone in Jesus, in his sprinkled blood, it shall speak in thy conscience better things than that of Abel.

I am afraid there are many that do not know what we mean by believing. Good Dr. Chalmers once visiting a poor old woman, told her to believe in Christ, and she said, "But that is just the thing I do not know what you mean by." So Dr. Chalmers said, "Trust Christ." Now, that is just the meaning of believing. Trust him with your soul; trust him with your sins; trust him with the future; trust him with the past; trust him with everything. Say,

"A guilty, weak, and worthless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

May the Lord now give you his blessing; for Jesus Christ's sake.
Amen.

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The Blood of Sprinkling

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."—Hebrews 12:24, 25.

We are joyfully reminded by the apostle that we are not come to Mount Sinai and its overwhelming manifestations. After Israel had kept the feast of the Passover, God was pleased to give his people a sort of Pentecost, and more fully to manifest himself and his law to them at Sinai. They were in the wilderness, with the solemn peaks of a desolate mountain as their center; and from the top thereof, in the midst of fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and with the sound of a trumpet, God spake with them. "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." We are not come to the dread and terror of the old covenant, of which our apostle saith in another place, "The covenant from the Mount Sinai gendereth unto bondage" (Galatians 4:24.) Upon the believer's spirit there rests not the slavish fear, the abject terror, the fainting alarm, which swayed the tribes of Israel; for the manifestation of God which he beholds, though not less majestic, is far more full of hope and joy. Over us there rests not the impenetrable cloud of apprehension; we are not buried in a present darkness of despair; we are not tossed about with a tempest

of horror; and, therefore, we do not exceedingly fear and quake. How thankful we should be for this! Israel was privileged even in receiving a fiery law from the right hand of Jehovah; but we are far more favored, since we receive "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

Our apostle next tells us what we are come to. I suppose he speaks of all the saints after the death and resurrection of our Lord and the descent of the Holy Ghost. He refers to the whole church, in the midst of which the Holy Spirit now dwells. We are come to a more joyous sight than Sinai, and the mountain burning with fire. The Hebrew worshipper, apart from his sacrifices, lived continually beneath the shadow of the darkness of a broken law; he was startled often by the tremendous note of the trumpet, which threatened judgment for that broken law; and thus he lived ever in a condition of bondage. To what else could the law bring him? To convince of sin and to condemn the sinner is its utmost power. The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ lives in quite another atmosphere. He has not come to a barren crag, but to an inhabited city, Jerusalem above, the metropolis of God. He has quitted the wilderness for the land which floweth with milk and honey, and the material mount which might be touched for the spiritual and heavenly Jerusalem. He has entered into fellowship with an innumerable company of angels, who are to him, not cherubim with flaming swords to keep men back from the tree of life, but ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. He is come to the joyous assembly of all pure intelligences who have met, not in trembling, but in joyous liberty, to keep the feast with their great Lord and King. He thinks of all who love God throughout all worlds, and he feels that he is one of them; for he has come to "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." Moreover, he has come "to God the Judge of all," the umpire and rewarder of all the chosen citizens who are enrolled by his command, the ruler and judge of all their enemies. God is not to them a dreadful person who speaks from a distance; but he is their Father and their Friend, in whom they delight themselves, in whose presence there is fullness of joy for them. Brethren, our fellowship is with the Father, our God. To him we have come through our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, in the power of the Spirit of God we realize the oneness of the church both in heaven and earth, and the spirits of just men made perfect are in union with us. No gulf divides the

militant from the triumphant; we are one army of the living God. We sometimes speak of the holy dead; but there are none such: they live unto God; they are perfected as to their spirits even now, and they are waiting for the moment when their bodies also shall be raised from the tomb to be again inhabited by their immortal souls. We no longer shudder at the sepulcher, but sing of resurrection. Our condition of heart, from day to day, is that of men who are in fellowship with God, fellowship with angels, fellowship with perfect spirits.

We have also come to Jesus, our Savior, who is all and in all. In him we live; we are joined unto him in one spirit; he is the Bridegroom of our souls, the delight of our hearts. We are come to him as the Mediator of the new covenant. What a blessed thing it is to know that covenant of which he is the Mediator! Some in these days despise the covenant; but saints delight in it. To them the everlasting covenant, "ordered in all things, and sure," is all their salvation and all their desire. We are covenanted ones through our Lord Jesus. God has pledged himself to bless us. By two immutable things wherein it is impossible for him to lie, he has given us strong consolation, and good hope through grace, even to all of us who have fled for refuge to the Lord Jesus. We are happy to live under the covenant of grace, the covenant of promise, the covenant symbolized by Jerusalem above, which is free, and the mother of us all.

Then comes the last thing of all, mentioned last, as I shall have to show you, for a purpose. We have come "to the blood of sprinkling." On that first day at Sinai no blood of sprinkling was presented, but afterwards it was used by divine order to ratify the national covenant which the tribes made with Jehovah at the foot of the hill. Of that covenant the Lord says, "which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them." He never brake his covenant, but they brake it; for they failed to keep that condition of obedience without which a covenant founded upon works falls to the ground. We have come to the blood of sprinkling which has fallen upon a covenant which never shall be broken; for the Lord hath made it to endure though rocks and hills remove. This is called by the Holy Ghost "a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." We are come to the covenant of grace, to Jesus the Mediator of it, and to his blood, which is the seal of it. Of this last we are going to

speak at this time—"The blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

I shall need this morning to occupy all the time with what I regard as only the first head of my discourse. What is it? "The blood of sprinkling." It will be our duty afterwards to consider where we are—"we are come unto this blood;" and, thirdly, to remember what then? "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."

I. FIRST, WHAT IS IT? What is this "blood of sprinkling?" In a few words, "the blood of sprinkling" represents the pains, the sufferings, the humiliation, and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he endured on the behalf of guilty man. When we speak of the blood, we wish not to be understood as referring solely or mainly to the literal material blood which flowed from the wounds of Jesus. We believe in the literal fact of his shedding his blood; but when we speak of his cross and blood we mean those sufferings and that death of our Lord Jesus Christ by which he magnified the law of God; we mean what Isaiah intended when he said, "He shall make his soul an offering for sin;" we mean all the griefs which Jesus vicariously endured on our behalf at Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha, and specially his yielding up his life upon the tree of scorn and doom. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" and the shedding of blood intended is the death of Jesus, the Son of God.

Remember that his sufferings and death were not apparent only, but true and real; and that they involved an incalculable degree of pain and anguish. To redeem our souls cost our Lord an exceeding sorrowfulness "even unto death;" it cost him the bloody sweat, the heart broken with reproach, and specially the agony of being forsaken of his Father, till he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Our Mediator endured death under the worst possible aspects, bereft of those supports which are in all other cases of godly men afforded by the goodness and faithfulness of God. His was not merely a natural death, but a death aggravated by supernatural circumstance, which infinitely intensified its woe. This is what we mean by the blood of Christ, his sufferings, and his death.

These were voluntarily undertaken by himself out of pure love to us, and in order that we might thereby be justly saved from deserved punishment. There was no natural reason on his own account why he should suffer, bleed, and die. Far from it,—“He only hath immortality.” But out of supreme love to us, that man might be forgiven without the violation of divine rectitude, the Son of God assumed human flesh, and became in very deed a man, in order that he might be able to offer in man's place a full vindication to the righteous and unchangeable law of God. Being God, he thus showed forth the wondrous love of God to man by being willing to suffer personally rather than the redeemed should die as the just result of their sin. The matchless majesty of his divine person lent supreme efficacy to his sufferings. It was a man that died, but he was also God, and the death of incarnate God reflects more glory upon law than the deaths of myriads of condemned creatures could have done. See the yearning of the great God for perfect righteousness: he had sooner die than stain his justice even to indulge his mercy. Jesus the Lord, out of love to the Father and to men, undertook willingly and cheerfully for our sakes to magnify the law, and bring in perfect righteousness. This work was so carried out to the utmost, that not a jot of the suffering was mitigated, nor a particle of the obedience foregone: “he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Now he hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness: for he has offered such an expiation that God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth. God is at once the righteous Judge, and the infinitely loving Father, through what Jesus hath suffered.

Brethren, though I have said that there was no reason why the Son of God should bleed and die on his own account, yet towards us there was a reason. Our Lord from of old in the eternal covenant was constituted the head and representative of all who were in him; and so, when the time came, he took the place, bore the sin, and suffered the penalty of those whom the Father gave him from before the foundations of the world. He is as much the representative man as the first Adam was the representative man; and as in Adam the sin was committed which ruined us, so in the second Adam the atonement was made which saves us. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” There was no

other person so fit to undertake the enterprise of our redemption as this second man, who is the Lord from heaven. He properly, but yet most generously and spontaneously, came and shed his precious blood, in the room and place and stead of sinners, to bring the guilty near to God.

But the text does not merely speak of the blood shed, which I have explained to you, but of "the blood of sprinkling." This is the atonement applied for divine purposes, and specially applied to our own hearts and consciences by faith. For the explanation of this sprinkling we must look to the types of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the blood of sprinkling meant a great many things; in fact, I cannot just now tell you all that it signified. We meet with it in the Book of Exodus, at the time when the Lord smote all the first-born of Egypt. Then the blood of sprinkling meant preservation. The basin filled with blood was taken, and a bunch of hyssop was dipped into it, and the lintel and the two side-posts of every house tenanted by Israelites were smeared with the blood; and when God saw the blood upon the house of the Israelite, he bade the destroyer pass that family by, and leave their first-born unharmed. The sprinkled blood meant preservation: it was Israel's passover and safeguard.

The sprinkled blood very frequently signified the confirmation of a covenant. So it is used in Exodus 24., which I read to you just now. The blood was sprinkled upon the book of the covenant, and also upon the people, to show that the covenant was, as far as it could be, confirmed by the people who promised, "All that the Lord hath said will we do." The blood of bulls and of goats in that case was but a type of the sacrificial blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The lesson which we learn from Exodus 24: is that the blood of sprinkling means the blood of ratification or confirmation of the covenant, which God has been pleased to make with men in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since Jesus died, the promises are Yea and Amen to all believers, and must assuredly be fulfilled. The covenant of grace had but one condition, and that condition Jesus has fulfilled by his death, so that it has now become a covenant of pure and unconditional promise to all the seed.

In many cases the sprinkling of the blood meant purification. If a person had been defiled, he could not come into the sanctuary of God without

being sprinkled with blood. There were the ashes of a red heifer laid up, and these were mixed with blood and water; and by their being sprinkled on the unclean, his ceremonial defilement was removed. There were matters incident to domestic life, and accidents of outdoor life, which engendered impurity, and this impurity was put away by the sprinkling of blood. This sprinkling was used in the case of recovery from infectious disease, such as leprosy; before such persons could mingle in the solemn assemblies, they were sprinkled with the blood, and thus were made ceremonially pure. In a higher sense this is the work of the blood of Christ. It preserves us, it ratifies the covenant, and wherever it is applied it makes us pure; for "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." We have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; for we have come unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

The sprinkling of the blood meant, also, sanctification. Before a man entered upon the priesthood the blood was put upon his right ear, and on the great toe of his right foot, and on the thumb of his right hand, signifying that all his powers were thus consecrated to God. The ordination ceremony included the sprinkling of blood upon the altar round about. Even thus hath the Lord Jesus redeemed us unto God by his death, and the sprinkling of his blood hath made us kings and priests unto God for ever. He is made of God unto us sanctification, and all else that is needed for the divine service.

One other signification of the blood of the sacrifice was acceptance and access. When the high priest went into the most holy place once a year, it was not without blood, which he sprinkled upon the ark of the covenant, and upon the mercy-seat, which was on the top thereof. All approaches to God were made by blood. There was no hope of a man drawing near to God, even in symbol, apart from the sprinkling of the blood. And now to-day our only way to God is by the precious sacrifice of Christ; the only hope for the success of our prayers, the acceptance of our praises, or the reception of our holy works, is through the ever-abiding merit of the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost bids us enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; there is no other way.

There were other uses besides these, but it may suffice to put down the sprinkling of the blood as having these effects, namely, that of

preservation, satisfaction, purification, sanctification, and access to God. This was all typified in the blood of bulls and of goats, but actually fulfilled in the great sacrifice of Christ.

With this as an explanation, I desire to come still closer to the text, and view it with great care; for to my mind it is singularly full of teaching. May the Holy Spirit lead us into the truth which lies herein like treasure hid in a field!

First. The blood of sprinkling is the center of the divine manifestation under the gospel. Observe its innermost place in the passage before us.* You are privileged by almighty grace to come first to Mount Zion, to climb its steeps, to stand upon its holy summit, and to enter the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. In those golden streets, surrounding the hallowed shrine, you behold an innumerable company of angels. What a vision of glory! But you must not rest here; for the great general assembly, the festal gathering, the solemn convocation of the enrolled in heaven, is being held, and all are there in glad attire, surrounding their God and Lord. Press onward to the throne itself, where sits the Judge of all, surrounded by those holy spirits who have washed their robes, and, therefore, stand before the throne of God in perfection.

Have you not come a long way? Are you not admitted into the very center of the whole revelation? Not yet. A step further lands you where stands your Savior, the Mediator, with the new covenant. Now is your joy complete; but you have a further object to behold. What is in that innermost shrine? What is that which is hidden away in the holy of holies? What is that which is the most precious and costly thing of all, the last, the ultimatum, God's grandest revelation? The precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot—the blood of sprinkling. This comes last; it is the innermost truth of the dispensation of grace under which we live. Brethren, when we climb to heaven itself, and pass the gate of pearl, and wend our way through the innumerable hosts of angels, and come even to the throne of God, and see the spirits of the just made perfect, and hear their holy hymn, we shall not have gone beyond the influence of the blood of sprinkling; nay, we shall see it there more truly present than in any other place beside. "What!" say you, "the blood of Jesus in heaven?" Yes. The earthly sanctuary, we are told, was

purified with the blood of bulls and of goats, "but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."(Hebrews 9:23) When Jesus entered once for all into the holy place, he entered by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us: so saith the apostle in the ninth chapter of this epistle. Let those who talk lightly of the precious blood correct their view ere they be guilty of blasphemy; for the revelation of God knows no lower deep, this is the heart and center of all. The manifestation of Jesus under the gospel is not only the revelation of the Mediator, but especially of his sacrifice. The appearance of God the Judge of all, the vision of hosts of angels and perfect spirits, do but lead up to that sacrifice which is the source and focus of all true fellowship between God and his creatures. This is the character which Jesus wears in the innermost shrine where he reveals himself most clearly to those who are nearest to him. He looks like a lamb that has been slain. There is no sight of him which is more full, more glorious, more complete, than the vision of him as the great sacrifice for sin. The atonement of Jesus is the concentration of the divine glory; all other revelations of God are completed and intensified here. You have not come to the central sun of the great spiritual system of grace till you have come to the blood of sprinkling—to those sufferings of Messiah which are not for himself, but are intended to bear upon others, even as drops when they are sprinkled exert their influence where they fall. Unless you have learned to rejoice in that blood which taketh away sin, you have not yet caught the key-note of the gospel dispensation. The blood of Christ is the life of the gospel. Apart from atonement you may know the skin, the rind, the husk of the gospel; but its inner kernel you have not discovered.

I next ask you to look at the text and observe that this sprinkling of the blood, as mentioned by the Holy Ghost in this passage, is absolutely identical with Jesus himself. Read it. "To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." He saith it is the blood that speaketh; and then he proceeds to say, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." This is a very unexpected turn, which can only be explained upon the supposition that Jesus and the blood are identical in the writer's view. By what we may call a singularity in grammar, in putting him for it, the Spirit of God intentionally sets forth the striking

truth, that the sacrifice is identical with the Savior. "We are come to the Savior, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh; see that ye refuse not him." Beloved friends, there is no Jesus if there is no blood of sprinkling; there is no Savior if there is no sacrifice. I put this strongly, because the attempt is being made nowadays to set forth Jesus apart from his cross and atonement. He is held up as a great ethical teacher, a self-sacrificing spirit, who is to lead the way in a grand moral reformation, and by his influence to set up a kingdom of moral influence in the world. It is even hinted that this kingdom has never had prominence enough given to it because it has been overshadowed by his cross. But where is Jesus apart from his sacrifice? He is not there if you have left out the blood of sprinkling, which is the blood of sacrifice. Without the atonement, no man is a Christian, and Christ is not Jesus. If you have torn away the sacrificial blood, you have drawn the heart out of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and robbed it of its life. If you have trampled on the blood of sprinkling, and counted it a common thing, instead of putting it above you upon the lintel of the door, and all around you upon the two side-posts, you have fearfully transgressed. As for me, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, since to me that cross is identical with Jesus himself. I know no Jesus but he who died the just for the unjust. You can separate Jesus and the blood materially; for by the spear-thrust, and all his other wounds, the blood was drawn away from the body of our Lord; but spiritually this "blood of sprinkling" and the Jesus by whom we live, are inseparable. In fact, they are one and indivisible, the self-same thing, and you cannot truly know Jesus, or preach Jesus, unless you preach him as slain for sin; you cannot trust Jesus except you trust him as making peace by the blood of his cross. If you have done with the blood of sprinkling, you have done with Jesus altogether; he will never part with his mediatorial glory as our sacrifice, neither can we come to him if we ignore that character. Is it not clear in the text that Jesus and the blood of sprinkling are one? What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. Note this right carefully.

Thirdly, observe that this "blood of sprinkling" is put in close contact with "the new covenant." I do not wonder that those who are lax in their views of the atonement have nothing honorable to say concerning the covenants, old or new. The doctrine of the covenants is the marrow of

divinity; but these vain-glorious spirits affect to despise it. This is natural, since they speak slightly of the atonement. What covenant is there without blood? If it be not ratified, if there be no sacrifice to make it sure, then is it no covenant in the sight of God or of enlightened men. But, O beloved, ye who know your Lord, and follow on to know him yet better, to you the covenant of promise is a heritage of joy, and his atonement is most precious as the confirmation of it. To us the sacrificial death of our Lord is not a doctrine, but the doctrine, not an outgrowth of Christian teaching, but the essence and marrow of it. To us Jesus in his atonement is Alpha and Omega, in him the covenant begins and ends. You see how it was confirmed by blood. If it be a man's covenant, if it be confirmed, it standeth; but this is God's covenant, confirmed with promises, oaths and blood, and it stands fast for ever and ever. Every believer is as much interested in that covenant as was Abraham the father of believers; for the covenant was made with Abraham and his spiritual seed; and in Christ it is confirmed to all that seed for ever by his most precious blood. That, also, is evident enough in the text: fail not to consider it well.

But, fourthly, I want you to notice that according to the text the blood is the voice of the new dispensation. Observe that on Sinai there was "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more." You look, therefore, under the new dispensation, for a voice, and you do not come to any till you reach the last object in the list, and there see "the blood of sprinkling that speaketh." Here, then, is the voice of the gospel; it is not the sound of a trumpet, nor the voice of words spoken in terrible majesty; but the blood speaks, and assuredly there is no sound more piercing, more potent, more prevailing. God heard the voice of Abel's blood and visited Cain with condign punishment for killing his brother; and the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cries in the ears of God with a voice which is ever heard. How can it be imagined that the Lord God should be deaf to the cry of his Son's sacrifice? Lo, these many ages the blood has cried—"Forgive them! Forgive them! Accept them! Deliver them from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom!"

The blood of sprinkling has a voice of instruction to us even as it has a voice of intercession with God. It cries to us, "See the evil of sin! See how

God loveth righteousness! See how he loveth men! See how impossible it is for you to escape from the punishment of sin except by this great sacrifice in which the love and the justice of God equally appear! See how Jehovah spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all."

What a voice there is in the atonement!—a voice which pleads for holiness and love, for justice and grace, for truth and mercy. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."

Do you not hear it? If you take away the blood of sprinkling from the gospel, you have silenced it. It has no voice if this be gone. "Oh," they say, "the gospel has lost its power!" What wonder when they have made it a dumb gospel! How can it have power when they take away that which is its life and speech? Unless the preacher is evermore preaching this blood, and sprinkling it by the doctrine of faith, his teaching has no voice either to rouse the careless or to cheer the anxious. If ever there should come a wretched day when all our pulpits shall be full of modern thought, and the old doctrine of a substitutionary sacrifice shall be exploded, then will there remain no word of comfort for the guilty or hope for the despairing. Hushed will be for ever those silver notes which now console the living, and cheer the dying; a dumb spirit will possess this sullen world, and no voice of joy will break the blank silence of despair. The gospel speaks through the propitiation for sin, and if that be denied, it speaketh no more. Those who preach not the atonement exhibit a dumb and dummy gospel; a mouth it hath, but speaketh not; they that make it are like unto their idol.

Let me draw you nearer still to the text. Observe, that this voice is identical with the voice of the Lord Jesus; for it is put so. "The blood of sprinkling that speaketh. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." Whatever the doctrine of the sacrifice of Jesus may be, it is the main teaching of Jesus himself. It is well to notice that the voice which spoke from Sinai was also the voice of Christ. It was Jesus who delivered that law the penalty of which he was himself to endure. He that read it out amidst the tempest was Jesus. Notice the declaration—"Whose voice then shook the earth." Whenever you hear the gospel, the voice of the precious blood is the voice of Jesus himself, the voice of him that shook the earth at Sinai. This same voice shall by-and-by shake, not the earth only, but

also heaven. What a voice there is in the blood of sprinkling, since indeed it is the voice of the eternal Son of God, who both makes and destroys! Would you have me silence the doctrine of the blood of sprinkling? Would any one of you attempt so horrible a deed? Shall we be censured if we continually proclaim the heaven-sent message of the blood of Jesus? Shall we speak with bated breath because some affected person shudders at the sound of the word "blood?" or some "cultured" individual rebels at the old-fashioned thought of sacrifice? Nay, verily, we will sooner have our tongue cut out than cease to speak of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. For me there is nothing worth thinking of or preaching about but this grand truth, which is the beginning and the end of the whole Christian system, namely, that God gave his Son to die that sinners might live. This is not the voice of the blood only, but the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. So saith the text, and who can contradict it?

Further, my brethren, from the text I learn another truth, namely, that this blood is always speaking. The text saith not "the blood of sprinkling that spoke," but "that speaketh." It is always speaking, it always remaineth a plea with God and a testimony to men. It never will be silenced, either one way or the other. In the intercession of our risen and ascended Lord his sacrifice ever speaketh to the Most High. By the teaching of the Holy Ghost the atonement will always speak in edification to believers yet upon the earth. It is the blood that speaketh, according to our text, this is the only speech which this dispensation yields us. Shall that speech ever be still? Shall we decline to hear it? Shall we refuse to echo it? God forbid. By day, by night, the great sacrifice continues to cry to the sons of men, "Turn ye from your sins, for they cost your Savior dear. The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, since he is able to forgive and yet be just. Your offended God has himself provided a sacrifice; come and be sprinkled with its blood, and be reconciled once for all." The voice of this blood speaks wherever there is a guilty conscience, wherever there is an anxious heart, wherever there is a seeking sinner, wherever there is a believing mind. It speaketh with sweet, familiar, tender, inviting voice. There is no music like it to the sinner's ear: it charms away his fears. It shall never cease its speaking so long as there is a sinner yet out of Christ; nay, so long as there is one on earth who still needs its cleansing power

because of fresh backslidings. Oh, hear ye its voice! Incline your ear and receive its blessed accents: it says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

This part of my discourse will not be complete unless I bid you notice that we are expressly told that this precious blood speaks "better things than that of Abel." I do not think that the whole meaning of the passage is exhausted if we say that Abel's blood cries for vengeance, and that Christ's blood speaks for pardon. Dr. Watts puts it:—

"Blood has a voice to pierce the skies:
'Revenge!' the blood of Abel cries;
But the dear stream when Christ was slain
Speaks peace as loud from ev'ry vein."

That is quite true; but I conceive that it is not all the sense, and perhaps not even the sense here intended. Revenge is scarcely a good thing; yet Abel's blood spake good things, or we should hardly read that Christ's blood speaks "better things." What does the blood of Abel speak? The blood of Abel speaks to a complete and believing obedience to God. It shows us a man who believes God, and, notwithstanding the enmity of his brother, brings to God the appointed sacrifice of faith, strictly following up, even to the bitter end, his holy obedience to the Most High. That is what the blood of Abel says to me; and the blood of Jesus says the same thing most emphatically. The death of Jesus Christ was the crown and close of a perfect life, it was a fit completion of a course of holiness. In obedience to the Great Father, Jesus even laid down his life. But if this be all the blood of Jesus speaks, as some say that it is, then it does not speak better things than the blood of Abel; for it only says the same things in a louder voice. The martyrdom of any saint has a voice for obedience to God as truly as the martyrdom of Jesus; but the death of our Lord says far more, infinitely more, than this: it not only witnesses to complete obedience, but it provides the way by which the disobedient may be forgiven and helped to obedience and holiness. The cross has a greater, deeper, gladder gospel for fallen men than that of a perfect example which they are unable to follow.

The blood of Abel said this, too—that he was not ashamed of his faith, but witnessed a good confession concerning his God, even to the death; he put his life in his hand, and was not ashamed to stand at the altar of God, and avow his faith by obediently offering the ordained sacrifice. Now, I grant you that the blood of Jesus also declares that he was a faithful and true witness, who willingly sealed his witness with his blood. He proved by shedding his blood that he could not be turned aside from truth and righteousness, even though death stood in his way; but if that is all that the blood of sprinkling speaketh, it saith no better things than the blood of Abel. "Be faithful unto death," is the voice of Abel as well as of Jesus. Jesus must have said more than this by his blood-shedding.

The blood of Abel said good things; that is implied in the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ says better things; and no doubt the blood of Abel rises to the dignity of teaching self-sacrifice. Here was a man, a keeper of sheep, who by his mode of life laid out his life for the good of those committed to his charge; and at the last, in obedience to God, he yielded himself up to die by a brother's hand. It was the first draught of a picture of self-sacrifice. Our Lord Jesus Christ also made a complete self-sacrifice. All his life long he gave himself to men. He lived never for himself. The glory of God and the good of men were united in one passion which filled his whole soul. He could say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." His death was the completion of his perfect self-sacrifice. But if that were all, the blood of Jesus saith no better thing than Abel's death saith, though it may say it more emphatically.

Our Lord's blood saith "better things than that of Abel;" and what doth it say? It saith, "There is redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we were healed." "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The voice of the blood is this, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Now, my brethren, these are better things than Abel's blood could say, and they are what the blood of Jesus speaks to every one upon whom it is

sprinkled by faith. It must be applied to each one of us by faith, or it says nothing to us. But when it falls on each believing individual, it saith to him words of blessing which pacify his conscience and delight his soul.

The apostle says that "Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling." Is it so? Has that blood of sprinkling ever been applied to you? Do you feel it? Are you preserved? Are you cleansed? Are you brought nigh to God? Are you sanctified unto God's service by the atoning sacrifice? If so, then go you out, and in firm confidence that never can be shaken, make your glory in the blood of sprinkling. Tell every sinner whom you meet that if the Lord Jesus wash him he shall be whiter than snow. Preach the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God and then sing of it. Recollect that wondrous threefold song in the fifth chapter of the Revelation, where, first of all, the elders and living creatures round about the throne, sing a new song, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Then ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels take up the strain and cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Nor is this all; for the apostle tells us, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." See you not that they all extol the Lord Jesus in his sacrificial character as the Lamb slain? I have scant patience with those who dare to put this great truth into the background, and even sneer at it or misrepresent it of set purpose. Sirs, if you would be saved you must have the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon you. He that believeth not in Christ Jesus, in Jesus the atoning sacrifice, must perish. The eternal God must repulse with infinite disgust the man who refuses the loving sacrifice of Jesus. Inasmuch as he counted himself unworthy of this wondrous sacrifice, this marvellous expiation there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin, and nothing for him but that eternal blackness and darkness and thunder which were foreshadowed at Sinai. Those who refuse the atonement which wisdom devised, which love provided, and which justice has accepted, have signed their own death-warrant, and none can wonder that they perish. The Lord lead us to glory in Christ crucified. Amen.

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The Blood of Sprinkling (Second Sermon.)

"Ye are come . . . to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."—Hebrews 12:24, 25.

In the former part of this sermon the text grew upon me so largely that it was quite impossible to express all its meaning. In as condensed a manner as possible I explained what was meant by "the blood of sprinkling," and I also enlarged upon the high position which this precious blood occupies in the gospel dispensation; but I was obliged to leave for this second occasion two practical questions which the text is sure to raise if it be carefully thought upon.

The doctrinal portion of our meditation was greatly blest to our hearts, for God the Holy Ghost refreshed us thereby: may he now fulfill his sacred office with equal power, by revealing the things of Christ to us in a way which shall cause self-examination, and arouse us to give more earnest heed than ever to the voice of him that speaketh from heaven. No theme can excel in value and excellence that of the precious blood of Jesus. Unless the Holy Spirit shall prepare our hearts, even with such a topic as this before us, we shall be nothing profited; but if he will show these choice truths unto us, we shall be comforted, quickened, edified, and sanctified by them.

It is a considerable disadvantage to some of you that you have not heard the former part of the sermon; but I hope you will read it at your leisure, and then, if you read this in connection with it, the whole subject will be before you.* Not that I can set it all out in words: I only mean that it will be before you as the ocean is before us when we sit on the beach, or as the heavens are before us when we gaze upon Arcturus with his sons. Finite language fails to convey the infinite; and if ever there was a text which deserved to be called infinite, it is that which is now before us.

Having touched, as with a swallow's wing, the surface of our great theme under the first division of the sermon, I have now to speak with you upon

the second, which is this: Where are we with reference to this blood of sprinkling? The text says, "Ye are come." We are not come to Mount Sinai, but we are come to Mount Zion; to angels and their God; to saints and their Mediator, and to the blood of sprinkling. This having had its share of our thoughts, we are to conclude with the question, What then? If we have come to this blood of sprinkling, what then? The answer is, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." Let us give to the wondrous truths revealed to us by the sacrifice of Jesus the most earnest heed, that our souls may hear and live. May the Holy Spirit enable us to hear the heavenly voice at this hour! "Faith cometh by hearing; may it come at this time by our reverently hearing the voice of the blood of sprinkling!"

II. My business under the second head of my discourse is to answer the question, WHERE ARE WE? I have to explain what is meant by the expression which is found in the twenty-second verse of the chapter "Ye are come." Link the twenty-second verse with this twenty-fourth, and read, "Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling."

Well, first, ye are come to the hearing of the gospel of the atoning sacrifice. The Israelites left Egypt, and, having passed the Red Sea, they entered the desert, and at length came to the mount of God, even to Sinai, that terrible mountain. In the valley around that throne of God they were gathered together in their thousands. What a sight that vast multitude must have been! Probably two millions or more were encamped before the mount. Then, "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran; and he came with ten thousands of his saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Israel crouched in the valley below, subdued by the terrible majesty of the scene, and overawed by the trumpet voice which pealed forth from the midst of the thick darkness. The Lord spake with them, but their uncircumcised ears could not bear his glorious voice, and they entreated that Moses might act as mediator, and speak in God's stead.

You and I have not come to such a terrible sight at this hour. No quivering mountain smokes before you, no terrible lightnings appall you, no thunders distress you.

"Not to the terrors of the Lord,

The tempest, fire, and smoke;
Not to the thunder of that word
Which God on Sinai spoke:

"But we are come to Sion's hill
The city of our God,
Where milder words declare his will,
And spread his love abroad."

Among the great things which you are called upon to consider under the gospel is "the blood of sprinkling." Count yourselves happy that you are privileged to hear of the divinely appointed way of reconciliation with God. You are come to hear, not of your sin and its doom, not of the last judgment and the swift destruction of the enemies of God; but of love to the guilty, pity for the miserable, mercy for the wicked, compassion for those who are out of the way. You are come to hear of God's great expedient of wisdom, by which he, by the same act and deed, condemns sin, and lets the sinner live; honors his law, and yet passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin. You are come to hear, not of the shedding of your own blood, but of the shedding of his blood who, in his infinite compassion, deigned to take the place of guilty men—to suffer, that they might not suffer, and die, that they might not die. Blessed are your ears, that they hear of the perfect sacrifice! Happy are your spirits, since they are found where free grace and boundless love have set forth a great propitiation for sin! Divinely favored are you to live where you are told of pardon freely given to all who will believe on the name of the Lord Jesus, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. You hear at this hour not law, but gospel; not the sentence of judgment, but the proclamation of grace. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." It is no small thing for the kingdom of God to have come so nigh unto you. Awake to a sense of your privilege: you do not sit in heathen midnight, nor in Popish gloom, nor in Jewish mist; but day has dawned on you: do not refuse the light.

In a better sense, going a little further, we have not only come to the blood of sprinkling by hearing about it, but we have come to it because

the great God now deals with us upon methods which are founded and grounded upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ. If God were to deal with us upon the terms laid down at Sinai, he need not be long in finding the "two or three witnesses" to prove that we have broken his law. We should be ourselves compelled to plead guilty; no witnesses would be required. Truly, he hath not dealt with us after our sins. We are so faulty that we can draw no comfort from the prospect of judgment by law; we appeal to mercy alone; for on any other ground our case is hopeless. "This do, and thou shalt live" is a covenant which brings us no ray of comfort; for its only word to us is that thunderbolt—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

By the works of the law none can be justified, for by that law we are all condemned. Read the Ten Commandments, and pause at each one, and confess that you have broken it either in thought, or word, or deed. Remember that by a glance we may commit adultery, by a thought we may be guilty of murder, by a desire we may steal. Sin is any want of conformity to perfect holiness, and that want of conformity is justly chargeable upon every one of us. Yet the Lord does not, under the gospel dispensation, deal with us according to law. He does not now sit on the throne of judgment, but he looks down upon us from the throne of grace. Not the iron rod, but the silver scepter, is held over us. The long-suffering of God rules the age, and Jesus the Mediator is the gracious Lord-lieutenant of the dispensation. Instead of destroying offending man from off the face of the earth, the Lord comes near to us in loving condescension, and pleads with us by his Spirit, saying, "You have sinned, but my Son has died. In him I am prepared to deal with you in a way of pure mercy and unmingled grace."

O sinner, the fact that you are alive proves that God is not dealing with you according to strict justice, but in patient forbearance; every moment you live is another instance of omnipotent long-suffering. It is the sacrifice of Christ which arrests the axe of justice, which else must execute you. The barren tree is spared because the great Dresser of the vineyard, who bled on Calvary, intercedes and cries, "Let it alone this year also." O my hearer, it is through the shedding of the blood and the mediatorial reign of the Lord Jesus that you are at this moment on praying ground and pleading terms with God! Apart from the blood of

atonement you would now be past hope, shut up for ever in the place of doom. But see how the great Father bears with you! He stands prepared to hear your prayer, to accept your confession of sin, to honor your faith, and to save you from your sin through the sacrifice of his dear Son.

Through our Lord Jesus sovereign grace and infinite love find a free way to the most undeserving of the race. Through the divine sacrifice the Lord saith, "Come now and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Thus the rebel is treated as a child, and the criminal as a beloved one. Because of yonder death on Calvary's cruel tree, God can invite guilty men to come to him, and he can receive them to the bosom of his love. O my dear hearers, do remember this! I am not sent to scold you, but to woo you, not sent to thunder at you, but to let the soft cleansing drops from the heart of Jesus fall upon you. I beg you not to turn away, as men may well do when the tidings are heavy; but hearken diligently, for the message is full of joy. You are now in the house of prayer, addressed by one of the Lord's ambassadors, and the tidings are of peace through a propitiation which God himself has provided and accepted. We cry not to you, "Prepare for vengeance;" but we proclaim, "a God ready to pardon." We do not threaten that he will no more have mercy upon you; but we tell you that he waiteth to be gracious. If I had to say, "You have provoked him past bearing, and he now means to destroy you," what a miserable man should I be! How could I bring such evil tidings to my fellow-creatures? Then would it have been woe to me that my mother bare me for so hard a fate. Thank God, it is not so. By virtue of the blood of sprinkling the language of boundless love is heard among our apostate race, and we are entreated to acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace.

No, my hearer, the day of grace is not over: you are not come to Sinai. No, you are not yet condemned past all hope; for you are still within reach of Jesus the Mediator. There is forgiveness. The fountain which was opened of old for sin and for uncleanness is open still. If you have sinned like David, if you will but accept the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, I am able to speak to you as Nathan did to the guilty king, and say, "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." At any rate, God is dealing with you

now on gospel terms; he sits on Zion, not on Sinai; he pronounces invitations of grace, and does not utter the stern sentence of justice.

Further, there is a far more effectual way of coming to the blood of sprinkling than this—when by faith that blood is sprinkled upon our souls. This is absolutely needed: the blood shed must become to each one of us the blood sprinkled. "How can I know," says one, "that the blood of Christ is upon me?" Dost thou trust thyself with Christ? Dost thou believe that he made an atonement on the cross; and wilt thou venture thy eternal destiny upon that fact, trusting in what Jesus did, and in that alone? If thou dost thus trust, thou shalt not trust in vain. Dost thou apply thy heart to the precious blood of Jesus? Then that precious blood is applied to thy heart. If thine heart bleeds for sin, bring it to the bleeding heart of Jesus, and it shall be healed. I showed, in the early part of this discourse, that the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the two side-posts of the door preserved the Israelites on the night of the Passover: it shall also preserve you. The blood sprinkled upon the defiled made them ceremonially clean: it shall cleanse you. Have I not often quoted those blessed words: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin?" That blood put upon the sons of Aaron dedicated them to God; and if it be applied to you, it shall consecrate you to God, and you shall become the accepted servant of the Most High. Oh, what a blessed thing to know assuredly that we have come to the blood of sprinkling by a true and humble faith! Canst thou say that thou dost alone rely on Jesus for salvation? Canst thou call heaven and earth to witness that thou hast no other confidence? Then remember the word of the Lord: "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life. He that believeth in him is not condemned." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Are not these words full of strong assurance? Indeed, we have not come to Mount Sinai, the place of trembling; but to Zion, the place which is beautiful for situation, the joy of the earth; the vision of peace, the home of infinite blessedness. Conscience no longer thunders at you for your sins, for your sins are gone. The expiation has covered them: the sprinkling of the blood has put them all away. Your iniquities are cast into the depths of the sea; God has cast them behind his back. The handwriting of ordinances that was against you Christ has taken away, nailing it to his cross, as a record in which there is no more condemning

force. The debt is paid, the bill is receipted. Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? O beloved! it is a most blessed thing to come to the blood of sprinkling.

"The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view."

The act of faith, whereby we accept and trust in the Lord Jesus as our Mediator and Sacrifice, is the true and effectual coming to the blood of sprinkling. May none of us forget thus to come! He is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, and those who come to him shall be led into full salvation. Have you thus come? If you have not, why do you delay? He saith, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Come to him, for he is calling you; come to him, even as you now are, and he will receive you without fail.

Further, to come to this blood of sprinkling means thankfully to enjoy all that comes to us through the blood of sprinkling. I have intruded upon this somewhat already. Brothers and sisters, if you have come to the blood of sprinkling, believe in the full pardon which God has given you, and in your consequent peace with God. It is a blessed word in the Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins? I have seen some of the children of God who have believed in Jesus, but it has been with a faith which did not realize the full blessing promised to it; for they were as troubled about their sins as if they had never been forgiven. Now, a man who receives a free pardon from the Queen, and goes his way out of prison, rejoices in that pardon as a reality, and therefore walks abroad without fear. You must believe in the pardon of God as a reality, and act accordingly. If he has absolved you for Jesus' sake, then you are absolved. Why tremble like a guilty wretch waiting for the verdict? Why talk about fearing divine wrath? If you are pardoned, the deed of grace is done, and can never be undone; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance on his part. His remission of sin is a clear gaol delivery, a sure plea, a full quittance.

"Oh! how sweet to view the flowing
Of our Lord's atoning blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God!"

I want every child of God in his inmost soul to come to the blood of sprinkling by full assurance of his justification, and then to go on to enjoy constant access to the mercy-seat, and communion with the Lord God. We may now with holy boldness speak with God in prayer, for the mercy-seat is sprinkled with the blood. O pardoned one, be not backward to enjoy thy liberty of fellowship! Thou art clean through the blood, and therefore thou mayest enter into the closest communion with the divine Father; thou art consecrated by the blood, and therefore thou mayest abound in the service of thy God. Treat thy God as a child should treat a father, and be not so awed by his majesty as to be cast down and distressed because of past sin, seeing it is pardoned. Take the good that God provides thee; enjoy the peace the blood has bought thee; enter into the liberty that thy ransom price has ensured thee. Do not stand in feelings, and fears, and dreams; but come unto this blood of sprinkling, and rest there, and be filled with joy and peace through believing. With such a ransom found for thee, dream not of going down into the pit, but ascend with gladness into the hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy place.

I think, once more, that this coming to the blood of sprinkling means also that we feel the full effect of it in our lives. The man who knows that Jesus shed his blood for him, and has had that blood applied to his conscience, becomes a sin-hating man, consecrated to him who has cleansed him. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." I believe that there is no fruitful source of virtue like faith in the precious blood of Jesus. I hope your conduct will always support me in this assertion. Those who are debtors for salvation to their dying Lord should be the most holy of men. You people who think that you will get to heaven by some other way than by "the blood of sprinkling" have no sure bonds to hold you to holiness. You trust partly to

your own works, and partly to what Jesus has done. Well, you do not owe him much, and therefore you will not love him much, and therefore you will not feel bound to live strict, holy, gracious lives. But the man who knows that his many sins are all washed away through the blood of Jesus, and that thus he is saved, he is the man who will serve the Lord with all his heart. He who has received a finished righteousness and complete salvation is under boundless obligations of gratitude, and the force of these obligations will urge him to a consecrated life. Over him the supreme power of gratitude will exert its sacred influence, and he will be not only carefully obedient, but ardently zealous in the service of his Redeemer. We know it is so, and we mean to prove it by our daily conduct. Brethren, I would have you exhibit more and more the influence of the precious blood in sanctifying your lives. Are there not Christians who hold the doctrine of the atoning blood, and yet are no better than others? Alas! it is so. But it is one thing to hold a doctrine, and another thing for that doctrine to take hold upon your heart and influence your life. Oh, if we believed practically what we believe professionally, what manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness! Hear me, my brother, and answer the appeals I make to thee as in the presence of the Lord. Blood-bought; canst thou live for thyself? Blood-washed; canst thou defile thy garments? Marked with the King's own name, in the King's own blood; how canst thou yield thyself to other rulers? God grant that we may come unto the blood of sprinkling till it shall purify our nature, and fill us with an all-consuming enthusiasm for him whose heart was pierced for us!

I ask you, then, to put the question closely home, "Have I come unto this blood of sprinkling? If not, why should I not come at once?" I read the other day an imaginary story, which describes the need of looking well to this great business. Receive it as a parable:—A little daughter of the house of Israel, had heard the commandment concerning the Passover night, and as she lay ill in her bed she cried, "Father, have you sprinkled the blood upon the lintel and the two side-posts?" Her father answered, "Not yet, my child. It shall be done." The daughter was distressed, and filled with fear. After waiting a little while she again cried, "Father, father, have you sprinkled the blood upon the door?" He answered carelessly, "Child, I have told Simeon to sprinkle it, and I have no doubt it is done." "But,

father," cried she, "it is near midnight, and the destroying angel will soon be abroad; are you sure that the blood is over the door? Jehovah our God hath said that we must sprinkle the blood upon the lintel and the two side-posts, or else the destroyer will not pass over us. Father, are you sure it is done?" The father passed over her enquiry: he had been eating of the lamb with his friends, and thought that this was sufficient; he did not care to give too much prominence to the ghastly idea of blood. He was of a liberal mind, and would not believe that a merciful God would smite his household for so small an omission.

Then his daughter arose from her bed, made strong by the God of Israel. Nothing would content her until she had been outside into the street, and seen for herself whether the saving mark was over the door of her father's house. It was almost midnight, but by the light of the moon she looked, and no blood-mark was there! How great was her distress! "Father," she cried, "make haste and bring the basin." There it stood, filled with blood; for the Paschal Lamb had been slain. The father, at her entreaty, dashed the hyssop into it, struck the lintel and the two side-posts and shut the door, and as he did so, the midnight hour arrived. They were saved so as by fire. The daughter's obedient care and reverence of the Lord had warded off the sword of the destroyer. Oh that the holy anxiety of some one now present would work the like blessing for other households! Ask, dear child, ask the question, "Father, have you come to the blood of sprinkling? Is the blood of the Lamb above your head, between you and God? Is it on both sides of you, when you come in and go out?" O soul, be thus anxious about thyself, and rest not till thou hast by faith been purged with hyssop, and cleansed by the blood of the one sacrifice for sin.

III. The last part of our subject is this: WHAT THEN? According to our text, the blood of Jesus is the voice of the new dispensation. It is the blood which speaks, and it speaks better things than the blood of Abel. What then is our duty? How doth the apostle express our obligation? "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."

I would have a quarter of an hour's very quiet talk with you, without excitement or quibbling debate. Lend me your ears, for I speak in all love for your souls. I want, dear friends, that this great truth of atonement which I so often preach may have a fair hearing, and not be left to lie

among the number of forgotten things.

Do not refuse the voice of Jesus by cold indifference. God was made flesh, and dwelt among men, and in due time he took upon himself our sin, and suffered for it in his own body on the tree, that sin might be put away by the sacrifice of himself. By his death upon the cross our Lord made atonement for the sin of man, and those who believe in him are delivered from evil and its consequences. The main point is that Jesus died for us, the just for the unjust. His atoning blood has a voice: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." The text says: See to it; look to it; make sure of it; be careful about it. Do not miss the salvation of your Lord through neglect; for he who dies by neglecting the healing medicine will as surely perish as he who stabs himself. Be in earnest to accept the Savior: I beseech you so to do, for I am afraid that many refuse him that speaketh, because they never think of him, or of his sacrifice. It seems to me that if I were a young man I would give this matter very early notice. However deeply I might be engaged in business, I should feel that my first concern ought to be to set myself right with God. Other matters would be sure to drop into order if I could be right with the Lord of all. If I heard it said that salvation came by the blood of Christ, I think I should pull myself together and resolve to understand this singular statement. I would not let it go by me, but would endeavor to reach the bottom of it, and practically understand it. I would meditate much upon teaching so wonderful as this—that the Son of God in man's stead honored the justice of God by death, and so put away sin.

When I was a youth I had a great longing to begin life on right principles: I longed to find deliverance from sin. I would wake up with the sun in summer time to read my Bible, and such books as Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," Alleine's "Alarm," and Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." In these books I tried to spell out the way of salvation; but the chief thing I longed to know was, "How can man be just with God? How can God be just with man, and yet put away his sin?" Do you not think that these questions are of high importance? I beg that they may not have the cold shoulder from you. Give this question due space. I know that a great many things demand your attention nowadays; but I claim for this, which is the

innermost revelation of God that it should have an early and earnest hearing. God incarnate in Christ Jesus bleeding and dying for human sin is a marvel of love too great to be passed over without thought. I pray you, therefore, "refuse not him that speaketh." Do not say, "I pray thee, have me excused." I do not suppose that you will become an infidel or act as a blasphemer towards this grand truth. I will not accuse you of denying the fact of the atonement; but my great fear is lest you should be indifferent to it. If it be so, that God himself has come to earth to bleed and die to save guilty man, it is the greatest, gladdest news that ever came to our poor erring race, and every member of that race should receive it with hopeful attention.

When you resolve to study the doctrine, do not approach it with prejudice through misapprehension. Those that hate the gospel of Christ are very busy in caricaturing the doctrine of the atonement. They assert that we preach that God was not merciful by nature, but must needs be appeased by the blood of his own Son. They charge us with saying that Jesus by his death made God loving. We distinctly teach the very opposite of that statement. What we do say is this, that God is infinitely loving—that, in fact, God is love; but that love does not cause him to be unjust or unholy; for that in the long run would not be love. God is the Judge of all the earth, and he must do right. The Lord, as the great moral governor, if he makes a law, and threatens a penalty, must execute that penalty, or else his law will lose its authority. If the penalty threatened be not executed, there is a tacit acknowledgment that it was threatened in error. Could you believe in a fallible God? The Lord has made a law which is perfect, and just, and good. Would you rather be without law? What reasonable person desires anarchy? He has backed up that law with a threatening. What is the use of a law if to break it involves no evil consequences? A government that never punishes offenders is no government at all. God, therefore, as moral ruler, must be just, and must display his indignation against wrong and evil of every kind. It is written on the conscience of men that sin must be punished. Would you have it go unpunished? If you are a just man, you would not. To meet the case, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, by himself bearing the penalty of death, has honored the divine law. He has shown to all intelligences that God will not wink at sin, that even his infinite mercy must not come in the way of his justice. This is the

doctrine: do not listen to those who twist and pervert it. It is the love of God which has provided the great atonement by which, in a judgment better than ours, the law finds a glorious vindication, and the foundation of moral government is strengthened. Do consider this matter, and judge it fairly, with candid minds. We do assure you from God's Word that apart from the atonement of our Lord Jesus you can never be saved either from the guilt or power of evil. You will find no peace for your conscience that is worth having, no thorough and deep peace, except by believing in this atoning sacrifice; neither will you meet with a motive strong enough to rescue you from the bonds of iniquity. Therefore "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." Hear, and your soul shall live. Cavil, and you will die in your sins.

Do not refuse the voice of the Lord Jesus by rejecting the principle of expiation. If God is content with this principle, it is not for us to raise objection. The Lord God is infinitely more concerned to fix matters on a right foundation than ever we can be, and if he feels that the sacrifice of Jesus meets the case at all points, why should we be dissatisfied with it? If there were a flaw in the proceedings his holy eyes would see it. He would not have delivered up his own Son to die unless that death would perfectly fulfill the design intended by it. A mistake so expensive he would never have perpetrated. Who are you to raise the question? If God is satisfied, surely you should be? To refuse the atonement because we are too wise to accept so simple a method of mercy is the utmost height of folly. What! will ye refuse him that speaketh because the present phase of human madness dares to dispute the divine way of human redemption? I pray you, do not so.

Once more. Do not refuse this voice of mercy by preferring your own way of salvation. You have, no doubt, a way of salvation in your own mind, for few men have given up all hope. Perhaps your chosen hope is that you will be saved by doing your best. Alas! no man does his best; and the best acts of a rebel must be unaccepted of his king. So long as he is a rebel his acts are those of a rebel, and of no esteem with his prince. Perhaps your hope lies in saying so many prayers, and going to church, or attending chapel; or you are so unwise as to trust to a minister or priest. Now, we beseech you, hear the witness of God which he has given us in this book,

and learn that other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ the righteous. There is one salvation, and there can be no other; all other hopes are lying vanities, and arrogant insults to Jesus. God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin. There is no other propitiation, or atonement, or way of acceptance; and if you reject this way, you must die in your sins.

I cannot help it if you do not like this teaching, although I shall be grieved if you refuse it. I can only tell you the truth, and leave it with your own hearts. Do not wilfully refuse it. When I meet you face to face in that last day, to which we all must come, I shall not be clear of your blood unless I tell you what is assuredly the truth—that in the precious blood of Christ is the only cleansing from sin, and the only acceptance with God. By believing in Jesus, as slain for you, you shall be saved; but do what you may, pray as you may, fast as you may, give alms as you may, you shall not enter heaven by any other road. The way to glory is by the way of the cross. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Look to him whom you have pierced, and mourn for your sins. Look not to any other, for no other is needed, no other is provided, no other can be accepted. Jesus is the sole messenger of the covenant of life and peace. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."

"See that ye refuse not." Then there is a choice about it. If you had never heard the gospel, you could not have refused it; but now that you have heard the message, it lies within your power, and it is an awfully dangerous power, to refuse him that speaketh. Oh, can you, will you, dare you refuse my bleeding Savior—refuse the Lord of love? I see him now. The thorn-crown is about his brow. He is hanging on his cross expiring in unutterable pangs! Can you refuse him while he presents such a spectacle of sacrifice? His eyes are red with weeping; have you no tears for such sorrow? His cheeks are all distained with the brutal soldiers' spittle: have you no love and homage for him? His hands are fastened to the wood—his feet the same: and there he hangs to suffer in the sinner's stead. Will you not yield yourselves to him? I could joyfully bow before that cross-foot to kiss his dear feet distained with blood. What a charm he has for me! And you—do you refuse him?

He is no mere man. It is God himself who hangs upon the cross. His body

is that of a man, but it is in union with the Godhead. He who died at Calvary is God over all, and this makes his death so effectual. He whom you have offended, in order to be justly able to pardon you, hangs there and dies for you: and do you turn your back on him? O sirs, if you be wise you will come, as I said I fain would come, and kiss those bleeding feet, and look up and say, "My Lord, I am reconciled to thee—how could I be otherwise? My enmity is dead. How can I be an enemy to him that died for me? In shame, and scorn, and misery, Jesus dies that I may live. O Lord Jesus, thou hast wrought in me, not reconciliation merely, but full submission and hearty love. I joy to sink myself in thee, and to be thine for ever." See that ye refuse not my Lord. May the sweet Spirit who loves the cross, and, like a dove, hovers round it now, descend upon you all who hear my message! May the Holy Ghost apply the blood of sprinkling to you; and may you feel that, instead of refusing him that speaketh, you rejoice in his name!

When the text says, "See that ye refuse not," it tacitly and pleadingly says, "See that ye accept him." Dear hearers, I trust you will receive my Lord into your hearts. When we read of refusing, or receiving, we perceive an action of the will. Jesus must be willingly received: he will not force himself upon any man. Whosoever accepts Jesus is himself accepted of Jesus. Never was there a heart willing to receive him to whom Jesus denied himself. Never! But you must be willing and obedient. Grace works this in you; but in you this must be. Till the heart entertains Jesus gladly nothing is done. All that is short of a willing hearing of Jesus, and a willing acceptance of his great atonement, is short of eternal life. Say, wilt thou have this Savior, or dost thou decline his love? Wilt thou give him a cold refusal? Oh, do not so; but, on the contrary, throw open the doors of thy heart, and entreat thy Lord and Savior to come in.

I do not wonder that the Israelites asked that they might no longer hear the voice of thunder from the top of Sinai; it was too terrible for human ear; but you have no such excuse if you refuse him that speaketh; for Jesus speaks in notes more sweet than music, more tender than a mother's sonnet to her babe. Let me remind you, that he was wont to say, "come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in

heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." He declared that all manner of sin and of blasphemy should be forgiven unto men. He stood and cried, on the last day of the feast, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." I am telling you no fables; for Christ, who was born at Bethlehem and died on Calvary, by his own blood which he shed for many, assures you that there is forgiveness for every man of you who, confessing his sin, will come and put his trust in him.

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh;" for though you hear only my poor feeble voice pleading with you, with an honest, loving heart at the back of it, yet God the Holy Ghost is speaking, and Jesus Christ himself is speaking to you. Refuse me if you please, but do not refuse my Lord. The blood of Jesus says, "I was poured out for the guilty. I was shed to manifest divine love. I am sprinkled to cleanse from sin." Each drop as it falls creates peace of heart. Stand where that blood is falling. Let it sprinkle you.

Thus the blood speaks. Will you not answer, "Lord, we come to thee, for thou hast drawn us. Thy wounds have wounded our hearts. Thy death has killed our enmity. Sprinkle us unto thyself. Bedew us with thy blood. Let us be accepted in the Beloved?" Amen. So may God hear us!

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The Blood of the Testament

"For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all his people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you."—Hebrews 9:19, 20.

Blood is always a terrible thing. It makes a sensitive mind shudder even

to pronounce the word; but, to look upon the thing itself causes a thrill of horror. Although by familiarity men shake this off, for the seeing of the eye and the hearing of the ear can harden the heart, the instinct of a little child may teach you what is natural to us in reference to blood. How it will worry if its finger bleeds ever so little, shocked as the sight, actually there be no smart. I envy not the man whose pity would not stir to see a sparrow bleed or a lamb wantonly put to pain; and as for the cruel man, I shudder at the thought of his depravity. What exquisite pain it must be caused our first parent how keenly it must have touched the fine sensibilities of their nature to have had to offer sacrifice! Probably they had never seen death until they brought their first victim to the altar of God. Blood! Ah! how they must have shuddered as they saw the warm life-fluid flowing forth from the innocent victim. It must have seemed to them to be a very horrible thing, and very properly so, for God intended them to feel their feelings outraged. He meant them to take to heart the anguish of the victim, and learn, with many a shudder, what a destructive and killing thing sin was. He meant them to see before their eyes a commentary upon his threatening, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." He meant Adam and Eve to witness the harrowing appearance, as the sentence upon sin was executed, stabbing at the very heart of life, convulsing all the frame, sealing up the senses, and leaving behind but a wreck of the beautiful creature, and not a relic of happiness for it in the world. How dreadful must have been the spectacle, when the first pair gathered around the corpse of their second son, slain by his first brother! There were the clots of blood on the murderous club, or the sharp stone, or whatever other instrument Cain may have used in smiting his brother to the grave. How they must have mourned and sighed as they saw the precious crimson of human life wantonly poured out upon the ground, and crying to God against the murderer!

Yes, blood is always a ghastly and a terrible thing. It is so, I suppose, because we recognize in it the destruction of life. Is it not so, also,—though we may not be able to define the emotion,—because we are compelled, in our consciences, to admit the effect of sin, and we are staggered as we see what our sin has done. All through the great school of the Jewish law, blood was constantly used to instruct the Israelite in the guilt of sin, and in the greatness of the atonement necessary for putting it

away. I suppose that the outer court of the Jewish temple was something worse than ordinary shambles. If you will read the lists of the multitudes of beasts that were sometimes slain there in a single day, you will see that the priests must have stood in gore, and have presented a crimson appearance,—their snow-white garments all splashed over with blood as they stood there offering sacrifice from morning till night. Every man who went up to the tabernacle or to the temple must have stood aside for a moment, and have said, "What a place this is for the worship of God! Everywhere I see signs of slaughter." God intended this to be so. It was the great lesson which he meant to be taught to the Jewish people, that sin was a loathsome and a detestable thing, and that it could only be put away by the sacrifice of a great life, such a life as had not then been lived,—the life of the Coming One, the life of the eternal Son of God, who must himself become man, that he might offer his own, immaculate life upon the altar of God to expiate the guilt, and put away the filth and the loathsomeness of human transgression.

Some of you will feel sickened at these reflections, and object to what I have already said, as unworthy of my lips and offensive to your ears. I know who these will be,—the creatures of taste, who have never felt the loathsomeness of sin. Oh, I would that your sins would sicken you! I would to God that you had some sense of what a horrible thing it is to rebel against the Most High, to pervert the laws of right, to overthrow the rules of virtue, and to run into the ways of transgression and iniquity, for if blood be sickening to you, sin is infinitely more detestable to God; and if you find that being washed in blood seems awful to you, the great bath which was filled from Christ's veins, in which men are washed and made clean, is a thing of greater and deeper solemnity to God than any tongue shall be ever able to express.

I do not think anyone ever knows the preciousness of the blood of Christ, till he has had a full sight and sense of his sin, his uncleanness, and his ill-desert. Is there, any such thing as truly coming to the cross of Christ until you first of all have seen what your sin really deserves. A little light into that dark cellar, sir; a little light into that hole within the soul, a little light cast into that infernal den of your humanity, and you will soon discern what sin is, and, seeing it, you would discover that there was no hope of

being washed from it except by a sacrifice far greater than you could ever render. Then the atonement of Christ would become fair and lustrous in your eyes, and you would rejoice with joy unspeakable in that boundless love which led the Savior to give himself a ransom for us, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." May the Lord teach us, thundering at us, if need be, what sin means. May he teach it to us so that the lesson shall be burned into our souls, and we shall never forget it! I could fain wish that you were all burden-carriers till you grew weary. I could fain wish that you all labored after eternal life until your strength failed, and that you might then rejoice in him who has finished the work, and who promises to be to you All-in-all when you believe in him, and trust in him with your whole heart.

Looking carefully at the text, I would have you notice the name given to the blood of Christ, the ministry in which it was used, and the effect that it produced.

I. First, observe THE NAME GIVEN IN THE TEXT TO THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. It is said to be, "THE BLOOD OF THE TESTAMENT."

You are aware, perhaps, you who read your Bibles thoroughly, that the word here rendered "testament" is more commonly rendered "covenant", and although it would be wrong to say that it does not mean "testament", yet it would be right to say that it signifies both "covenant" and "testament", and that its first and general meaning is "covenant."

Let us take it so. The blood of Jesus is the blood of the covenant. Long before this round world was made, or stars began to shine, God foresaw that he would make man. He also foresaw that man would fall into sin. Out of that fall of man his distinguishing grace and infinite sovereignty selected a multitude that no man can number to be his. But, seeing that they had offended against him, it was necessary, in order that they might be saved, that a great scheme or plan should be devised, by which the justice of God should be fully satisfied, and yet the mercy of God should have full play. A covenant was therefore arranged between the persons of the blessed Trinity. It was agreed and solemnly pledged by the oath of the eternal Father that he would give unto the Son a multitude whom no man could number who should be his, his spouse, the members of his mystical

body, his sheep, his precious jewels. These the Savior accepted as his own, and then on his part, he undertook for them that he would keep the divine law that he would suffer all the penalties due on their behalf for offences against the law, and that he would keep and preserve every one of them until the day of his appearing. Thus stood the covenant, and on that covenant the salvation of every saved man and woman hangs. Do not think it rests with thee, soul, for what saith the Scripture "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy." He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." To show you that salvation is not by human merit, God was pleased to cast it entirely upon covenant arrangements. In that covenant, made between himself and his Son, there was not a word said about our actions having any merit in them. We were regarded as though we were not, except that we stood in Christ, and we were only so far parties to the covenant as we were in the loins of Christ on that august day. We were considered to be the seed of the Lord Jesus Christ, the children of his care, the members of his own body. "According as he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world." Oh, what grace it was that put your name and mine in the eternal roll, and provided for our salvation, provided for it by a covenant, by a sacred compact between the Father and his eternal Son, that we should belong to him in the day when he should make up his jewels!

Now, beloved, in a covenant there are pledges given, and on those pledges we delight to meditate. You know what they were. The Father pledged his honor and his word. He did more; he pledged his oath; and "because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself." He pledged his own word and sacred honor of Godhead that he would be true, to his Son, that he should see his seed; and that by the knowledge of him Christ should "justify many." But there was needed a seal to the covenant, and what was that Jesus Christ in the fullness of time set the seal to the covenant, to make it valid and secure, by pouring out his life's blood to make the covenant effectual once for all. Beloved, if there be an agreement made between two men, the one to sell such-an-such an estate, and the other to pay for it, the covenant does not hold good until the payment is made. Now, Jesus Christ's blood was the payment of his part of the covenant; and when he shed it, the covenant stood firm as the everlasting hills, and

the throne of God himself is not more sure than is the covenant of grace; and, mark you, that covenant is not sure merely in its great outlines, but sure also in all its details. Every soul whose name was in that covenant must be saved. Unless God can undeify himself, every soul that Christ died for he will have. Every soul for which he stood Substitute and Surety he demands to have, and each of the souls he must have, for the covenant stands fast. Moreover, every blessing which in that, covenant was guaranteed to the chosen seed was by the precious blood made eternally secure to that seed. Oh, how I delight to speak about the sureness of that covenant! How the dying David rolled that under his tongue as a sweet morsel! "Although my house," said he, "be not so with God,"-there was the bitter in his mouth; "yet," said he,—and there came in the honey, "yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." And this sureness, mark you, lies in the blood; it is the blood of Christ that makes all things secure, for all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us.

You will ask, it may be, "What is the purpose of this doctrine" Its purpose is this,-To you who have believed in Jesus covenant mercies are sure, not because of your frames and feelings, but because of the precious blood of Jesus. Yesterday you were happy, mayhap, and to-day you are downcast. Well, but the covenant has not changed. To-morrow you may be in the very depths of despair, while to-day you are singing upon the top of the mountain; but the covenant will not alter. That august transaction was not made by you, and cannot be unmade by you. It tarrieth not for man, and waiteth not for the sons of men. There it stands fast and settled, signed by the eternal signet, and your security is not in yourselves, but in Christ. If Christ bought you, if the Father gave you to him, if Christ became a Surety for you, then—

"Nor death, nor hell, shall ever remove
His favorites from his breast;
In the dear bosom of his love
They must for ever rest."

The name of the blood, as we find it in our own translation, is "the blood of the testament." This teaches a similar truth, though it puts it under another figure. Salvation comes to us as a matter of will. Jesus Christ has

left eternal life to his people as a legacy. Here are the words:—"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." Now, a will, as the apostle rightly tells us, has no power whatever unless the man who made it is dead. Hence the blood of Jesus Christ, the token of his death, gives validity to all the promises which he has made. That spear-thrust by the Roman soldier was a precious proof to us that our Lord was really dead. And now, beloved, whenever you read a precious promise in the Bible, you may say, "This is a clause in the Redeemer's will." When you come to a choice word, you may say, "This is another codicil to the will." Recollect that these things are yours, not because you are this or that, but because the blood makes them yours. The next time Satan says to you, "You do not believe as you ought, and therefore the promise is not sure," tell him that the sureness of the promise lies in the blood, and not in what you are or in what you are not. There is a will proved in heaven's Court of Probate, whose validity depends upon its signatures, and upon its witnesses, and upon its being drawn up in proper style. The person to whom the property is left may be very poor, but that does not overthrow the will; he may be very ragged, but that does not upset the will; he may have disgraced himself in some way or other, but that does not make the will void; he who made the will, and put his name to the will, makes the will valid, and not the legatee to whom the legacy was left. And so with you this covenant stands secure, this will of Christ stands firm. In all your ups and downs, in all your successes and your failures, you, poor needy sinner, have nothing to do but to come and take Christ to be your All-in-all, and put your trust in him, and the blood of the covenant shall make the promises sure to you.

This is a sweet topic. I have not time, however, to enlarge upon it; but I heartily commend it to your private meditations, and trust you may find consolation in it.

II. The blood which Moses called "the blood of the covenant" or "of the testament" was of the utmost importance in the ministry of the tabernacle, for **IT WAS SPRINKLED BY HIM EVERYWHERE.**

First, we are told that he sprinkled it upon the book. Oh, how delightful this Bible looks to me when I see the blood of Christ sprinkled upon it! Every leaf would have flashed with Sinai's lightnings, and every verse

would have rolled with the thunders of Horeb, if it had not been for Calvary's cross; but now, as you look, you see on every page your Savior's precious blood. He loved you, and gave himself for you, and now you who are sprinkled with that blood, and have by faith rested in him, can take that precious Book, and find it to be green pastures and still waters to your souls.

The blood was then sprinkled upon the mercy-seat itself. Whenever you cannot pray as you would, remember that Jesus Christ's blood has gone before you, and is pleading for you before the eternal throne; like the good Methodist, who, when a brother could not pray, cried out, "Plead the blood, brother!" Ay, and when you feel so unworthy that you dare not look up, when the big tear stand in your eye because you have been such a backslider, and have been so cold in heart, plead the blood, my sister, you may always come where the blood is. There you see that this sin of yours has been already atoned for. Before you committed it, Jesus carried it. Long before it fell from your heart the weight of it had pressed upon the Redeemer's heart, and he put it away in that tremendous day when he took all the load of his people's guilt, and hurled it into the sepulcher, to be buried there for ever.

Then the blood was sprinkled upon every vessel of the sanctuary. I like that thought. I like to come up to God's house, and say, "Well, I shall worship God today in the power and through the merit of the precious blood; my praises will be poor, feeble things, but then the sweet perfume will go up out of the golden censer, and my praises will be accepted through Jesus Christ, my preaching, oh! how full of faults; how covered over with sins! but then the blood is on it, and because of that, God will not see sin in my ministry, but will accept it because of the sweetness of his Son's blood."

You will come to the communion table to-night, most of you; but, oh! do not come without the precious blood, for the best place of all upon which it was sprinkled was upon all the people. The drops fell upon them all. As Moses took the basin, and scattered the blood over the whole crowd, it fell upon all who were assembled at the door of the Tabernacle. Have you had sprinkling with the precious blood, my hearer? If you have, you shall live for ever; but if you have not, the wrath of God abideth on you. Do you

ask how you can have the blood of Christ sprinkled upon you It cannot be done literally, but faith does it. Faith is the bunch of hyssop which we dip into the basin, and it sprinkles man's conscience from bad works. You say you have been christened, confirmed, baptized; but, all these things together would not have one soul, much less all the multitudes who trust in them. They are not sufficient for the taking away of a single sin. But you always say your prayers, and you have family prayers, and you are we honest, and so on. I know all this; but all these things you ought to have done, and they will not make amends for what you have not done. All the debt that you have paid will not discharge those that are still due. Know you not that saying of the Scriptures, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" You may work your fingers to the bone, but you can never weave a righteousness that shall cover your nakedness before God. The only hope of the sinner is to come and cast himself upon what Jesus Christ has done for him, depending upon the groans, and agonies, and death of the martyred Savior, who stood for us and suffered in our stead, that we might escape the wrath of God.

I hope that there is never a Sunday but what I teach this one doctrine; and, until this tongue is silent in the grave, I shall know no other gospel than just this,-Trust Christ, and you shall live. The bloody sacrifice of Calvary is the only hope of sinners. Look there, and you shall find the Star of peace guiding you to everlasting day; but turn your backs upon Christ, and you have turned your back upon heaven, you have courted destruction, you have sealed your doom. It is by the sprinkling of the blood, then, that we are saved. We must have the blood of Christ upon us in one way or the other. If we do not have it upon us to save us, we shall have it upon us to destroy us. "His blood be on us and on our children," said the Jews to Pilate in their madness, and the siege of Jerusalem was the answer to the cry. Worse than was the siege of Jerusalem to the Jews shall be the death of those who do despite to the Spirit of grace, and despise the blood of Jesus; but happy shall they be who, giving up every other confidence, come to the blood of the covenant, and put their trust there, for it shall not deceive them.

III. THE EFFECT OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST claims our earnest heed;

yet the minutes are few in which I can enlarge upon it.

Whenever Jesus Christ's blood comes upon a man, the instantaneous effect is something more than miraculous. Before the application of Christ's blood, the man was distracted. His guilt, and its consequent punishment, weighed heavily upon him. "Alas!" said he, "I shall soon die, and then hell will be my lot!" Oh! some of us will never forget when we were in that miserable, burdened state I protest before you all that, when I felt the weight of my sin, I wished that I had never been born; and I envied frogs, and toads, and the most loathsome creatures, and thought that they were so much better off than I, because they had never broken the law of God, which I had so wickedly and so willfully done. If I went to my bed, I started with the fear that I should wake up in hell; and by day the same dread thought distracted me, that I was cast off by God, and must perish. But the moment that I looked to Christ,—do not mistake me,—the very self-same moment that I put my trust in Christ, I rose from the depths of despair to the utmost heights of joy. It was not a process of reasoning; it was not a matter which took hours and days; it was all done in an instant. I understood that God had punished Christ instead of me, and I saw that, therefore, I could not be punished any more; that I never could be, if Christ died for me,—and I was assured that he did if I did but trust him. So I did trust him; with my whole weight I threw myself into his arms, and thought at the time that he had never had such a load to carry before. But I found that he was able to save, even to the uttermost, them that came unto him; and what joy and peace I had in that moment it is impossible for me to describe, and I thank God that I have never lost it. There have been time of depression; there have been seasons when the light of God's countenance has been withdrawn; but one thing I know,—Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am a sinner, and my soul rests alone on him; and how can he cast me away, since his own promise is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" I have believed; I have been baptized as an avowal of my faith; and he is not true if he does not save me. But he must be true, he cannot break his word. O dear friends, these are hundreds here who have passed through the same blessed experience, and they can tell you that the blood of Jesus in an instant speaks peace to the soul.

And this precious blood has this property about it, that, if the peace which it first causes should become a little dim, you have only to go to the precious blood to have that peace once more restored to you.

I would recommend any of my doubting brethren to come to Christ over again as they came to him at first. Never mind about your experience; never care about your marks and evidences. Never get piling up your experiences. If you go to the top of some mountains such as Snowdon or the Righi, you will find it all solid and firm enough; but there are some people who want to get a little higher than the mountain, so the people there build a rickety old stage, and charge you fourpence: or sixpence to go to the top of it; and when you get up there, you find it is all shaky, and ready to tumble down, and you are alarmed. Well, but what need is there to go up there at all? If you would stand on the mountain, that would not shake. So, sometimes, we are not content with resting upon Christ as poor sinners, and depending on him. We get building a rickety stage of our own experience, or sanctification, or emotions, and I know not what besides, and then it begins to shake under our feet. Better far if we were like the negro, who said he "fell flat down on de promise, and when he had done that, he couldn't fall no lower." Oh, to keep close to a promise! Job says that the naked embrace the rock for want of a shelter, and there is no shelter like the Rock of ages.

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

But I have not told you all the power of this blood, nor could I tell you tonight. That blood gives the pardoned sinner access with boldness to God himself. That blood, having taken away the guilt of sin, operates in a sanctifying manner, and takes away the power of sin, and the pardoned man does not live as he lived before he was pardoned. He loves God, who has forgiven him so much, and that love makes him enquire, "What shall I do for God, who has done so much for me" Then he begins to purge himself of his old habits. He finds that the pleasures that once were sweet to him are sweet no more. "Away ye go," he says to his old companions; "but I cannot go with you to hell." Having a new heart, a new love, a new desire, he begins to mix with God's people. He searches God's Word. He makes haste to keep God's commandments. His desires are holy and

heavenly, and he pants for the time when he shall get rid of all sin, shall be quite like Christ, and shall be taken away to dwell for ever where Jesus is. Oh! the blood of Christ is a blessed sin-killer. They say that St. Patrick drove all the snakes out of Ireland. Ah! but Christ drives all the serpents out of the human heart when he once gets in. If he does but sprinkle his blood upon our hearts, we become new men,—such new men as all the rules of morality could not have made us, such new men as they are who, robed in white, day without night sing Jehovah's praise before his throne.

Sinner, would you be saved to-night Trust Jesus, and you shall be. Sinner, would you be saved upon a dying bed Trust Jesus now, and you shall be. Sinner, would you be saved when the heavens are in a blaze, and the stars fall like withered fig leaves from the firmament Look to Jesus now, and you shall be saved then. Oh! I would to God that some of you would look to him not for the eyes of your body to do it, but for the eyes of your mind to do it. Think of what Christ is; God, and yet man. Think of such a Being suffering instead of you. What must be the merit of such suffering, and what an honor to God's justice that such an One should suffer instead of you! Then, depend upon Christ; and if you do so, your sins are forgiven you. Believe that they are. Then will you feel springing up within your heart great love to him who has forgiven you, and that will become the mainspring of your new life. You will start afresh like one that is born tonight. You will, indeed, be born again, for this is regeneration. Not sprinkling your face with drops of water, but making a new man of you,—generating you over again, not by natural generation, but by the eternal Father begetting you again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,—the true and only spiritual generation; and then, as new creatures in Christ Jesus, you shall go your way through this life up to the life eternal, God's blessing shielding you and crowning you for ever.

The Lord grant you his blessing, for Christ's sake! Amen

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Christ's Estimate of His People

"How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon."—Song of Solomon 4:10-11.

I shall not, this evening, attempt to prove that the Song of Solomon has a spiritual meaning. I am sure it has. It has been frequently said, and, I believe, has commonly been thought, that this song was originally written by Solomon upon his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter. Now I am as sure as I am of my own existence, that this is one of the grossest mistakes that ever was committed. There is nothing about Pharaoh's daughter in it. It is, first of all, improbable that it was written of her; and in the next place I will go further, and affirm that it is impossible that it could have been written by Solomon in honor of her. If you look all through the song you will find that this is so; in the first beginning she is compared to a shepherdess. Now all shepherds are abominations to the Egyptians; do you think, therefore, that Solomon would compare an Egyptian princess to the very thing which she abominated. In the next place, all the scenery is in the land of Canaan, none of it in Egypt; and besides that, all the places that Solomon speaks of, such as Engedi, Lebanon, Amana, and Damascus, were all out of the way; not one of them would have been passed in coming out of Egypt into Jerusalem, and very probably the Egyptian princess did not even know there were such places at all, so that if Solomon had wished to praise her he would not have compared her eyes to the fish-ponds of Heshbon, but would have spoken of the sweet waters of the Nile. Besides, it could not have been Pharaoh's daughter. Did Pharaoh's daughter ever keep sheep?—and yet the person who is represented here did. Did the watchman ever follow her about the streets, and try to take away her veil from her? Solomon would have shown them something if they had; therefore, that is impossible. In one place, Solomon compares her to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot. Now, horses were, among the Israelites, common things; and what would Pharaoh's daughter have said, if Solomon had compared her to a company of horses? She might have well looked him in the face and

said, "Have you not some better comparison for me than my father's horses?" It is very unlikely that Solomon perpetrated that folly. It is improbable, therefore, and we may almost say impossible, that it could be Pharaoh's daughter. She never came from Lebanon and from the top of Amana; most probably she never heard of those places, or, if she heard of them, she could not have come from them, for she came from Egypt. The fact is, that this book has been a puzzle to many men, for the simple reason that it was not written for them at all. Learned men and wise men find this a stone on which they are broken to powder, just because it was not written for them. Men who are disposed to laugh at Scripture find here an opportunity to exercise their profane wit, just because the book is not written for them. This book was called by the Jews, "the Holiest of Holies;" they never allowed any one to read it till he was thirty years of age; it was thought to be such a Sacred book. Many a Christian who reads it cannot understand it. And as good Joseph Irons says, "This dwarfish age is not likely to esteem this book as it ought to be esteemed; only those who have lived near to Jesus have drunk out of his cup, have eaten his flesh and drank his blood, only those who know the fullness of the word 'communion,' can sit down to this book with delight and pleasure; and to such men these words are as wafers made with honey, manna, angels' food: every sentence is like gold, and every word is like much fine gold." The true believer who has lived near to his Master will find this book to be a mass, not of gold merely, for all God's Word is this, but a mass of diamonds sparkling with brightness, and all things thou canst conceive are not to be compared with it for its matchless worth. If I must prefer one book above another, I would prefer some books of the Bible for doctrine, some for experience, some for example, some for teaching, but let me prefer this book above all others for fellowship and communion. When the Christian is nearest to heaven, this is the book he takes with him. There are times when he would leave even the Psalms behind, when standing on the borders of Canaan, when he is in the land of Beulah, and he is just crossing the stream, and can almost see his Beloved through the rifts of the storm-cloud, then it is he can begin to sing Solomon's Song. This is about the only book he could sing in heaven, but for the most part, he could sing this through, these still praising him who is his everlasting lover and friend.

With these preliminary remarks, let us go at once to the text. I have said that this is Jesus speaking to his Church. How when the Church praises Jesus, you do not wonder, for he deserves all she can say of him, and ten thousand times more. When she uses such large expressions concerning his loveliness, you feel that she falls far short of her mighty theme; that she does but demean him by her comparisons, for she can but compare the greater with the less, and the beautiful and the eternal, with that which is mutable and transient. But to hear Christ turn round upon his Church, and seem to say to her "Thou hast praised me, I will praise thee; thou thinkest much of me, I think quite as much of thee; thou usest great expressions to me, I will use just the same to thee. Thou sayest my love is better than wine, so is thine to me; thou tellest me all my garments smell of myrrh, so do thine; thou sayest my word is sweeter than honey to thy lips, so is thine to mine. All that thou canst say of me, I say it teach to thee; I see myself in thy eyes, I can see my own beauty in thee; and whatever belongs to me, belongs to thee. Therefore, O my love, I will sing back the song: thou hast sung it to thy beloved, and I will sing it to my beloved, thou hast sung it to thy Ishi, I will sing it to my Hephzibah, thou hast sung it to thy husband, I will sing it to my sister, my spouse."

Now note how sweetly the Lord Jesus sings to his spouse, First, he praises her love; "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine!" Next he praises her graces; "The smell of thy ointments, is much better than all spices." Then he praises her words; "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb." Then he praises her thoughts, the things that do not come out of her mouth, but lie under her tongue; "Honey and milk are under thy tongue." Then he finishes by praising her works, "The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon."

I. Begin at the beginning then, Christ first PRAISES HIS PEOPLE'S LOVE. Dost thou love God, my hearer? Dost thou love Jesus? If not, stand back! These things have nothing to do with thee, for if thou forest not Christ, thou hast neither part nor lot in the matter. Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. But canst thou say as Peter did, when his Master asked him thrice; "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Canst thou say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I

love thee; and thou knowest, O my Lord! that my grief is that I do not love thee more, I pant to have my little love increased, that my heart may be eaten up with love, that zeal of love to thee may completely consume me?" Harken then, to what the Lord Jesus says to thee to-night, by his Holy Spirit, from this song! Thy love, poor, feeble, and cold though it be, is very precious unto the Lord Jesus, in fact it is so precious, that he himself cannot tell how precious it is. He does not say how precious, but he says, "how fair." This is an expression that men use when they do not know how to describe anything. They lift up their hands, they put in a note of exclamation, and they say, "How fair! how precious! how much better is thy love than wine!" The fact is, that Jesus values our love at such a price, that the Holy Spirit when he dictated this Song of Solomon, could not see any word in all human language that was large enough to set forth Christ's estimation of our love. Have you never thought of Christ's love to you, till your heart has been melted, while your beloved spoke to you, till the tears have run down your eyes, and you have believed you could do as Mary Magdalene did, could kiss his feet, and wash them with your tears, and wipe them with the hairs of your head? Now can you believe it? Just what you think of Christ's love, Christ thinks of yours. You value his love, and you are right in so doing; but I am afraid that still you undervalue it. He even values your love, if I may so speak, he sets a far higher estimate upon it than you do; he thinks very much of little, he estimates it not by its strength, but by its sincerity. "Ah," he says, "he does love me, he does love me, I know he does; he sins, he disobeys me, but still I know he loves me, his heart is true, he does not love me as I deserve, but still he loves me." Jesus Christ is delighted with the thought that his people love him, this cheers any gladdens him. Just as the thought of his love gladdens us, so the thought of our love gladdens him. Notice how he puts it, he says, "How much better is thy love than wine!" Now wine when used in Scripture, frequently signifies two things, a great luxury, and a great refreshment. Wine is a luxury, especially it is so in this country, and even in the East, where there was more of it, good wine was still a dainty thing. Now Jesus Christ looks upon his people's love as being a luxury to him; and I will show you that he does. When he sat at the feast of Simon the Pharisee, I have no doubt there were sparkling wine cups on the table, and many rich dainties were there, but Jesus Christ did not care for the wine, nor for the banquet. What did he care for

them? That poor woman's love was much better to him than wine. He could say to Simon the Pharisee, if he had chosen, "Simon, put away thy wine cups, take away thy dainties; this is my feast, the feast of my people's love." I told you also that wine was used as an emblem of refreshment. Now, our Saviour has often been refreshed by his people's love. "No," says one, "that cannot be." Yes! you remember once he was weary and thirsty, and sat upon the well of Samaria. He needed wine then indeed to refresh him, but he could not get so much as a drop of water. He spoke to a woman whom he had loved from before all worlds, he put new life into her, and she at once desired to give him drink; but she ran away first to tell to the Samaritans what she had heard. Now the Saviour was so delighted at her wishing to do good, that when his disciples came, they expected to find him fainting, for he had walked many a weary mile that day, so they said, "Whence hath he meat?" and he said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." It was that woman's love that had fed him. He had broken her heart, he had won her to himself, and when he saw the tear roll from her eye, and knew that her heart was set upon him, his spirits all revived, and his poor flagging strength grew strong. It was this encouraged him. Nay, I will go farther. When Christ went to his cross there was one thing that cheered him even in the agonies of death, it was the thought of his people's love. Are we not told by the apostle Paul in the Hebrews, that our blessed and divine husband, the Lord Jesus, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame?" What was that joy? Why, the joy that he should see his seed, and that seed should love him, and that he should have his love written in their hearts, in remembrance of his dying pains and agonies: Jesus was cheered, even in his death agonies, by the thought of the love of his people, when the bulls of Bashan roared upon him, and the dogs bayed him, when the sun was put out in darkness, when his Father's hand was heavy upon him, when the legions of hell compassed him, when the pangs of body, and the tortures of spirit all beset him; it was this that cheered him, "My people, they are dear to me, for them I stretch these bleeding hands; for them shall this heart be pierced and oh, how they will love me, how they will love me on earth! how they will love me spiritually in Paradise!" This was the wine the Saviour had to drink; this was the cup of his delightful joy that made him bear all these pains without a murmuring, and this was the meaning of these words of Jesus—"How

much better is thy love than wine!"

Pause here, my soul, to contemplate a moment, and let thy joy wait awhile. Jesus Christ has banquets in heaven, such as we have never yet tasted, and yet he does not feed there. He has wines in heaven richer far than all the grapes of Eshcol could produce, but where dose he seek his wines? In our hearts, my friends, in our hearts. Not all the love of angels, nor all the joys of Paradise, are so dear to him as the love of his poor people, sprinkled with sin, and compassed with infirmity. Is not that a thought! I may preach about it, I can only speak it to you; read it, mark it, learn it, and inwardly digest it; and oh, if you saw him standing here to-night, and looking into your eyes, and saying to you personally,—"You love me, I know that you love me, thy love is to me better far than wine;" would you not fall at his feet and say, "Lord, is my love so sweet to thee? then shame upon me that I should give thee so little of it." And then you would break out into the Song of Krishnu, which we sung this morning,

"O now, my soul, forget no more
The Lord who all the misery bore,
Nor him forget who left his throne,
And for thy life gave up his own."

This is the first point: the love of the believer is sweet to Christ.

II. Do not imagine, however, that Christ despises our faith, or our hope, or our patience, or our humility. All these GRACES are precious, to him, and they are described in the next sentence under the title of ointment, and the working of these graces, their exercise and development, are compared to the smell of ointment. Now both wine and ointment were used in the sacrifice of the Jews, sweet smelling myrrh and spices were used in meat offerings and drink offerings before the Lord "But," saith Jesus Christ to his church, "all these offerings of wine, and all that burning of incense, is nothing to me compared to your graces. Your love is my wine, your virtues are my sweet smelling ointments." For now you have a little faith, but oh, how little it is. You seem to have got just faith enough to know how unbelieving you are; you have got love, but somehow you have only got about love enough to let you know how little you love him. You have some humility, but you have only enough

humility to discover you are very proud: you have some zeal for Christ, but you have only zeal enough to make you chide yourself that you are so cold; you have some hope, but you have only hope enough to lead you to see how despairing and desponding you often are; you have some patience, but you have only patience enough to teach you how often you murmur when you ought not. "I confess," say you, "that all my graces are a stench in my own nostrils, and all the good things I trust I have, I cannot look upon them with any pride or self-congratulation. I must bury myself in dust and ashes; and even those things, I can but weep over them, for they are so marred by my own evil nature." But now then, the very things that you and I very properly weep over, Christ delights in. He loves all these: the smell may seem to be but very faint and feeble, yet Jesus observes it, Jesus smells it, Jesus loves it, and Jesus approves it. Yes, believer, when you are on your sick bed and are suffering with patience; when you go about your humble way to do good by stealth; when you distribute of your alms to the poor; when you lift up your thankful eye to heaven; when you draw near to God with humble prayer, when you make confession of your sin to him; all these acts are like the smell of ointment to him, the smell of a sweet savor, and he is gratified and pleased. O Jesus, this is condescension indeed, to be pleased with such poor things as we have. Oh this is love, it proves thy love to us, that thou canst make so much out of little, and esteem so highly that which is of such little worth! Have you never known a little child when he feels love in his heart go into the garden or the field and bring you a little flower, it may be but a little buttercup or a daisy, a great thing to him, perhaps, but a trifle to you—worthless in fact—you have taken it and you have smiled and have felt happy because it was a token of your child's love? So Jesus esteems your graces, they are his gift to you. Mark, first of all, they are very poor things in themselves; till he esteems them as tokens of your love, and he rejoices in them, and declares they are as sweet to him as all the spices of Araby, and all the rich odours of the merchant. This is the second thing.

III. Now we come to thy third, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb." Christ's people are not a dumb people, they were once but they TALK now. I do not believe a Christian can keep the secret that God gives him if he were to try; it would burst his lips open to get out. When

God puts grace into your heart you may try to hide it, but hide it you cannot. It will be like fire in the bones, and will be sure to find its way out. Now the church is a talking church, a preaching church, and a praising church; she has got lips, and every believer will find he must use his lips in the service of Christ. Now it is but poor, poor matter that any of us can speak. When we are most eloquent in our Master's praise, how far our praiser fall beneath his worth! When we are most earnest in prayer, how powerless is our wrestling compared with the great blessing that we seek to obtain! When our song is loudest, and it begins to be something akin to the chorus of the angels, even then how marred it is with the discord of our unbelief and of our worldliness! But Jesus Christ does not find any fault in what the Church speaks. He says, "No, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop us the honeycomb." You know the honey that drops out of the honeycomb is the best—it is called the life-honey. So the words that drop from the Christian's lips are the very words of his life, his life-honey, and they ought to be sweet to every one. They are as sweet to the taste of the Lord Jesus as the drops of the honeycomb.

A little caution to some of you that talk too much. Some of you do not let your words drop as the honeycomb, they gush out as a great stream that sweeps everything before it, so that others could not thrust in a word edgeways; no, not it it were squeezed together and sharpened at one end could it be got in. They must talk, their tongue seems set on a hinge, like a pendulum, for ever going on, swing! swing! swing! Now Christ does not admire that. He says of his church in his commending, her lips "drop as the honeycomb." Now a honeycomb, when it drops, does not drop go much even as the drops that fall from the eaves of houses; for the honey is thick, and rich, and therefore it takes some time. One drop hangs for a time; then comes another, and then another, and does not all come in quick succession. Now when people are often talking a great deal, it is poor and thin, and good for nothing; but when they have something good to say, it drops by slow degrees like the honey from the honeycomb. Mark, I do not want you to say one good word less. They are those other words, those awkward ones. Oh that we could leave them out! I am as guilty of this myself, I fear, as many others. If we could talk half as much, it would be, perhaps, twice as good; and if we were to say only a tenth of what we do, perhaps we should be ten times better, for he is a wise man

that knows how to speak well, but he is a great deal wiser man that knows how to hold his tongue. The lips of the true church, the lips of the true believer drop like the honeycomb, with rich words, rich thoughts, rich prayers, rich praises. "Oh," says one, "but I am sure my lips do not drop like that when in prayer. Sometimes even I cannot get on at all, and when I am singing I cannot put my heart into it, and when I am trying to instruct others, I feel I am so ignorant that I know nothing myself." That is your estimate;—I am glad you are so humble as to think that. But Christ does not think so. "Ah," he says, "that man would preach if he could; that man would honor me better if he could." And he does not measure what we do, but what we want to do; and so it is that he reckons that our lips drop like the honeycomb. What is sweeter in the world than honey from the honeycomb? But whatever may be the sweetest thing to the world, the words of the Christian are the sweetest things to Christ. Sometimes believers are privileged to set down together, and they begin to talk about what he said, and what he suffered for them here below, they begin to speak of his exceeding glories and his boundless and matchless love; they begin to tell to one another what they have tasted and handled of the good word of life, and their hearts begin to burn within them when they speak of these things by the way. Do you know that Jesus is in that room, smiling Jesus is there, and he is saying to his own soul, "It is good to be here, the lips of these my brethren drop as the honeycomb, and their words are sweet to me." At another time the Christian is alone in his chamber, and he talks with his God in a few broken words, and with many sighs, many tears, and many groans, and little does he think that Jesus Christ is there, saying to such an one, "Thy lips, O my beloved, drop with honey like the honeycomb."

And now Christians will you not talk much about Jesus? Will you not speak often of him? Will you not give your tongue more continually to prayer and praise, and speech that ministers to edifying, when you have such a listener as this, such an auditor who stoops from heaven to hear you, and who values every word you speak for him? Oh, it is a sweet thing to preach when the people listen to catch every word. I would give in if I had to preach to an inattentive audience. And yet I do not know. Plato, we are told, was once listening to an orator, and when all the people had gone away but Plato, the orator went on with all his might. Being asked

why he proceeded, he replied, that Plato was sufficient audience for any man. And surely if in preaching, or in praying, all the world should find fault, and all the world should run from it, Jesus is enough to be the hearer for any man. And if he is satisfied, if he says our words are sweeter than the honeycomb, we will not stop; all the devils in hell shall not stop us. We could continue to preach, and praise, and pray, while immortality endures. If this be honey, then the honey shall drop. If Christ prizes it, we set his opinion against all the opinion in the world; he knows better than any others; he is the best judge, for he is the last and final judge—we will go on talking of him, while he goes on to say, our lips drop as the honeycomb. "But," says one, "if I were to try to talk about Jesus Christ, I do not know what I should say." If you wanted any honey, and nobody would bring it to you, I suppose the best way, if you were in the country, would be to keep some bees, would it not? It would be very well for you Christian people if you kept bees. "Well," says one, "I suppose our thoughts are to be the bees. We are always to be looking about for good thoughts, and flying on to the flowers where they are to be found; by reading, by meditation and by prayer, we are to send bees out of the hive." Certainly, if you do not read your Bibles. you will have no honey, because you have no bees. But when you read your Bibles, and study those precious texts, it is like bees settling on flowers, and sucking the sweetness out of them. There are many other books, though the Bible is the chief one, that you may read with great advantage; over which your thoughts may be busied as bees among flowers. And then you must attend the means of grace continually; you must listen often to the preaching of the Word; and if you hear a minister who is a plant of the Lord's right hand planting, and you in what you hear, you will be like the bees sucking sweetness out of flowers, and your lips will be like the honeycomb. But some people have nothing in their heads, and they are never likely to have for they are so wise that they cannot learn, and they are such fools that they will never teach. Some waste the time they have. Now I would have my people read much the Word of God, and study it, and then read such books as shall illustrate it. I will tell you where I have been sipping a bit just lately) and I have often sipped much from—it is this book of Solomon's Song. It is a favourite book of mine. And there is a sweet little book of Joseph Irons's, called "Nymphas," a blank verse explanation of it. If any of you have that little book, set your bees to work

on it, and if you do not suck honey out of it I am very much mistaken. Then let the bees bring the honey to the hive of your memory, and let it be added to the stores of your mind, and in this way you will get rich in precious things, so that when you speak, the saints will be edified, your prayers will be full of marrow and fatness, and your praises will have something in them, because you have sent your bees well abroad, and therefore your lips will drop as the honeycomb.

IV. This brings us to the next topic—"Honey and milk are under thy tongue." I find it necessary when I preach to keep a good stock of words under my tongue as well as those that are on it. It is a curious operation of the mind in the man who continually preaches. It sometimes happens while I am speaking to you that I am thinking about what I am going to say at the close of my sermon, and when I am thinking about people down stairs or in the gallery, and how I shall hit Mr. So-and-so, I am still talking right on, speaking with all my heart on the subject on which I am addressing you. It is because by continually preaching we get into the habit of keeping words under our tongue as well as those that are on the top, and sometimes we find it necessary to keep those words under our tongue altogether and not let them come further. Very often I have got a simile just ready to come out, and I have thought, "Ah, that is one of your laughable similes, take that back." I am obliged to change it for something else. If I did that a little oftener perhaps it would be better, but I cannot do it. I have sometimes a whole host of them under my tongue, and I am obliged to keep them back. "Honey and milk are under thy tongue."

That is not the only meaning. The Christian is to have words ready to come out by-and-bye. You know the hypocrite has words upon his tongue. We speak about solemn sounds upon a thoughtless tongue, but the Christian has his words first under the tongue. There they lie. They come from his heart; they do not come from the top of his tongue,—they are not superficial service work, but they come from under the tongue—down deep,—things that he feels, and matters that he knows. Nor is this the only meaning. The things that are under the tongue are thoughts that have never yet been expressed; they do not get to the top of the tongue, but lie there half formed and are ready to come out; but either because

they cannot come out, or we have not time to let them out, there they remain, and never come into actual words. Now Jesus Christ thinks very much even of these; he says, "Honey and milk are under thy tongue;" and Christian meditation and Christian contemplation are to Christ like honey for sweetness and like milk for nourishment. Honey and milk are two things with which the land of Canaan was said to flow; and so the heart of a Christian flows with milk and honey, like the land which God gave to his ancient people. "Well," says one, "I cannot find that my heart is like that. If I do sit down and think of Jesus, my thoughts turn upon the glories of his person and the excellency of his office; but oh, sir, my thoughts are such dull, cold, useless things, they do not feed me or delight me." Ah but, you see, Christ does not estimate them as you do; he feeds on them, they are like honey to him, and though you think little of your own thoughts, and are right in so doing, yet, oh remember, such is the love of Jesus, such is his abundant condescension and compassion, that the very least things that you have he values at a great price. The words you are not speaking the words you cannot utter, the groans you cannot bring out—these the Holy Spirit utters for you, and these Jesus treasures up as choice and peculiarly precious thing. "honey and milk are under thy tongue."

V. And then, last of all, "the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." The odoriferous herbs that grew on the side of Lebanon delighted the traveler, and, perhaps, here is an allusion to the peculiarly sweet smell of the cedar wood. Now, the garments of a Christian are two-fold—the garment of imputed righteousness, and the garment of inwrought sanctification. I think the allusion here is to the second. The garments of a Christian are his EVERY DAY ACTIONS—the things that he wears upon him wherever he goes. Now these smell very sweet to the Lord Jesus. And here let us speak to some of you here present who manifestly are not God's children, for you smell of the garlic of Egypt rather than of the cedar of Lebanon; and there are some professors, and, perhaps; some now present, whose smell is anything but like that of Lebanon. Take heed, ye that do not live up to your profession. You have sad evidences within that you have not possession. If you can dishonor Christ's holy gospel by the living in sin, tremble! lest when he shall come in the terror of judgment, he should cry, "Depart, ye cursed; I never knew

you." But if you be humble lovers of Christ, and really have your hearts set upon him, your daily actions are observed by him, and the smell of it is to him as sweet as the smell of Lebanon. What should you think if Jesus should meet you at the close of the day, and say to you, "I am pleased with the works of to-day?" I know you would reply, "Lord, I have done nothing for thee." You would say like those at the last day, "Lord when saw we thee hungry and fed thee? when saw we thee thirsty and gave thee drink?" You would begin to deny that you had done any good thing. He would say, "Ah, when thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee; when thou wast at thy bedside in prayer I heard thee. I saw thee when the tempter came and thou saidst, 'Get thee hence, Satan;' I saw thee give thine alms to one of my poor sick children; I heard thee speak a good word to the little child and teach him the name of Jesus; I heard thee groan when swearing polluted thine ears; I heard thy sigh when thou sawest the iniquity of this great city; I saw there when thine hands were busy, I saw that thou wast not an eye-servant or a man-pleaser, but that in singleness of purpose thou didst serve God in doing thy daily business; I saw thee, when the day was ended, give thyself to God again; I have marked thee mourning over the sins thou hast committed, and I tell thee I am pleased with thee." "The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." And, again, I hear you say, "But, Lord, I was angry, I was proud," and he says, "But I have covered up this, I have cast it into the depths of the sea; I have blotted it all out with my blood. I can see no ill in thee; thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." What would you do then? Would you not at once fall down at his feet and say, "Lord, I never knew love like this: I have heard that love covers a multitude of sins, but I never knew a love so broad as to cover all mine. And then to declare that thou canst see no sin in me at all—ah! that is love?" It may melt our heart, and make us seek to be holy, that we might not grieve Christ, make us labor to be diligent in his service, that we might not dishonor him.

I dare say some of you think when ministers preach or go about to do their pastoral duty, that of course Christ is very much pleased with them. "Ah," says Mary, "I am only a poor servant girl; I have to get up in the morning and light the fire, lay out the breakfast things, dust the parlour, make the pies and puddings for dinner, and clear away the things again,

and wash them up—I have to do everything there is to do in the house—Christ cannot be pleased with this." Why Mary, you can serve Christ as much in making beds, as I can in making sermons; and you can be as much a true servant of Christ in dusting a room, as I can in administering discipline in a church. Do not think for a single moment that you cannot serve Christ. Our religion is to be an everyday religion—a religion for the kitchen as well as for the parlour, a religion for the rolling pin, and the jack-towel, quite as much as for the pulpit stairs and the Bible—a religion that we can take with us wherever we go. And there is such a thing as glorifying Christ in all the common actions of life. "Servants be obedient to your masters, not only to those who are good and gentle, but to the froward." You men of business, you need not think that when you are measuring your ribbons, or weighing out your pounds of sugar, or when you are selling, or buying, or going to market, and such like, that you cannot be serving Christ. Why a builder can serve Christ in putting his bricks together, and you can serve Christ in whatever you are called to do with your hands, if you do it as unto the Lord, and not unto men. I remember Mr. Jay once said, that if a shoeblack were a Christian, he could serve Christ in blacking shoes. He ought to black them, he said, better than anyone else in the parish; and then people would say, "Ah, this Christian shoeblack, he is conscientious; he won't send the boots away with the heels half done, but will do them thoroughly." And so ought you. You can say of every article you sell, and of everything you do, "I turned that out of my hands in such a manner that it shall defy competition. The man has got his money's worth; he cannot say I am a rogue or a cheat. There are tricks in many trades, but I will not have anything to do with them; many get money fast by adulteration in trade, but I will not do it, I would sooner be poor than do it." Why, the world says, "there is a sermon in that grocer's window—look, you don't see him telling lies to puff his goods: there is a sermon there." People say as they pass by, "It is a godly man that keeps that shop, he cannot bring his conscience down to do what others do. If you go there, you will be well treated, and you will come out of his shop and say, I have spent my money well, and I am glad that I have dealt with a Christian man." Depend upon it, you will be as good preachers in your shops as I shall be in my pulpit, if you do that; depend upon it, there is a way of serving Christ in this manner; and this is to comfort you and cheer you. Upon all

the actions of your daily life the Lord Jesus looks down from heaven and says, "The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." I know you can hardly believe that Jesus Christ takes notice of such little things as that, but he does. You say, "Oh, but they are too trifling." But don't you know, the God that wings an angel guides a sparrow? Don't you know "the very hairs of your head are all numbered?" God not only wings the whirlwind, and gives an edge to the lightning flash, but he guides the chaff from the hand of the winnower, and steers the grain of dust in the evening gale. Do not think anything too little for you. He observes the mighty orbs as they whirl through space, but he notices you too, as you go about your business. And those little cups of cold water you give to his people—those little services you do for his church, those self-denials that you make for his honor, and those conscientious scruples which you foster, and which will not allow you to act as the world acts, all these he observes, and he says, "The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon."

And now to conclude, what shall we say to this? I was reading sometime ago, an article in a newspaper, very much in my praise; and you know, it makes me sad, so sad that I could cry, if ever I see anything praising me; it breaks my heart. I feel I do not deserve it; and then I say, "Now I must try and be better so that I may deserve it. If the world abuses me, I am a match for that, I begin to like it; it may fire all its big guns at me, I will not return a solitary shot, but just store them up, and grow rich upon the old iron. All the abuse it likes to heap upon me I can stand; but when a man praises me, I feel it is a poor thing I have done, sad that he praises me for what I do not deserve. This crushes me down, and I say I must set to work and deserve this. I must preach better. I must be more earnest, more diligent in my Master's service. Now, will not this text produce just the same effect on you? When the Lord comes to you, and begins saying, "You are not so humble, nor so prayerful, nor so believing as you ought to be;" you say, "I do not care about this whipping;" but when he comes and begins to praise you, and tells you, "That your lips drop as the honeycomb, that all your actions smell of myrrh, and that your love is better than wine, and that the thoughts under your tongue are better to him than wine and milk," what will you say? Oh, Lord, I cannot say thou art mistaken, for thou art infallible; but if I might say

such a thing, if I dared so think thou art mistaken, I should say, "Thou art mistaken in me;" but Lord I cannot think thou art mistaken, it must be true. Still, Lord, I do not deserve it; I am conscious I do not, and I never can deserve it, still if thou wilt help me, I will strive to be worthy of thy praise in some feeble measure. I will seek to live up to those high encomiums which thou hast passed upon me. If thou sayest, "My love is better than wine;" Lord, I will seek to love thee better, that the wine may be richer and stronger. If thou sayest, "My graces are like the smell of ointment," Lord, I will try to increase them, so as to have many great pots filled with them; and if my words drop as the honeycomb, Lord, there shall be more of them, and I will try to make them better, so that thou mayest think more of such honey; and if thou declarest that the thoughts under my tongue are to thee like honey and milk, then, Lord, I will seek to have more of those divine thoughts; and if my daily actions are to thee as the smell of Lebanon, Lord, I will seek to be more holy, to live nearer to thee; I will ask for grace, that my actions may be really what thou sayest they are.

Ye that love not God, I can weep over you, for ye have nothing to do with this text. It is a frightful thing that you should be shut out of such praise as this—may Christ bring you in! You must first be brought to feel you are nothing; you must then be led to feel that Christ is everything, and then, after that, you shall understand this text, and these words will be spoken to you.

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A Bottle in the Smoke

For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes. - Psalm 119:83

The figure of "a bottle in the smoke" is essentially oriental; we must therefore go to the East for its explanation. This we will supply to our hearers and readers in the words of the Author of the Pictorial Bible: "This doubtless refers to a leathern bottle, of kid or goat-skin. The peasantry of Asia keep many articles, both dry and liquid, in such bottles, which, for security, are suspended from the roof, or hung against the walls of their humble dwellings. Here they soon become quite black with smoke; for as, in the dwellings of the peasantry, there are seldom any chimneys, and the smoke can only escape through an aperture in the roof, or by the door, the apartment is full of dense smoke whenever a fire is kindled in it. And in those nights and days, when the smokiness of the hovels in which we daily rested during a winter's journey in Persia, Armenia, and Turkey, seemed to make the cold and weariness of actual travel a relief, we had ample occasion to observe the peculiar blackness of such skin vessels, arising from the manner in which substances offering a surface of this sort, receive the full influence of the smoke, and detain the minute particles of soot which rest upon them. When such vessels do not contain liquids, and are not quite filled by the solids which they hold, they contract a shrunk and shrivelled appearance, to which the Psalmist may also possibly allude as well as to the blackness. But we presume that the leading idea refers to the latter circumstance, as in the East blackness has an opposite signification to the felicitous meaning of whiteness. David had doubtless seen bottles of this description hanging up in his tent when a wanderer; and though he might have had but few in his palace, yet in the cottages of his own poor people he had, no doubt, witnessed them. Hence he says of himself, 'I am become,' by trouble and affliction, by trial and persecution, 'like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.'"

First, God's people have their trials—they get put in the smoke; secondly, God's people feel their trials—they "become like a bottle in the smoke;" thirdly, God's people do not forget God's statutes in their trials—"I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes."

I. GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE THEIR TRIALS. This is an old truth, as old as the everlasting hills, because trials were in the covenant, and certainly the covenant is as old as the eternal mountains. It was never designed by God

when he chose his people, that they should be an untried people; that they should be chosen to peace and safety, to perpetual happiness here below, and freedom from sickness and the pains of mortality. But rather, on the other hand, when he made the covenant, he made the rod of the covenant too; when he drew up the charter of privileges, he also drew up the charter of chastisements; when he gave us the roll of heirship, he put down the rods amongst the things to which we should inevitably be heirs. Trials are a part of our lot; they were predestinated for us in God's solemn decrees; and so surely as the stars are fashioned by his hands, he has fixed their orbits, so surely are our trials weighed in scales; he has predestinated their season and their place, their intensity and the effect they shall have upon us. Good men must never expect to escape troubles; if they do, they shall be disappointed; some of their predecessors have escaped them.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

Mark Job, of whose patience ye have heard; read ye well of Abraham, for he had his trials, and by his faith under them, when he offered up Isaac, he became "the father of the faithful." Note ye well the biographies of all the patriarchs, of all the prophets, of all the apostles and martyrs, and you shall discover none of those, whom God made vessels of mercy, who were not hung up like bottles in the smoke. It is ordained of old, that the cross of trouble, even as the sparks fly upwards; and when born again, it does seem as if we had a birth to double trouble; and double toil and trouble come to the man who hath double grace and double mercy bestowed upon him. Good men must have their trials; they must expect to be like bottles in the smoke.

Sometimes these trials arise from the poverty of their condition. It is the bottle in the cottage which gets into the smoke, not the bottle in the palace. The Queen's plate knows nothing of smoke; we have seen at Windsor how carefully it is preserved; it knoweth nothing of trial, no hands are allowed to touch that, so as to injure it, although even it may be stolen by accident when the guards are not careful over it. Still, it was not intended to be subject to smoke. So with God's poor people; they must

expect to have smoke in their dwellings. We should suppose that smoke does not enter into the house of the rich, although even then our supposition would be false; but certainly we must suppose there is more smoke where the chimney is ill built, and the home is altogether of bad construction. It is the poverty of the Arab that puts his bottle in the smoke; so the poverty of Christians exposes them to much trouble, and inasmuch as God's people are for the most part poor, for that reason must they always be for the most part in affliction. We shall not find many of God's people in the higher ranks; not many of them shall ever be illustrious in this world. Until happier times come, when kings shall be their nursing fathers, and queens their nursing mothers, it must still be true that "God hath chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, that they should be heirs of the kingdom." Poverty hath its privileges, for Christ hath lived in it; but it hath its ills, it hath its smoke, it hath its trials. Ye know not sometimes how ye shall be provided for; ye are often pinched for food and raiment, ye are vexed with anxious cares, ye wonder whence tomorrow's food shall come, and where ye shall obtain your daily supplies. It is because of your poverty that ye are hung up like a bottle in the smoke.

Many of God's people, however, are not poor; and even if they are, poverty does not occasion so much trouble to them as some suppose; for God, in the midst of poverty, makes his children very glad, and so cheers their hearts in the cottage that they scarce know whether it be a palace or a hovel; yea, he doth send such sweet music across the waters of their woe, that they know not whether they be on dry land or not.

But there are other trials: and this brings us to remark, that our trials frequently result from our comforts. What makes the smoke? Why, it is the fire, by which the Arab warms his hands, that smokes his bottle, and smokes him too. So, beloved, our comforts usually furnish us with troubles. It is the law of nature, that there should never be a good, without having an ill connected with it. What if the stream fertilize the land? It can sometimes drown the inhabitants. What if the fire cheer us? doth it not frequently consume our dwellings? What if the sun enlighten us? does he not sometimes scorch and smite us with his heat? What if the rain bring forth our food, and cause the flowers to blossom on the face of

the earth? does it not also break the young blossom from the trees, and cause many diseases? There is nothing good without its ill, there is no fire without its smoke. The fire of our comfort will always have the smoke of trial with it. You will find it so, if you instance the comforts you have in your own family. You have relations; mark you, every relationship engenders its trial, and every fresh relationship upon which you enter opens to you, at one time certainly, a new source of joys, but infallibly also a new source of sorrows. Are you parents? your children are your joy; but those children cause you some smoke, because you fear, lest they should not be brought up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and it may be, when they come to riper years, that they will grieve your spirits,—God grant they may not break your hearts by their sins! You have wealth. Well, that has its joys with it; but still, hath it not its trials and its troubles? Hath not the rich man more to care for than the poor? He who hath nothing sleepeth soundly, for the thief will not molest him; but he who hath abundance often trembles lest the rough wind should blown down that which he hath builded—lest the rude storm should wreck that argosy laden with his gold—lest an overwhelming and sudden turn in the tide of commerce should sweep away his speculations and destroy his hopes. Just as the birds that visit us fly away from us, so do our joys bring sorrow with them. In fact, joy and sorrow are twins; the blood which runs in the veins of sorrow, runs in the veins of joy too. For what is the blood of sorrow, is it not the tear? and what is the blood of joy? When we are full of joy do we not weep? Ah! that we do. The same drop which expresses joy is sorrow's own emblem; we weep for joy, and we weep for sorrow. Our fires gives smoke, to tell us that our comforts have their trials with them. Christian men! you have extraordinary fires, which others have never kindled; expect then to have extraordinary smoke. You have the presence of Christ; but then you will have the smoke of fear, lest you should lose it. You have the promise of God's Word—there is the fire of it: but you have the smoke sometimes, when you read it without the illumination of God's Spirit. You have the joy of assurance; but you have also the smoke of doubt, which blows into your eyes, and well nigh blinds you. You have your trials, and your trials arise from your comforts. The more comfort you have, the more fire you have, the more sorrows shall you have, and the more smoke.

Again, the ministry is the great fire by which Christian men warm their hands: but the ministry hath much smoke with it. How often have you come to this house of God and had your spirits lifted up! But perhaps as often ye have come here to be cast down. Your harp strings at times have been all loose; you could not play a tune of joy upon them, you have come here, and Christ tuned your harp, so that it could awake "like David's harp of solemn sound." But at other times you have come here, and had all the rejoicings removed from you, by some solemn searching sermon. Last Sabbath day, how many of you there were like bottles in the smoke! This pulpit, which is intended at times to give you fire, is also intended to have smoke with it. It would not be God's pulpit if no smoke issued from it. When God made Sinai his pulpit, Sinai was altogether on a smoke. You have often been like bottles in the smoke,—the smoke caused by the fire of God's own kindling, the fire of the gospel ministry.

I think, however, that David had one more thought. The poor bottle in the smoke keeps there for a long time, till it gets black; it is not just one puff of smoke that comes upon it; the smoke is always going up, always girding the poor bottle; it lives in an atmosphere of smoke. So, beloved, some of us hang up like bottles in the smoke, for months, or for a whole year. No sooner do you get out of one trouble, than you tumble into another; no sooner do you get up one hill, than you have to mount another; it seems to be all up hill to heaven with you. You feel that John Bunyan is right in his ditty—"A Christian man is seldom long at ease; when one trouble's gone, another doth him seize." You are always in the smoke. You are linked perhaps with an ungodly partner; or perhaps you are of a singular temperament, and your temperament naturally puts clouds and darkness round about you, so that you are always in the smoke. Well, beloved, that was the condition of David; he was not just sometimes in trial, but it seemed as if trials came to him every day. Each day had its cares; each hour carried on its wings some fresh tribulation; while, instead of bringing joy, each moment did but toll the knell of happiness, and bring another grief. Well, if this is your case, fear not, you are not alone in your trials; but you see the truth of what is uttered here: you are become like bottles in the smoke.

II. This brings us to the second point: CHRISTIAN MEN FEEL THEIR

TROUBLES. They are in the smoke; and they are like bottles in the smoke. There are some things that you might hang up in the smoke for many a day, and they would never be much changed, because they are so black now, that they could never be made any blacker, and so shrivelled now, that they never could become any worse. But the poor skin bottle shrivels up in the heat, gets blacker, and shows at once the effect of the smoke; it is not an unfeeling thing, like a stone, but it is at once affected. Now, some men think, that grace makes a man unable to feel suffering; I have heard people insinuate that the martyrs did not endure much pain when they were being burned to death; but this is a mistake, Christian men are not like stones; they are like bottles in the smoke. In fact, if there be an difference, a Christian man feels his trials more than another, because he traces them to God, and that makes them more acute, as coming from the God whom he loves. But at the same time, I grant you, it makes them more easy to bear, because he believes they will work the comfortable fruits of righteousness. A dog will bite the stone that is thrown at it, but a man would resent the injury on the man that threw the stone. Stupid, foolish, carnal unbelief quarrels with the trial; but faith goes into the Court of King's Bench at once, and asks its God "wherefore dost thou content with me." But even faith itself does not avert the pain of chastisement, it enables us to endure, but does not remove the trial. The Christian is not wrong in giving way to his feelings; did not his Master shed tears when Lazarus was dead? and did he not, when on the cross, utter the exceeding bitter cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Our Heavenly Father never intended to take away our griefs when under trial; he does not put us beyond the reach of the flood, but builds us an ark, in which we float, until the water be ultimately assuaged, and we rest on the Ararat of heaven for ever, God takes not his people to an Elysium where they become impervious to painful feelings: but he gives us grace to endure our trials, and to sing his praises while we suffer. "I am become like a bottle in the smoke:" I feel what God lays upon me.

The trial that we do not feel is no trial at all. I remember a remarkable case of assault and battery that was tried sometime ago. I knew a friend who happened to be in court. It was a most singular affair; for when the prosecutor was requested to state in what the assault consisted; he said, in curious English, "Ah! sir, he struck me a most tremendous blow."

"Well, but where did he strike you?" "Well, sir, he did not hit me; it only just grazed me." Of course the judge said there was no assault and battery, because there was no real blow struck. So we sometimes meet with persons, who say, "I could bear that trial if it did not touch my feelings." Of course you could, for then it would be no trial at all. Suppose a man were to see his house and property burned, would you call it a trial, if he could do as Sheridan did, when his theatre was burned? He went to a house opposite, and sat down drinking, and jokingly said, "Surely, every man has a right to sit and warm his hands by his own fireside." It is feeling that makes it a trial; the essence of the trial lies in my feeling it. And God intended his trials to be felt. His rods are not made of wheat straw, they are made of true birch; and his blows fall just where we feel them. He does not strike us on the iron plates of our armour; but he smites us where we are sure to be affected.

And yet more: trials which are not felt are unprofitable trials. If there be no blueness in the wound, then the soul is not made better; if there be no crying out, then there will be no emptying out of our depravity. It is just so much as we feel, that we are profited; but a trial unfelt must be a trial unsanctified, a trial under which we do not feel at all, cannot be a blessing to us, because we are only blessed by feeling it, under the agency of God's Holy Spirit. Christian man! do not blush, because you are like a bottle in the smoke: because you are sensitive under affliction, for so you ought to be. Do not let others say, you ought not feel it so much, because your husband is dead, or your child is dead, or you have lost your property. Just tell them that you ought; for God sent the trouble, that you might feel it (not excessively, and murmur against God,) but that you might feel the rod, and then kiss it. That is patience: not when we do not feel, but when we feel it, and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." "I am like a bottle in the smoke." Now, a bottle, when it is in the smoke, gets very black: so does the Christian, when he is in the smoke of trial, or in the smoke of the gospel ministry, or the smoke of persecution, get very black to his own esteem. It is marvellous how bright we are when everything goes right with us; but it is equally marvellous how black we get when a little tribulation comes upon us. We think very well of ourselves while there is no smoke; but let the smoke come, and it just reveals the blackness of our hearts. Trials teach us what we are; they dig

up the soil, and let us see what we are made of; they just turn up some of the ill weeds on the surface; they are good, for this reason, they make us know our blackness.

A bottle, too, that hangs up in the smoke, will become very useless. So do we, often, when we are under a trying ministry, or a trying providence, feel that we are so very useless, good for nothing, like a bottle that has been hung up in the smoke, that nobody will ever drink out of any more, because it will smoke everything that is put in it, we feel that we are no use to anybody—that we are poor unprofitable creatures. In our joys we are honorable creatures; we scarcely think the Creator could do without us; but when we are in trouble, we feel, "I am a worm, and no man"—good for nothing; let me die; I have become useless, as well as black, "like a bottle in the smoke."

And then a bottle in the smoke is an empty bottle. It would not have been hung up in the smoke unless it had been empty. And very often under trials how empty we become; we are full enough in our joys; but the smoke and heat soon dry every atom of moisture out of us; all our hope is gone, all our strength is departed, we then feel that we are empty sinners, and want a full Christ to save us. We are like bottles in the smoke.

Have I described any of your characters? I dare say some of you are like bottles in the smoke. You do feel your trials; you have a soft, tender heart, and the arrows of the Almighty sink fast in it. You are like a piece of seaweed, affected by every change of the weather; not like a piece of rock, that might be hung up and would never change, but you are capable of being affected, and it is quite right you should be: you are "become like a bottle in the smoke."

III. And now, beloved, the third and blessed thought is, that **CHRISTIANS, THOUGH THEY HAVE TROUBLES, AND FEEL THEIR TROUBLES, DO NOT IN THEIR TROUBLES FORGET GOD'S STATUTES.**

What are God's statutes? God has two kinds of statutes, both of them engraved in eternal brass. The first are the statutes of his commands; and

of these he has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail till all be fulfilled." These statutes are like the statutes of the Medes and Persians; they are binding upon all his people. His precepts are a light and easy yoke; but they are one which no man must cast from his shoulders; all must carry the commands of Christ, and all who hope to be saved by him must take up his cross daily and follow him. Well, the Psalmist said, "In the midst of my trials I have not swerved from thy statutes; I have not attempted to violate thy commands; I have not in any way moved from the strict path of integrity; and in the midst of all my persecutions, I have gone straight on, never once forgetting God's statutes or commands." And then again: there are statutes of promise, which are equally firm, each of them as immortal as God who uttered them. David did not forget these; for he said of them, "Thy statutes have been my song, in the house of my pilgrimage;" and he could not have sung about them if he had forgotten them.

Why was it David still held fast by God's statutes? First of all, David was not a bottle in the fire, or else he would have forgotten them. Our trials are smoke, but not fire; they are very uncomfortable, but they do not consume us. In other parts of Scripture, the figure of fire may be applied to our trials, but here it would not be appropriate, because the bottle would be burned up directly, if it were in the fire. But the Christian may say, "True, it is all smoke round about me, but there is nothing which tends to burn up my piety; smoke may dim my evidence, but it cannot burn it; it may, and certainly will, be obnoxious to my eyes and nose, and all my senses, but it cannot burn my limbs; it may stop my breath, and prevent my drinking in the pure air of heaven, but it cannot consume my lungs and burn the vital parts of my body. Ah! it is well for thee, O Christian, that there is more smoke than fire in thy trials. And there is no cause why you should forget your God in your troubles; they may have a tendency to drive you from him, but like great waves, they often wash the drift wood of the poor lost barks upon the beach of God's love; and the mast, that might have floated out to sea, and been carried no one knows where, if often stranded on the shore, and there once more is made to do fresh service. So art thou, Christian, washed on shore by the waves of thy trouble, and never art thou washed away by them. "I have not forgotten thy statutes."

Another reason why, when David was in the smoke, he did not forget God's statutes was this, that Jesus Christ was in the smoke with him, and the statutes were in the smoke with him too. God's statutes have been in the fire, as well as God's people. Both the promise and the precept are in the furnace; and if I hang up in the smoke, like a bottle, I see hanging up by my side, God's commands, covered with soot, and smoke, subject to the same perils. Suppose I am persecuted: It is a comfort to know that men do not persecute me, but my Master's truth. It is a singular thing, with regard to all the envenomed shafts that have been hurled at me, that they have generally fallen on that part of my frame which is most invulnerable, because they have generally fallen on something I have quoted from somebody else, or proved from Scripture. They may go on; it is sweet to think that Jesus Christ is in the smoke as well as we are; and the more flame there is, the better we shall be able to see our Master in the smoke with us.

"By God's command where'er I stray,
Sorrow attends me all the way,
A never failing friend;
And, if my sufferings may augment
Thy praise, behold me well content—
Let sorrow still attend!

It costs me no regret, that she
Who follow'd Christ should follow me;
And though where'er she goes,
Thorns spring spontaneous at her feet,
I love her and extract a sweet
From all my bitter woes."

Another reason why David did not forget the statutes was, they were in the soul, where the smoke does not enter. Smoke does not enter the interior of the bottle; it only affects the exterior. So it is with God's children: the smoke does not enter into their hearts; Christ is there, and grace is there, and Christ and grace are both unaffected by the smoke. Come up, clouds of smoke! curl upward, till ye envelop me! Still will I

hang on the Nail, Christ Jesus—the sure Nail, which never can be moved from its place—and I will feel, that "while the outward man decayeth, the inward man is renewed day by day;" and the statutes being there, I do not forget them. "For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet I do not forget thy statutes." To such of you as can join with David, let me give a word of consolation. If you have been persecuted, and still hold fast by God's word—if ye have been afflicted, and still persevere in the knowledge of our Lord and Master, you have every reason to believe yourself a Christian. If under your trials and troubles you remain just what you were when at ease, you may then hope, and not only so, but steadfastly believe and be assured that you are a child of God. Some of you, however, are very much like Christians, when you hear sermons full of promises; when I preach to you about bruised reeds, or address you with the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour;" but when I give you a smoky sermon—one which you cannot endure—if you then can say, guilty, weak, and helpless I may be, but still I fall into his arms; sinful I know I am, and I have grace cause for doubt, but still

"There, there, unshaken will I rest,
Till this vile body dies;"

I know, poor, weak, and helpless though I am, that I have a rich Almighty Friend; if you can stand a little smoke, then you may believe yourself to be a child of God. But there are some fantastic people we know of, who are shocked with a very puff of smoke, they cannot endure it, they go out at once, just like rats out of the hold of a ship when they begin to smoke it; but if you can live in the smoke and say, "I feel it, and still can endure it,"—if you can stand a smoky sermon, and endure a smoky trial, and hold fast to God under a smoky persecution, then you have reason to believe, that you are certainly a child of God. Fair-weather birds! you are good for nothing; it is the stormy petrels that are God's favorites. He loves the birds that can swim in the tempest; he loves those who can move in the storm, and like the eagle, companion of the lightening flash, can make the wind their chariot, and ride upon forked flames of fire. If in the heat of battle, when your helmet is bruised by some powerful enemy, you can still hold up your head, and say, "I know whom I have believed," and do not swerve from your post, then you are verily a child of heaven; for

constancy, endurance, and perseverance, are the true marks of a hero of the cross, and of the invincible warriors of the Lord. Those are no invincible ships that flee away before a storm; he is no brave warrior who hears reports from others that a fort is impregnable, and dares not attack it; but he is brave, who dashes his ship beneath the guns, or runs her well nigh aground, and gives broadside after broadside with a desperate valour against his foe; he who in the smoke and the tempest, in the clamour and roar of the battle, can yet coolly give his commands, and knowing that every man is expected to do his duty, can fight valiantly, he is a brave commander, he is a true soldier, he shall receive from his master a crown of glory. O Christian! cleave to thy Master in the smoke, hold on to thy Lord in the trials, and thou shalt be refined by thine afflictions; yea, thou shalt exceedingly increase, and be profited beyond measure.

However, I have some here who can consume their own smoke. There are some of my congregation who, when they have any trials, can manage to get over them very well themselves. They say, "Well, I don't care, you seem to be a sad set of simpletons, you feel everything; but as for me, it all rolls off, and I don't care for anything." NO, I dare say you don't but the time will come when you will find the truth of that little story you used to read when you were children, that don't care came to a very bad end. These persons are not like bottles in the smoke, but like pieces of wood hanging over it; but they will find there is something more than smoke by-and-bye; they will come to a place, where there is not only smoke, but fire; and though they can endure the smoke of this world's troubles, they will find it not so easy as they imagine to endure the unutterable burnings and the everlasting flames of that pit whose fire knows no extinction, and whose worm shall know no death. Oh! hardened sinner, thou hast sorrows now, which are like the skirmishers before an army, a few light-armed troops to lead the way for the whole hosts of God's avengers, who shall trample thee beneath their feet. One or two drops of woe have fallen on the pavement of thy life; thou laughest at them; ah! but they are the heralds of a shower of fire and brimstone, which God shall rain out of heaven upon thy soul throughout eternity. And yet you may be pitying us poor Christians, because of our troubles and sufferings. Pity us, do you? Ah! but our light afflictions is but for a

moment, and it worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Take your pity back, and reserve it for yourselves; for your light joy, which is but for a moment, worketh out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of torment, and your little bliss will be the mother of an everlasting, unutterable torture, which we shall happily escape. Your sun will soon set, and at its setting your night shall come; and when your night cometh, it will be night for ever, without hope of light again. Ere thy sun setteth, my hearer, may God give thee grace. Dost thou inquire what thou shouldst do to be saved? Again comes the old answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved." If thou art no sinner, I have no salvation for thee; if thou art a Pharisee, and knowest not thy sins, I have no Christ to preach to thee; I have no heaven to offer to thee, as some have; but if thou art a sinner, a bona-fide sinner, if thou art a real sinner, not a sham one, I have this to tell thee: "Jesus Christ came to save sinners, even the chief;" and if thou wilt believe on him, thou shalt go out of this house of prayer, shriven, absolved, without a sin; forgiven, pardoned, washed, without a stain, accepted in the Beloved. As long as thou livest, that pardon shall avail thee; and when thou diest, thou wilt have nought to do, but to show it at the gates of paradise, to gain admittance. And then, in a nobler and sweeter song, that pardon shall form the basis of thy praise, while heaven's choirs shall sing, or while the praise of the Eternal shall be the chaunt of the universe. God bless thee! Amen.

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The Call of Abraham

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."—Hebrews 11:8.

Abraham's faith was of the most eminent order, for he is called the Father of the Faithful. Let us rest assured that nothing but repeated and fiery trials could have trained his faith to so great a strength as that which it

exhibited in his preparation to slay his son at the command of God. This true Jerusalem blade was long annealed before it gained its marvellous edge and matchless temper. Men come not to their perfect stature except by years of growth. Stars cannot reach the zenith of the heavens by one sudden flash, nay even the sun himself must climb to his meridian. Trials are the winds which root the tree of our faith. They are the trainers, drilling God's young soldiers, and teaching their hands to war and their fingers to fight. Foremost among Abraham's trials was that of being called away to a land which he had never been; as this may be our trial also, I pray that my words may be adapted to our present condition.

I. First, let us LOOK AT ABRAHAM. Abraham's family was originally an idolatrous one; afterwards some beams of light shone in upon the household, and they became worshippers of the true God; but there was much ignorance mingled with their worship, and at least occasionally their old idolatrous habits returned. The Lord who had always fixed on Abraham to be his chosen servant and the father of his chosen people upon earth, made Abraham leave the society of his friends and relatives, and go out of Ur of the Chaldees, and journey away to the land of Canaan, which he had promised afterwards to give him for an inheritance.

We shall notice first what Abraham left, and then where Abraham went; the trial is made up of these two things. What had he to leave? He had to leave behind him those who were exceeding dear to him. It is true that just after his first call, his own father, Terah, died, having gone a part of the way with Abraham and detained Abraham a little while by sickness. Abraham then went on his way obedient to the Lord's command. Nevertheless, he left behind him all the association of his youth, the house in which he had been trained, the family with which he had been nursed, all those whom he had known and with whom he had taken sweet counsel; and he must go forth into exile from the family of his love. He left behind him his native country, and to a patriot that is no small struggle—to leave all the associations of one's country, and bear with us one's native songs to be sung in distant valleys. Many a man has felt keenly enough the separation from home and kindred, and next to that, the sad banishment from his native land. Besides, we all know with what inconvenience Abraham must have removed. He had a considerable

property in flocks and herds, and probably had the ancestral dwelling house in which to reside. He must leave all these, and he must also leave the fair pastures wherein his flocks and his father's flocks had been fed, and he must wend his way into the wilderness. He must give up all agricultural pursuits, renounce his vine and his fig tree, and go his way, he knew not whither, to a land which to him was as unknown as the valley of the shadow of death. Whose of you who have had to part from those you loved, who have had your hearts rent when loved ones have been torn away, can sympathize somewhat with Abraham's trial when he left home and family, and country, and all, to go forth into an unknown land. This is the place from which he went.

How, let us turn to the place to which he journeyed. When men emigrate, they, wish to know the nature of the country in which they are to live. If it be a richer country than their own, although it be with some reluctance, they spread the sail and speed across the waters; and it may be, after they have settled there a little while, their mother country is almost forgotten, and they find a settled dwelling-place in their adopted land. But Abraham knew nothing of the country to which he was about to move; he had simply God's promise that it should be his inheritance. It was, it might be said, a wild goose chase, and the profane would deride it as a mad and idle dream. Doubtless, the prudent father cautioned him to avoid so great a risk, and the anxious mother bade him remember that, as a bird wandereth from his nest, so is he that leaveth his place. But amidst all this, Abraham was wiser than the wisest, for he put aside all worldly maxims, he set the precept above the maxim, and considered the promise more precious than the proverb. Well was it for Abraham that he knew that the wise things of men are often ignorance dressed out in its best clothes. It has been said by an acute old writer, that when Christ came into Jerusalem—and he was incarnate wisdom—he came riding upon an ass; but when Satan came into paradise—and he is infernal folly—he came in the shape of a wise creature, the subtle serpent. Wisdom came riding upon stupidity, and folly came in the garments of craftiness; We shall often find it so in our lives. Simplicities are next akin to revelations. Plain simple things, and especially a plain simple obedience, are next akin to the very wisdom of the seer; and he who knoweth how to read the precept need not be afraid that the prophecy will ever contradict it, or

render obedience to the precept an act of folly. Abraham then went forth, he knew not whither. "The journey is a long one," say some timid ones. "It is so," said Abraham, "but God will help me on the way." "The end of your journey may be doleful," they say. "No," saith Abraham, "it cannot be doleful; it may be disappointing to my worldly ambition, but not to my faith. I believe that God will be with me, and that take me where he may, I shall lack no good thing." So Abraham went on his way along alone and weary journey, and God did not desert him, but graciously provided for him.

I have spoken to you of what Abraham left, and whither he went; now I would have you observe for a moment how it was that Abraham went. It is said that when he was commanded, he obeyed. Ere the precept had gone forth, obedience had come forth to meet it with rejoicing. God had scarcely spoken ere Abraham replied. Just as the thunder followeth the lightning's flash, instanter, when the storm is near, so when faith is near, the thunder of our obedience follows the mighty flash of God's influence in our hearts. If God bids us do, we should do at once. Abraham went without any hesitation. He did not say, "Lord give me a little time: I will go in a week. Suffer me first to go and bury my father." I do not find that he said, "Lord let me tarry till harvest be reaped." No, he was commanded to go, and he went without hesitation. There were no carnal arguments between God and Abraham, for God has not invited his people to reason with him with human arguments. He has invited sinners to do it.—"Come now and let us reason together," he has said. When men have no faith, God invites them to reason, but when they have faith, reasoning with God becomes a sin. Abraham asked no question: he was not like Moses: he did not say, "Who am I that thou shouldest send me;" but when he was commanded to go, he went and he followed God without hesitation.

And then again, we have every reason to believe that he obeyed without reluctance. He went as cheerfully away from his father's house as he had ever gone into it. I know not that he was sent away with the voice of tabret and of harp, but I am sure there was the voice of music in his heart. He might have said, "I go as cheerfully to-day I know not where, as ever I have gone to the fat land of Egypt or the spice-bearing country of the Sabeans." Men said his journey was absurd and deplorable, but to him it

was the happiest and the best, for God was with him; and if the star did not guide him as it did the wise men to Bethlehem, yet there was a star within his own soul that shone like a sun, and lightened his footsteps and cheered his spirit, and sent him on his joyous way towards his appointed habitation. He went cheerfully, not knowing whither he went, not starting and fretting like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, but running with willing footsteps in the way of God. The ancients pictured Mercury with wings upon its heels, and surely faith hath them there.

"'Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."

Love may be the wings, but the wings are upon the feet of faith, and it flies to do the will of God whilst hearkening to his commands.

But, then, notice that when Abraham started he made no stipulations with his Lord. If God had commanded Abraham to go to the utmost bounds of the green earth, to "rivers unknown to song," Abraham would have departed. If God had commanded him to ford the Atlantic, Abraham would have obeyed. His feet would have been willing to attempt a miracle, and the stormy billows would have been dry before his march. We may rest assured that when Abraham started, he asked no questions concerning how far or to what place he was journeying. He left that all in the hands of God. His faith put its hand inside the hand of its father, and he was content to be led wherever his father would lead him. Now, it is always foolish in us to be led by man, for then "the blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch;" but for the blind to be led by God is one of the best and wisest things. We sometimes put blinkers upon horses that they may not see too much, I fear we might wear such things ourselves to great advantage. In watching with the eyes of carnal reason for objections to God's precept and providence, it would be well if our eyes were burnt out, for better for us to enter into life having no eyes than having two eyes to follow our own devices and find our end destruction in hell fire. Abraham's faith, then, was a tried one. Add now I conclude this sketch of the Patriarch's call, by observing that Abraham's faith was well rewarded.

I think with all the trials of Abraham, you and I might even envy his position. That tent of his was a royal tent. Never did the curtains of

Solomon himself enshroud more true royalty, or kingly nobility, than this poor tent in which Abraham sojourned. What a blessed man was he. His very dreams were blessed. The Lord was his shield and his exceeding great reward. A land was given to him, and was it a barren land? No. The Jews of old used to say that Canaan was the breast of the world; for there was always an abundance of milk and fatness. Other countries might have been the world's extremities, but this was the world's own breast, flowing with milk and honey. God gave him from the river of Egypt, even to the great river—the river Euphrates, and he looking from his starry height as an exalted patriarch, saw a race as numerous as the sand of the sea inhabiting the land. And he expects a mightier blessing yet. He looks for the day when the sons of Abraham shall at the second coming of Christ be assembled in their own land, and all the people shall walk in the light of Zion.

I think I have said enough about Abraham. Had my voice been strong enough, I could have enlarged, for it is a subject upon which much might be said extremely interesting to the spiritual mind.

II. But now I come to observe that YOU AND I MAY BE PLACED IN THE SAME POSITION. At their first conversion very many of the people of God are called to pass through the precise trial which Abraham endured. Some of us, it is true, were born of pious parents, and our conversion was a theme of joy to the home; it made jubilee; the fatted calf was killed, and there was music and dancing. But others were born as children of the Philistines; our parents were haters of God. I may be addressing such. No sooner did you begin to attend the house of God, than your father was the first to laugh at you, and when you were detected on your knees, mother, and brothers, and sisters, all assailed you with sneers and ridicule. It may be that you have suffered much household persecution for the sake of Christ's cross, and the profession of it you have made. Moreover, you may have been called to separate yourself from your whole ancestry; for in looking back you cannot detect on the family tree one branch that ever bore heavenly fruit. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. The whole family has been given up to Satan, and you have been called to bear a lonely protest to the gospel of Christ; you have come out, you have blighted your own worldly prospects, you have drowned your own

interest in crossing the river. You have suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake, and perhaps at the time you may have been greatly staggered; nay, even now you may be passing through the fiery trial. You may be staggering in your soul, and saying, "Can this be right? shall I give up my religion, shall I put back into port, or shall I encounter these waves that threaten to submerge my vessel?" Dear brothers and sisters, if father and mother forsake you, then the Lord will take you up. "He that loveth father and mother, and house and lands, more than me," saith Christ, "is not worthy of me." You must leave all for Christ's sake. Be prepared. If they will come with you, take their compliance gladly; if they will not, then come alone; "Come ye out from among them; be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing." Be an Abraham. Leave everything, and if you do this in faith, verily ye shall not lack your reward. He is able, and he has promised to give you in this life ten times more than you lose for him, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Such Christians as I have referred to, who are not called in early life to endure this trial, frequently have to bear its counterpart at another stage in their journey. On a sudden their minds are enlightened with regard to the pure simplicity of the gospel; their family is professedly religious and they have been in the habit of attending a certain place of worship with their kindred and friends, till at length a change passes over their religious views. Perhaps it is a doctrinal change; they have imbibed the orthodox faith from the pure fountain of revelation itself, unalloyed by the traditions and qualifications of men; they have cast away all the heterodox glossary of man, and have determined to believe nothing but the sovereign grace of God. Perhaps their views on baptism may have changed, and seeing nothing in Scripture to warrant infant sprinkling, they have come out with a determination to practice believer's baptism. It may be that this entails the scoff and scorn of all who know them. This grieves the hearts of those who know and love Jesus, and the question arises with them, "What shall I do?" These matters may be non-essential, shall I keep them back? Shall I for charity's sake weaken my testimony. Shall I only bear testimony to points on which I may agree with other people, and hold my tongue about the rest. Oh, my dear friends, such carnal policy, if you practice it, will do you serious injury. Whatever you believe, carry it out. Depend upon it a grain of truth is a grain of diamond

dust, and it is precious. There may be truths non-essential to our salvation; but there are no non-essential truths with regard to our comfort. Every truth is essential. We must keep back none, but follow the Lord wholly; let this be your song,—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where he goes,
'Hinder me not,' shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose."

The tendency of the present age is to temporize; we are asked continually to qualify our testimony; to cut off some portion of the truth we preach; to smooth down and polish our words. God forbid; we will not do so. Whatever we believe to be true, to the last jot and tittle we will speak it out. I hope so long as I live there will always be a straight road from my heart to my mouth, and that I shall be able to preach whatever I believe in my soul, and to keep nothing reserved. Do you the same. Though you should forsake all, and should be by all forsaken, for the truth's sake, with Abraham's trial and Abraham's faith, you shall have Abraham's honor and Abraham's reward.

How often has this temptation happened to the rich. When those who have moved in court circles, have suddenly become the subjects of the enlightening Spirit of grace, what opposition they have had to encounter! Many have been the noble ladies and gentlemen who have sat in this hall; yet, although I know many of them were impressed, how few of them have remained! Here and there one; they shine like the gleanings of the vintage.—Here and there one upon the topmost boughs. And what is the reason? Is it that their consciences are incapable of conviction? It is simply that the cares of this life, or the deceitfulness of riches chokes the Word, and by-and-bye they are offended. It is not likely that the simple worship of our unendowed meeting-houses is to win the palm of courtly applause; it is not likely that the name of Dissenter is to be held respectable; it is not likely that Calvinism is to become the court religion of England; it is not likely, at least at present, that a poor, simple, honest man's ministry, will be a ministry that courtiers regard; we never expected it. Nevertheless, there have been some, and God bless them, who have not been ashamed to come out, and leave behind them their

former associates and take part with the despised people of God, scarcely knowing whither they went. Though they did know we were poor, and most of us uneducated and illiterate, they have taken their portion with us, and they have shown no signs of turning back but do even glory in that which some count to their shame. God bless them, and that abundantly.

Again, this trial of faith cometh oftentimes in matters of providence. We have been lining our nests very softly, and counting all the eggs that are laid therein, with the greatest cheerfulness and delight; we have had much goods laid up for many years, and all of a sudden, Misfortune, like a wicked boy, has climbed the tree, and pulled down the nests, and the birds had to fly, and we have said, "Whither shall we go?" But God has comforted us, and we have said in our hearts, "Every tree in the forest of earth is doomed to the axe, why, therefore, should we build our nest here? Let us fly away and find our home in the rock of ages." And God has rewarded our faith. Our business, though suddenly blighted when flourishing in one place, has been, when removed amidst sad misgivings and dark uncertainties, even more flourishing in another; or if not, if trials have multiplied and poverty has succeeded wealth, yet grace has increased, and as our afflictions abounded, our consolations have much more abounded. I believe, dear friends, that many and many a time you, in your providential journey will have to go forth, not knowing whither you are going. But it is good for you; do not murmur at it. If the father of the faithful had to do it, why should the sons murmur? The father of the family must not know whither he was going, and shall you, the sons and daughters, long to read the future with whistful curious eyes? No, wherever God in his providence guides you, let it be your joy to know that he is too wise to err—too good to be unkind.

And, beloved, this is what I feel at the present moment respecting the position of ourselves as a congregation. I was to this test by considering the way in which God led us, especially in reference to this place. It is now nearly three years since Exeter Hall was shut against us, for reasons which I have never considered to be fully justifiable. Then it was we went forth not knowing whither we went, and this place was prepared for us. It is more than probable that after two more Sabbaths have elapsed we

must go forth again not knowing whither we shall go. But my faith is fixed upon him who has provided for us hitherto. This congregation cannot be scattered. God has gathered it, and we will go forth, being assured that a place shall be discovered in which we shall meet, and this shall work for the furtherance of the gospel, and for the glory of God. I feel that perhaps God has another host of sinners to be aroused and converted to Christ. We are getting old steady sort of folks here, and we have settled into a respectable concern. We may be turned into the streets, but, God going with us, we care not where we go. Wherever it is we shall be kept together; we are not men whose attachment has been formed hastily. We love each other. Like Abraham, and Lot and his family, we will journey together; we have no cause to fear. Do not, I entreat you, betray the slightest distress about it; if God has done it, he has wise purposes, let us submit in silence, and believe it must and shall be well. Abraham went forth "not knowing whither he went." We will imitate him. While Abraham's faith is our faith Abraham's God is our God. He speaks and every doubt is hushed—"Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward." So then we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

And I thought, while meditating upon this text, that the time must come to each of us, when, in a certain sense, we must go forth from this world, not knowing the place to which we are going. The hour is coming when you and I shall lie low upon our silent beds of languishing, and the message will come—"Arise and go forth from the house in which thou hast dwelt, from the city in which thou halt done business, from thy wife, from thy children, from thy bed, and from thy table. Arise and take thy last journey." And what know I of the journey? A little have I read of it, and somewhat has been re-vested by the Spirit to my soul; but how little do we know of the realms of the future! We know there is a black and stormy river called "Death." He bids me cross it. May he give me grace to go through the stream! And, after death, what cometh? No traveler hath returned to tell. Some say it is a land of confusion and of the shadow of death. Well, be it what it may, we will go forth, not knowing whither we go, but yet knowing that since he is with us, passing through the gloomy vale, we need fear no evil. We must be going to our Father's house, be that where it may. We must be going to our heavenly Father's kindly

home, where Jesus is: to that royal city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. This shall be our last removal, to dwell for ever with him we love, to dwell in the bosom of God. We will take our last journey, and we will not fear to take it, for God is our refuge and strength, our helper in the hour of trouble and of death.

III. And now, my voice almost fails me, and therefore. I must come at once to the last point, which is that of EXHORTING YOU MOST CHEERFULLY TO FOLLOW THE GUIDE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND PRECEPT, LEAD IT WHEREVER IT MAY.

Let us follow the Shepherd, with a ready mind, because he has a perfect right to lead us wherever he pleases. We are not our own, we are bought with a price. If we were our own, Ye might repine at our circumstances, but since we are not, let this be our cry, "Do what thou wilt, O Lord, and though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee;" we are not true to our profession of being Christians, if we pick and choose for ourselves. Picking and choosing are great enemies to submission. In fact, they are not at an consistent therewith. If we are really Christ's Christians, let us say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

And then in the next place we ought to submit because wherever he may lead us, if we know not where we go, we do know one thing, we know with whom we go, we do not know the road, but we do know the guide. We may feel that the journey is long, but we are quite sure that the everlasting arms that carry us are strong enough, be the journey never so many leagues in length. We do not know what may be the inhabitants of the land into which we may come, Canaanites or not; but we do know that the Lord our God is with us, and he shall surely deliver them into our hands.

Another reason why we should follow with simplicity and faith all the commands of God, is this, because we may be quite sure they shall all end well. They may not be well apparently while they are going on, but they will end well at last. You sometimes see in a factory the wheels running some this way, and some the other, and some crossways, and they seem to be playing all sorts of anticks, but somehow or other the deviser brings them all to work for some settled object. And I know that come prosperity

or come adversity, come sickness or come wealth, come foe, come friend, come popularity, or come contempt, his purpose shall be worked out, and that purpose shall be pure, unmingled good to every blood-bought heir of mercy on whom his heart is set.

And I may add, to conclude. Let us as a congregation, above all others, put the most implicit trust in our wonder-working God; when we recollect what he has already done for us, how he hath made the wrath of man to praise him, the contempt, the contumely, and the scorn has helped to bring to this place the willing thousands to hear the Word. The abuse of our enemies has been our best help, our grandest assistance; and in looking back day after day, and Sabbath after Sabbath. I can only hold up my hands and exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" And shall we doubt for the future? No; mariner, hoist the sail; loose the rudder bands; drag up the anchor; once again to sea we go, with the flag of faith at the masthead, with Jehovah at the helm, to a sure port the vessel shall be guided, though the storm may howl, and hell beneath shall be stirred; for God is with us, and the God of Abraham is our refuge. God give to every one of you the firmest trust in his providence, that you may go forth not knowing whither you go.

As for you that believe not in God, may you be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as in your Redeemer, and afterwards to trust your God, and leave al your concerns in his hands.

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A Defense of Calvinism

The old truth that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach today, or else be false to my

conscience and my God. I cannot shape the truth; I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again.

It is a great thing to begin the Christian life by believing good solid doctrine. Some people have received twenty different "gospels" in as many years; how many more they will accept before they get to their journey's end, it would be difficult to predict. I thank God that He early taught me the gospel, and I have been so perfectly satisfied with it, that I do not want to know any other. Constant change of creed is sure loss. If a tree has to be taken up two or three times a year, you will not need to build a very large loft in which to store the apples. When people are always shifting their doctrinal principles, they are not likely to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God. It is good for young believers to begin with a firm hold upon those great fundamental doctrines which the Lord has taught in His Word. Why, if I believed what some preach about the temporary, trumpery salvation which only lasts for a time, I would scarcely be at all grateful for it; but when I know that those whom God saves He saves with an everlasting salvation, when I know that He gives to them an everlasting righteousness, when I know that He settles them on an everlasting foundation of everlasting love, and that He will bring them to His everlasting kingdom, oh, then I do wonder, and I am astonished that such a blessing as this should ever have been given to me!

"Pause, my soul! adore, and wonder!
Ask, 'Oh, why such love to me?'
Grace hath put me in the number
Of the Saviour's family: Hallelujah! Thanks, eternal thanks, to Thee

I suppose there are some persons whose minds naturally incline towards the doctrine of free-will. I can only say that mine inclines as naturally towards the doctrines of sovereign grace. Sometimes, when I see some of the worst characters in the street, I feel as if my heart must burst forth in tears of gratitude that God has never let me act as they have done! I have thought, if God had left me alone, and had not touched me by His grace, what a great sinner I should have been! I should have run to the utmost lengths of sin, dived into the very depths of evil, nor should I

have stopped at any vice or folly, if God had not restrained me. I feel that I should have been a very king of sinners, if God had let me alone. I cannot understand the reason why I am saved, except upon the ground that God would have it so. I cannot, if I look ever so earnestly, discover any kind of reason in myself why I should be a partaker of Divine grace. If I am not at this moment without Christ, it is only because Christ Jesus would have His will with me, and that will was that I should be with Him where He is, and should share His glory. I can put the crown nowhere but upon the head of Him whose mighty grace has saved me from going down into the pit. Looking back on my past life, I can see that the dawning of it all was of God; of God effectively. I took no torch with which to light the sun, but the sun enlightened me. I did not commence my spiritual life-no, I rather kicked, and struggled against the things of the Spirit: when He drew me, for a time I did not run after Him: there was a natural hatred in my soul of everything holy and good. Wooings were lost upon me-warnings were cast to the wind- thunders were despised; and as for the whispers of His love, they were rejected as being less than nothing and vanity. But, sure I am, I can say now, speaking on behalf of myself, "He only is my salvation." It was He who turned my heart, and brought me down on my knees before Him. I can in very deed, say with Doddridge and Toplady-

"Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made my eyes o'erflow."

and coming to this moment, I can add-

"Tis grace has kept me to this day,
And will not let me go."

Well can I remember the manner in which I learned the doctrines of grace in a single instant. Born, as all of us are by nature, an Arminian, I still believed the old things I had heard continually from the pulpit, and did not see the grace of God. When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received those truths in my own soul-when they were, as John Bunyan says, burnt

into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown on a sudden from a babe into a man-that I had made progress in Scriptural knowledge, through having found, once for all, the clue to the truth of God. One week-night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher's sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, How did you come to be a Christian? I sought the Lord. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment- I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, How came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, "I ascribe my change wholly to God."

I once attended a service where the text happened to be, "He shall choose our inheritance for us;" and the good man who occupied the pulpit was more than a little of an Arminian. Therefore, when he commenced, he said, "This passage refers entirely to our temporal inheritance, it has nothing whatever to do with our everlasting destiny, for," said he, "we do not want Christ to choose for us in the matter of Heaven or hell. It is so plain and easy, that every man who has a grain of common sense will choose Heaven, and any person would know better than to choose hell. We have no need of any superior intelligence, or any greater Being, to choose Heaven or hell for us. It is left to our own free-will, and we have enough wisdom given us, sufficiently correct means to judge for ourselves," and therefore, as he very logically inferred, there was no necessity for Jesus Christ, or anyone, to make a choice for us. We could choose the inheritance for ourselves without any assistance. "Ah!" I thought, "but, my good brother, it may be very true that we could, but I think we should want something more than common sense before we should choose aright."

First, let me ask, must we not all of us admit an over-ruling Providence, and the appointment of Jehovah's hand, as to the means whereby we

came into this world? Those men who think that, afterwards, we are left to our own free-will to choose this one or the other to direct our steps, must admit that our entrance into the world was not of our own will, but that God had then to choose for us. What circumstances were those in our power which led us to elect certain persons to be our parents? Had we anything to do with it? Did not God Himself appoint our parents, native place, and friends? Could He not have caused me to be born with the skin of the Hottentot, brought forth by a filthy mother who would nurse me in her "kraal," and teach me to bow down to Pagan gods, quite as easily as to have given me a pious mother, who would each morning and night bend her knee in prayer on my behalf? Or, might He not, if He had pleased have given me some profligate to have been my parent, from whose lips I might have early heard fearful, filthy, and obscene language? Might He not have placed me where I should have had a drunken father, who would have immured me in a very dungeon of ignorance, and brought me up in the chains of crime? Was it not God's Providence that I had so happy a lot, that both my parents were His children, and endeavoured to train me up in the fear of the Lord?

John Newton used to tell a whimsical story, and laugh at it, too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of election, "Ah! sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards." I am sure it is true in my case; I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that great Biblical doctrine. I recollect an Arminian brother telling me that he had read the Scriptures through a score or more times, and could never find the doctrine of election in them. He added that he was sure he would have done so if it had been there, for he read the Word on his knees. I said to him, "I think you read the Bible in a very uncomfortable posture, and if you had read it in your easy chair, you would have been more likely to understand it. Pray, by all means, and the more, the better, but it is a piece of superstition to think there is anything in the posture in which a man puts

himself for reading: and as to reading through the Bible twenty times without having found anything about the doctrine of election, the wonder is that you found anything at all: you must have galloped through it at such a rate that you were not likely to have any intelligible idea of the meaning of the Scriptures."

If it would be marvelous to see one river leap up from the earth full-grown, what would it be to gaze upon a vast spring from which all the rivers of the earth should at once come bubbling up, a million of them born at a birth? What a vision would it be! Who can conceive it. And yet the love of God is that fountain, from which all the rivers of mercy, which have ever gladdened our race—all the rivers of grace in time, and of glory hereafter—take their rise. My soul, stand thou at that sacred fountain-head, and adore and magnify, for ever and ever, God, even our Father, who hath loved us! In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in the mind of God, like unborn forests in the acorn cup; long ere the echoes awoke the solitudes; before the mountains were brought forth; and long ere the light flashed through the sky, God loved His chosen creatures. Before there was any created being—when the ether was not fanned by an angel's wing, when space itself had not an existence, when there was nothing save God alone—even then, in that loneliness of Deity, and in that deep quiet and profundity, His bowels moved with love for His chosen. Their names were written on His heart, and then were they dear to His soul. Jesus loved His people before the foundation of the world—even from eternity! and when He called me by His grace, He said to me, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

Then, in the fulness of time, He purchased me with His blood; He let His heart run out in one deep gaping wound for me long ere I loved Him. Yea, when He first came to me, did I not spurn Him? When He knocked at the door, and asked for entrance, did I not drive Him away, and do despite to His grace? Ah, I can remember that I full often did so until, at last, by the power of His effectual grace, He said, "I must, I will come in;" and then He turned my heart, and made me love Him. But even till now I should have resisted Him, had it not been for His grace. Well, then since He purchased me when I was dead in sins, does it not follow, as a

consequence necessary and logical, that He must have loved me first? Did my Saviour die for me because I believed on Him? No; I was not then in existence; I had then no being. Could the Saviour, therefore, have died because I had faith, when I myself was not yet born? Could that have been possible? Could that have been the origin of the Saviour's love towards me? Oh! no; my Saviour died for me long before I believed. "But," says someone, "He foresaw that you would have faith; and, therefore, He loved you." What did He foresee about my faith? Did He foresee that I should get that faith myself, and that I should believe on Him of myself? No; Christ could not foresee that, because no Christian man will ever say that faith came of itself without the gift and without the working of the Holy Spirit. I have met with a great many believers, and talked with them about this matter; but I never knew one who could put his hand on his heart, and say, "I believed in Jesus without the assistance of the Holy Spirit."

I am bound to the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart, because I find myself depraved in heart, and have daily proofs that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing. If God enters into covenant with unfallen man, man is so insignificant a creature that it must be an act of gracious condescension on the Lord's part; but if God enters into covenant with sinful man, he is then so offensive a creature that it must be, on God's part, an act of pure, free, rich, sovereign grace. When the Lord entered into covenant with me, I am sure that it was all of grace, nothing else but grace. When I remember what a den of unclean beasts and birds my heart was, and how strong was my unrenewed will, how obstinate and rebellious against the sovereignty of the Divine rule, I always feel inclined to take the very lowest room in my Father's house, and when I enter Heaven, it will be to go among the less than the least of all saints, and with the chief of sinners.

The late lamented Mr. Denham has put, at the foot of his portrait, a most admirable text, "Salvation is of the Lord." That is just an epitome of Calvinism; it is the sum and substance of it. If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, "He is one who says, Salvation is of the Lord." I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. "He only is my rock and my salvation." Tell me

anything contrary to this truth, and it will be a heresy; tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rock-truth, "God is my rock and my salvation." What is the heresy of Rome, but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ-the bringing in of the works of the flesh, to assist in our justification? And what is the heresy of Arminianism but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here. I have my own Private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor.

"If ever it should come to pass,
That sheep of Christ might fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day"

If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all; if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be; and then there is no gospel promise true, but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God hath loved me once, then He will love me for ever. God has a mastermind; He arranged everything in His gigantic intellect long before He did it; and once having settled it, He never alters it, "This shall be done," saith He, and the iron hand of destiny marks it down, and it is brought to pass. "This is My purpose," and it stands, nor can earth or hell alter it. "This is My decree," saith He, "promulgate it, ye holy angels; rend it down from the gate of Heaven, ye devils, if ye can; but ye cannot alter

the decree, it shall stand for ever." God altereth not His plans; why should He? He is Almighty, and therefore can perform His pleasure. Why should

He? He is the All-wise, and therefore cannot have planned wrongly. Why should He? He is the everlasting God, and therefore cannot die before His plan is accomplished. Why should He change? Ye worthless atoms of earth, ephemera of a day, ye creeping insects upon this bay-leaf of existence, ye may change your plans, but He shall never, never change His. Has He told me that His plan is to save me? If so, I am for ever safe.

"My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impress'd on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace."

I do not know how some people, who believe that a Christian can fall from grace, manage to be happy. It must be a very commendable thing in them to be able to get through a day without despair. If I did not believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I think I should be of all men the most miserable, because I should lack any ground of comfort. I could not say, whatever state of heart I came into, that I should be like a well-spring of water, whose stream fails not; I should rather have to take the comparison of an intermittent spring, that might stop on a sudden, or a reservoir, which I had no reason to expect would always be full. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of Christians are those who never dare to doubt God, but who take His Word simply as it stands, and believe it, and ask no questions, just feeling assured that if God has said it, it will be so. I bear my willing testimony that I have no reason, nor even the shadow of a reason, to doubt my Lord, and I challenge Heaven, and earth, and hell, to bring any proof that God is untrue. From the depths of hell I call the fiends, and from this earth I call the tried and afflicted believers, and to Heaven I appeal, and challenge the long experience of the blood-washed host, and there is not to be found in the three realms a single person who can bear witness to one fact which can disprove the faithfulness of God, or weaken His claim to be trusted by His servants. There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know shall happen-

"He shall present my soul,
Unblemish'd and complete,
Before the glory of His face,
With joys divinely great"

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God. The promises of man may be broken-many of them are made to be broken-but the promises of God shall all be fulfilled. He is a promise-maker, but He never was a promise- breaker; He is a promise-keeping God, and every one of His people shall prove it to be so. This is my grateful, personal confidence, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me"-unworthy me, lost and ruined me. He will yet save me; and-

"I, among the blood-wash'd throng,
Shall wave the palm, and wear the crown,
And shout loud victory"

I go to a land which the plough of earth hath never upturned, where it is greener than earth's best pastures, and richer than her most abundant harvests ever saw. I go to a building of more gorgeous architecture than man hath ever builded; it is not of mortal design; it is "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens." All I shall know and enjoy in Heaven, will be given to me by the Lord, and I shall say, when at last I appear before Him-

"Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days;
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise"

I know there are some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the merit of the blood of Jesus: if my theological system needed such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds. I cannot, I dare not allow the thought to find a lodging in my mind, it seems so near akin to blasphemy. In Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore. There must be sufficient efficacy in the blood of Christ, if God had so willed it, to have saved not

only all in this world, but all in ten thousand worlds, had they transgressed their Maker's law. Once admit infinity into the matter, and limit is out of the question. Having a Divine Person for an offering, it is not consistent to conceive of limited value; bound and measure are terms inapplicable to the Divine sacrifice. The intent of the Divine purpose fixes the application of the infinite offering, but does not change it into a finite work. Think of the numbers upon whom God has bestowed His grace already. Think of the countless hosts in Heaven: if thou wert introduced there to-day, thou wouldst find it as easy to tell the stars, or the sands of the sea, as to count the multitudes that are before the throne even now. They have come from the East, and from the West, from the North, and from the South, and they are sitting down with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob in the Kingdom of God; and beside those in Heaven, think of the saved ones on earth. Blessed be God, His elect on earth are to be counted by millions, I believe, and the days are coming, brighter days than these, when there shall be multitudes upon multitudes brought to know the Savior, and to rejoice in Him. The Father's love is not for a few only, but for an exceeding great company. "A great multitude, which no man could number," will be found in Heaven. A man can reckon up to very high figures; set to work your Newtons, your mightiest calculators, and they can count great numbers, but God and God alone can tell the multitude of His redeemed. I believe there will be more in Heaven than in hell. If anyone asks me why I think so, I answer, because Christ, in everything, is to "have the pre-eminence," and I cannot conceive how He could have the pre-eminence if there are to be more in the dominions of Satan than in Paradise. Moreover, I have never read that there is to be in hell a great multitude, which no man could number. I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to Paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them! Then there are already in Heaven unnumbered myriads of the spirits of just men made perfect-the redeemed of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues up till now; and there are better times coming, when the religion of Christ shall be universal; when-

"He shall reign from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway,"

when whole kingdoms shall bow down before Him, and nations shall be born in a day, and in the thousand years of the great millennial state there will be enough saved to make up all the deficiencies of the thousands of years that have gone before. Christ shall be Master everywhere, and His praise shall be sounded in every land. Christ shall have the pre-eminence at last; His train shall be far larger than that which shall attend the chariot of the grim monarch of hell.

Some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say, "It is so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men; it commends itself," they say, "to the instincts of humanity; there is something in it full of joy and beauty." I admit there is, but beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might admire in the theory of universal redemption, but I will just show what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were lost before He died. If the doctrine be true, that He died for all men, then He died for some who were in hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there were even then myriads there who had been cast away because of their sins. Once again, if it was Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has He been disappointed, for we have His own testimony that there is a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, and into that pit of woe have been cast some of the very persons who, according to the theory of universal redemption, were bought with His blood. That seems to me a conception a thousand times more repulsive than any of those consequences which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of special and particular redemption. To think that my Savior died for men who were or are in hell, seems a supposition too horrible for me to entertain. To imagine for a moment that He was the Substitute for all the sons of men, and that God, having first punished the Substitute, afterwards punished the sinners themselves, seems to conflict with all my ideas of Divine justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of all men, and that afterwards some of those very men should be punished for the sins for which Christ had already atoned, appears to me to be the most monstrous iniquity that could ever have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, to the goddess of the Thugs, or to the most diabolical heathen deities. God forbid that we should ever think

thus of Jehovah, the just and wise and good! There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer- I wish to be called nothing but a Christian; but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it. But far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none but Calvinistic Christians within her walls, or that there are none saved who do not hold our views. Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him that, while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man himself I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan; and if there were wanted two apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitefield and John Wesley. The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness, and communion with God; he lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians, and was one "of whom the world was not worthy." I believe there are multitudes of men who cannot see these truths, or, at least, cannot see them in the way in which we put them, who nevertheless have received Christ as their Savior, and are as dear to the heart of the God of grace as the soundest Calvinist in or out of Heaven.

I do not think I differ from any of my Hyper-Calvinistic brethren in what I do believe, but I differ from them in what they do not believe. I do not hold any less than they do, but I hold a little more, and, I think, a little more of the truth revealed in the Scriptures. Not only are there a few cardinal doctrines, by which we can steer our ship North, South, East, or West, but as we study the Word, we shall begin to learn something about the North-west and North-east, and all else that lies between the four cardinal points. The system of truth revealed in the Scriptures is not simply one straight line, but two; and no man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. For instance, I read in one Book of the Bible, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Yet I am taught, in another part of the same inspired Word, that "it is not of him

that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." I see, in one place, God in providence presiding over all, and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions, in a great measure, to his own free-will. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act that there was no control of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to atheism; and if, on the other hand, I should declare that God so over-rules all things that man is not free enough to be responsible, I should be driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and yet that man is responsible, are two facts that few can see clearly. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one part of the Bible that everything is foreordained, that is true; and if I find, in another Scripture, that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is only my folly that leads me to imagine that these two truths can ever contradict each other. I do not believe they can ever be welded into one upon any earthly anvil, but they certainly shall be one in eternity. They are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the human mind which pursues them farthest will never discover that they converge, but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

It is often said that the doctrines we believe have a tendency to lead us to sin. I have heard it asserted most positively, that those high doctrines which we love, and which we find in the Scriptures, are licentious ones. I do not know who will have the hardihood to make that assertion, when they consider that the holiest of men have been believers in them. I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield, who in successive ages were the great exponents of the system of grace; or what will he say of the Puritans, whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing, but now we are looked upon as the heretics, and they as the orthodox. We have gone back to the old school; we can trace our descent from the apostles. It is that vein of free-grace, running through the sermonizing of Baptists, which has saved us as a denomination. Were it not for that, we should not stand where we are today. We can run a golden line up to Jesus Christ Himself, through a holy succession of

mighty fathers, who all held these glorious truths; and we can ask concerning them, "Where will you find holier and better men in the world?" No doctrine is so calculated to preserve a man from sin as the doctrine of the grace of God. Those who have called it "a licentious doctrine" did not know anything at all about it. Poor ignorant things, they little knew that their own vile stuff was the most licentious doctrine under Heaven. If they knew the grace of God in truth, they would soon see that there was no preservative from lying like a knowledge that we are elect of God from the foundation of the world. There is nothing like a belief in my eternal perseverance, and the immutability of my Father's affection, which can keep me near to Him from a motive of simple gratitude. Nothing makes a man so virtuous as belief of the truth. A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice. A man cannot have an erroneous belief without by-and-by having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other. Of all men, those have the most disinterested piety, the sublimest reverence, the most ardent devotion, who believe that they are saved by grace, without works, through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God. Christians should take heed, and see that it always is so, lest by any means Christ should be crucified afresh, and put to an open shame.

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The Census of Israel

"These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."—Numbers 26:63-65.

We have come to another census, an important halting-place in the march of a nation's history. This carries our thoughts back to the ancient Bible story connected with the chosen people of God. A census was taken of the tribes of Israel in the wilderness two years after they had left Egypt. It only numbered males who were over twenty: the men capable of active service in war. By thus taking a census of his people, the Lord showed that he valued each one of them. They were registered by their families and by their names; thus were they personally enrolled in the family book of the living God, and he thus, in effect, said to each one of them, "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." By the registration of each man by name, he felt that he was not lost in the crowd; but was by person and pedigree owned as one of those to whom the Lord had promised the land which flowed with milk and honey. There was good reason for taking the number of the people just as the nation was forming, so that in the wilderness they might be arranged, and marshalled, and disciplined for the conflict which lay before them. When commanded of God, because he saw that great ends would be served thereby, and when associated with redemption, a census was by no means a wrong or a dangerous national arrangement. David ordered the people to be numbered, and because his motive and his method were wrong, it brought a pestilence on the land; but, in itself, the taking of a census was a wise and useful thing.

Thirty-eight years had passed away since the first numbering at Sinai, and the people had come to the borders of the Promised Land; for they were in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. The time had come for another census. The wisdom which commanded the counting of Israel at the beginning of the wilderness journey, also determined to count them at the end of it. This would show that he did not value them less than in former years; it would afford proof that his word of judgment had been fulfilled to them; and, moreover, it would marshal them for the grand enterprise of conquering the land of Canaan. They were to go forth in their armies to fight giant races, and armies versed in war; they were to dislodge nations from their ancient strongholds, and with the sword, to destroy guilty aboriginal races which God had condemned to destruction; and for this their military strength needed numbering and ordering. Here was good reason for the census, which now, for the second or third time, was carefully carried out.

Our text is from the Book of Numbers, and the book well answers to its title; for it continually deals with numbers and numberings. The numbering on this occasion was not of the women and children or the infirm; for the order ran thus, "Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers house, all that are able to go to war in Israel." If the numbers of our churches were taken in this fashion, would they not sadly shrink? We have many sick among us that need to be carried about, and nursed, and doctored. Half the strength of the church goes in ambulance service towards the weak and wounded. Another diminution of power is occasioned by the vast numbers of undeveloped believers, to whom the apostle would have said, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." They should have become men, but they remain babes in grace. They are sadly slow in reaching the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. How many are quite unable to bear arms against the foe; for they need to be themselves guarded from the enemy! To revise the church rolls so as to leave none but vigorous soldiers on the muster-roll would make us break our hearts over our statistics. May the Lord send us, for this evil, health and cure!

When the second census was taken, it was found that the people were nearly of the same number as at the first. Had it not been for the punishment so justly inflicted upon them, they must have largely increased; but now they had somewhat diminished. They were a rapidly increasing people when they were in Egypt: the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied. The family of Jacob increased at a marvellous rate from the time of the going down into Egypt to the time of quitting that land. This was changed during the forty years of the wilderness; for the whole of the grown men who came out of bondage were judged unfit to enter into the promised land because of unbelief; and these dying away rapidly, the people scarcely maintained their number. It is of God to multiply a nation, or a church. We may not expect any advance in our numbers if we grieve the Spirit of God, and if by our unbelief we drive him to declare that we shall not prosper. Israel's growth ceased for forty years; may it never be so with us as a church! We would say with Joab,

"Now the Lord thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold." May the righteous seed multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, till their number shall be as countless as the sands of the shore, or as the stars of the sky!

Concerning the second census of Israel, I would speak with you, since this is the morning of the day on which our British census is to be taken. May we gather lessons of wisdom from the theme!

I. First, observe with interest, and with a design to be profited—THE NOTABLE CHANGE WROUGHT AMONG THE PEOPLE BY DEATH. But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai."

They answered to their names, six hundred thousand and more of them, and there they stood in their ranks, full of vigorous life. About forty years had passed away, and if these same names had been read out not a man save Caleb and Joshua could have answered to the roll-call. The entire mass of the nation had been changed. The old ones were all gone; all that stood in their places by the Jordan were men who were under age at the first census, or who were not even born at that time. "Not a man of them" remained, says the text; and it repeats the statement: "There was not left a man of them."

Such changes strike us as most memorable. They must not be passed over without remark. In the course of forty years, my brethren, what changes take place in every community, in every church, in every family! A friend showed me, last Thursday, a photograph of myself, in the midst of my first deacons. It was taken scarcely thirty-eight years ago, and yet of the entire group I only survive. Those associates of the youthful preacher have all gone to their reward. We have likenesses of other groups of church officers of a later date, in which I am placed in the center, and I am there still; but nearly all of those who once surrounded me have gone home. Those who were our leaders in our days of struggle, and who saw the hand of God with us in those first years, are growing few in number. We have not yet completed the forty years; but when we have done so, the words of our text will be almost literally applicable to our case as a

church. The going and the coming, the adding and the taking away, have changed the texture of this fabric; and no thread will soon be left. Surely the Lord would have us notice this, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. A costly operation, involving so many sorrows, is not to be passed over without thought. Beloved, we, too, are passing away. The pastor and his present helpers must themselves be summoned home in due course. The march of the generations is not a procession passing before our eyes, while we sit, like spectators, at the window; but we are in the procession ourselves, and we, too, are passing down the streets of time, and shall disappear in our turn. We, too, shall sleep with our fathers, unless the Lord shall come speedily. I hear a clarion-blast sounding out from the graves which lie behind us: "Be ye also ready." From the last closed sepulcher there comes the prophetic warning, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

This change was universal throughout the whole camp. There was a change even in the enumerators. The Sinai census had been taken by Moses and Aaron; and now Moses just remains long enough to take his leading place; but his brother Aaron is not there; the high priest of God has gone up to mount Hor, has been stripped of his garments, has been buried and mourned by all Israel, and now Eleazar his son stands before the Lord in his father's stead. It was so among the other priests and Levites and elders of the people. There was a change everywhere: among the poorest dwellers in that canvas city and among the princes who dwelt beneath the standards of the tribes, all had changed. There was not left a man of them." Thus is it among ourselves: no offices can be permanently held by the same men: "they are not suffered to continue by reason of death." No position, however lofty or lowly, can retain its old possessor. It is not only the cedars that fall, but the fir trees feel the axe. "There is no discharge in that war." That same scythe which cuts down the towering flower among the grass, also sweeps down whole regiments of green blades. See how they lie together in long rows, to wither in a common decay! Throughout the whole body this change is gradually taking place. No man can climb the rock of immortality, and sit there amid the seething sea, and say to death, "Thy waves cannot reach me here!" Though vigorous in health, though sound in constitution, though guarded by all the armor of the science of health, you too must fall by the arrows

of the insatiable archer. "It is appointed unto men once to die."

The change is inevitable. Man that is born of woman must be of few days. If it had not been for the great sin of Israel at Kadesh, many of the people might have lived to the second census, and beyond it; but even then if by reason of strength their lives had been lengthened, yet would they soon have died out in the ordinary course of nature. If forty years had not been appointed as the end of that generation, yet without that appointment they would all have passed away in another twenty or thirty years. As Moses said in his wilderness psalm, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

We must soon quit our tents for the last battle. When the conscript number shall be drawn we may escape this year, and next; but the lot will fall upon us in due time. There is no leaping from the net of mortality wherein, like a shoal of fish, we are all enclosed. Unless our Lord shall soon appear we shall each one find a grave; for, as the wise man says, All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." "We must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." Therefore we wisely bow before the stern decree, and yield ourselves to death.

But let us not forget that all this change was still under the divine control. Though the people must pass away, yet still the Lord's hand would be in each death and its surroundings. If not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father's knowledge, we may rest assured that no man dieth without the will of God; no man is carried to his long home unless the Lord hath said, "Return, ye children of men."

What can preserve my life, or what destroy?
An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave—
Legions of angels can't confine me there."

To create and to destroy are sole prerogatives of the King of kings. Till he speaks the word, we live not; or living, we die not. Walking in the midst of ten thousand stricken with the plague, we are safe till God appoints our removal. Concerning those that are asleep, we know that they have not

died without the will of our Father: concerning our time also, we know that we shall not be the toys of chance, or the victims of fate. A wise and loving God fixes the date and place of our decease; for "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Stern though the work may be, his great and tender heart rules the ravages of death. Let us therefore be comforted concerning the great changes which death is working. Here is no cause for tears, as though we were left in a monster's power, and bereft of a Father's care. The Lord is still ruling, and nothing happens save as he appoints.

Moreover, the change was beneficial. It was well that the first generation should die in the wilderness. The people who had been accustomed to servitude in Egypt had acquired the vices of slaves; and when they came out of the house of bondage they were fearful, fickle, the creatures of appetite, and the victims of panic, selfishness, and discontent. They had all the vices of subject races, and were alike destitute of manliness and self-control. They were soon cowed by fear and baffled by difficulty. They were easily persuaded, and as easily dissuaded. They were a people of whom nothing could be made. Even the divine tuition in which Moses and Aaron were engaged, and in which miracles, and types, and laws were employed, could not teach them anything so that they really knew it. To make a nation which could preserve the worship of the one God in the world, the generation which came out of Egypt must die out. The taint of slavery and idolatry must be lessened if it could not be quite removed. It was desirable that there should be a people trained in a better school, with a nobler spirit, fit to take possession of the promised land. The change was working rightly: the divine purpose was being fulfilled. Maybe, we do not think thus of the changes which are taking place in the communities to which we belong. We scarcely think that better men are coming on; we even fear that the coming race is weaker than the present: but then, we are not fair judges; for we are prejudiced in favor of our own generation. I do not doubt that God meaneth well to his own church, and that the accomplishment of his eternal purposes requires that men should come and go, and that thus the face of society should be changed. It is well that the age of man is not so protracted as in the days of Methuselah. A teacher influential for error dies and is forgotten; a sinner pestilential for vice passes away, and the air grows pure. Imagine a

gambler with five hundred years of craft to guide him, or a libertine reeking with six hundred years of debauchery! Surely the present narrowed limits of human life are all too wide for the depraved! We need not wish for giants of iniquity such as centuries of life would produce. The incoming of new blood into the social frame is good in a thousand ways: it is well that we should make room for others who may serve our Master better. God grant they may! Our prayer is, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children." We are content to take the work if our sons may behold the glory: we are glad to move off that they may rise on stepping stones of our ended lives to nobler things.

One other remark I cannot help making, and that is, that these changes are most instructive. If we are now serving God, let us do so with intense earnestness, since only for a little while shall we have the opportunity to do so among men. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Live while you live. At the same time, lay plans for influencing the rising generation. Lay yourself out to work while it is called to-day. If anything should be done, it were well that it were done quickly. If we wish truth to conquer, and the gospel to prevail, let us fight the Lord's battles now; and if we would see truth prevail after we are gone, let us seek out faithful young men, who will teach others also, that the testimony for the Lord God of Israel die not out of the land. We must soon quit the field. Let each man set his house in order, for he must soon leave it to be gazed upon by strangers' eyes. Let us see that our life-work is rounded off and well-finished, so that in the survey of it by our successors they may say of us, "He being dead yet speaketh." As we must soon be gone from among the living, let us bless them while we may. Arise, ye saints, and bestir yourselves; for the day is far spent, and the shadows of evening are falling. I pray that we may learn well this first lesson of our text. O Spirit of life, teach us life even by the doings of death!

II. Secondly, we have here before us THE PERPETUITY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. There was a change in the constituent elements of the Israelitish nation, but the nation was still there. Not one man was there who was counted thirty-eight years before, save Caleb and Joshua, and

yet the nation was the same. Do you ask for Israel? There it is. Balaam can see the people from the top of the hill, and they are the same people whom Pharaoh pursued to the Red Sea. The nation is living, though a nation has died. It is the same chosen seed of Abraham with whom Jehovah is in covenant. God has a church in the world, and he will have a church in the world till time shall be no more. The gates of hell and the jaws of death shall not prevail against the church, though each one of its members must depart out of this world in his turn.

Mark well, that "the church in the wilderness" lives on. There are the same twelve tribes, the same standards heading the tribes, the same tabernacle in the midst of the host, and the same priesthood celebrating sacred service with solemn pomp. Everything has changed and yet nothing has altered. God has built his holy habitation upon foundations which can never be removed. Although the men who bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord wear other names, yet they fulfill the same office. The music of the sanctuary rises and falls, but the strain goes on. The hallelujah never ceases, nor is there a pause in the perpetual chorus, "His mercy endureth for ever."

The gaps were filled up by appointed successors. As one warrior died another man stepped into his place, even as one wave dying on the shore is pursued by another. The men were not all swept away at once, but by perceptible degrees. Now and then there came an awful and sudden destruction, as when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram went down alive into the pit; but, as a rule, the people dropped off gradually, as ripe fruit falls from the trees, and they were succeeded by others as the fading leaves of autumn have the buds of spring just beneath them. In the church of God one dieth in the order of nature, but another is born into the kingdom by the power of grace. We miss some useful Christian woman, and we lament her; but before many days another sister is prepared of the Lord to serve in her stead. Baptism for the dead never ceases among us. An honored brother falls asleep, and we carry him to the grave; and possibly we fear no other can do his work, and fill the vacancy he leaves. Perhaps no one can do the same work; but yet, in some other way or form, the work is done; and still the vines are trimmed, the sheep are fed, and the lambs are cherished. No one dead man lies in the way to stop the march

of the army, as did the corpse of Amasa, which lay gory in the road in David's day. The chosen host still marches on. Even as the stars in their courses, we still move on. God buries his workmen, but his work lives.

In Israel's case the gaps were filled by their own sons. As these men passed away their children took their places. I commend to you, my brethren, this fact as your encouragement in prayer for your children. Oh, that the Lord would pour his spirit upon our seed, and his blessing upon our offspring! Oh, that every saint here may be succeeded by his own descendants! This is the Lord's frequent way of keeping alive the gracious succession. Abraham is gone, but Isaac still kindles the altar-fire. In a blind old age Isaac is gathered to his fathers, but Jacob worships "the fear of his father Isaac." Jacob gathers up his feet in the bed, but Judah and Joseph, and the rest of them, continue as a salt in the earth. Oh, that it may be so in all our families! May we never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel to testify for him! Among all the honors that God can put upon our households I think this is the greatest, that we should have in our families a succession of saints. It is no small privilege to look back and to remember our ancestors who feared the Lord: may we also look forward with hope that, if this dispensation lasts, there may still be some of our name, bearing our blood in their veins, who shall be called by sovereign grace into the service we have loved so well. Search beyond the congregation for new converts, but do not forget to look within your own doors for the largest accessions to the church. Hope that your sons and daughters after the flesh may be born into the one family in heaven and earth," which bears the name of Jesus. Pray that your children may be God's children, and may your prayer come up with acceptance into the ears of the Lord our God, whose mercy is on children's children of them that fear him, and keep his covenant!

All the offices of "the church in the wilderness" were filled with fitting men. Behold Aaron, in his robes of glory and beauty! What a man is he to be the High Priest! With what grace and dignity he presides! He dies: will not the priesthood fail? No, my brethren. Yonder is Eleazar, who occupies his father's place most worthily. Moses also passes away. There is none like Moses. He is king in Jeshurun, without peer or rival. The Jews have a tradition that when he was called to go up to the top of Nebo to die, the

people followed him up the hill, the women beating on their breasts, and uttering bitter wailings, while the strong men bowed themselves with grief, and cried, "The father of the nation is to be taken away! Alas, what shall we do?" He was bidden to leave the people on the mountain side, and he went up alone to the place where Jehovah kissed away his soul, and so he passed into his rest. Truly it was a great loss, but the Lord found a man to follow Moses. Joshua was not equal to Moses in many things; and yet for the work he had to do he was a much more fit man than Moses. The times were red with war, and Joshua was more able than Moses to fight the Canaanites and conquer the land. Joshua was the man for the sword, as Moses had been the man of the book. And God will fill every office in his church, not as you and I might wish, but as his infinite wisdom determines. Wherefore let us be of good courage, and fear no lack.

At this second numbering, the people stood ready for greater work than they had ever done before. The first numbering found them fit for the wilderness: the second numbering found them ready for the capture of the goodly land and Lebanon. God had been preparing them, by forty years of marching, for their new enterprise, and for development into a nation. May it please the Lord to make his church ready for the coming of her Lord, and for the salvation of nations! If brighter days are dawning, the church will be prepared as a bride for her husband; and if tribulation is to come to try all the earth, she shall be strengthened as a martyr for the burning. The Lord doth keep her: lest any hurt her he will keep her night and day.

It was Israel's joy that God's love was not withdrawn from the nation. The Lord still owned the tribes as his people. His glory was still above the mercy-seat, and his fiery, cloudy pillar still guided their marchings or fixed their haltings. Still the manna dropped from heaven, and still they drank of the water from the smitten rock. Thus the Lord has a church still, and it is ever the same church, loved of her lord, indwelt by his Spirit, and dedicated to his praise. Let us take courage: the church is not destroyed. Many changes take place, and many sorrows are involved therein, but the church of God is as ever-living as her immortal Head, who has declared, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Still, her stars are the

hope of the world's night, and her angels are the heralds of the eternal morning. She follows the bleeding lamb, who is the doctrine of her teaching, the model of her acting, the glory of her hope.

III. Thirdly, let me bring before your minds THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF THE WORD OF GOD. This we perceive in the last verse. "For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."

Note how unchangeable are the threatenings of the Lord. Among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness." Take note of this, you that think God's word can fail: ye know not what ye dream. His words of righteous wrath are not lost: they kill as with a two-edged sword. The verse says, There was not left a man of them." Whom the Lord had condemned to die, nothing could keep alive. Therefore, do not imagine, O you that obey not the Lord, that you shall go unpunished!

The unbelievers were many, yet not one escaped. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." The rebels were a terribly large majority, but the crowds in the broad way make it none the safer. God has no respect for multitudes; "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Here they outnumbered the faithful more than ten thousand times; and yet the justice of God did not spare one of them. "There was not left a man of them." How can any of you hope to escape? "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies." The proudest sinner shall be laid low: the thunders of Jehovah shall smite down each individual transgressor, and no one shall go away free in the day of God's wrath.

It was a long time before all the sinners died; but the long-suffering of God had its limit, and in the end every rebel died in the wilderness. They lived on, some of them, for all the forty years; but they could not pass the bound. Perhaps they said, "Ah! this ban from God will never take effect on us." Yet, ere the years were up, the survivors of the doomed race had to share the common fate. Not a man of those whom Moses and Aaron

numbered at Sinai could pass the line of fire which closed in the forty years. God waits, waits in infinite mercy; but the punishment of the wicked is none the less sure. "Their foot shall slide in due time." The Lord hath bent his bow, and made it ready", and when their hour is come, they shall find that he is not slack concerning his word. Do not, I pray you, doubt the terrible certainty of divine threatenings because they are long in taking effect. Say not, "Where is the promise of his coming?" He will come; and when he comes it shall be "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Some of the unbelieving generation were, no doubt, full of vigor, and they said, "We are as strong as old Caleb, and quite as likely as he to cross the Jordan. Our eyes are as clear as those of Moses, and we shall outlive the forty years appointed us." But death chilled the coals of juniper, and quenched their vehement flame. The stalwart man of war laid down his weapons, vanquished by the unconquerable foe of men. "There was not left a man of them." How like a knell those words sound in my ears! The mighty in the day of battle were no longer mighty when their hour had come. "They could not enter in because of unbelief"; but "their carcasses fell in the wilderness." All their days were passed away in the wrath of God. Beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. It is vain for you to indulge a hope, "larger" or smaller, if you die in your sin. The justice of the Most High is not to be escaped. In that last great day, when the throne shall be set, and every man shall give an account for the things done in his body, whether they be good or whether they be evil, the strict Judge will by no means clear the guilty, but they shall be driven away in his wrath to the place where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Oh that you would flee to Christ for refuge! Look to his cross, I pray you, that you may be saved! As the Lord fulfilled his threatenings, so did he cause his promises to come to pass. Caleb lived on, and so did Joshua. They were often in danger. Did not the rebels take up stones to stone them? They were of often near to death: Joshua was commander-in-chief of the army, and Caleb was a man of war from his youth up. They endured the common risks of soldiers; but nothing could kill them, for God had promised that they should enter the land. They believed God and honored him by their conduct, and therefore

he kept them until the hour came to go in unto the land to possess it. There were only two of them; but God did not therefore overlook them. He keeps covenant with individuals as well as with nations. They were not men who kept themselves out of harm's way, neither were they timorous, and therefore afraid to advance their opinions. No doubt they came in for a special share of envy and malice, but their reward with God was sure. If you believe in Jesus, though you should be the only one of your family, yet you shall be saved. Though you know none of your kith and kin that fear the Lord, yet the God of Israel will not forget the lone one who is separated from his brethren. Though the faithful should become so few that all the saints together should only make a handful, yet it is written, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

God's word standeth. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Jehovah's threatenings and promises are of equal force. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" There shall be no change even to a jot or tittle in this wondrous book. God forbid that we should begin to doubt it; for if we once begin, where shall we end? With this striking confirmation before us, we believe that the word of the Lord must stand. Let us be as the man whom the Lord blesses, because, saith he, "he trembleth at my word."

IV. Our last point is this: learn from my text THE ABIDING NECESSITY OF FAITH. Those people came out of Egypt with Moses, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea when they came forth into the wilderness. One would have hoped that they all would march to Canaan, but it was not so. The first census is taken, their names are on the roll; but, sad to say, at the next numbering all those names have vanished. What a difference between the church-roll at Sinai and the book of life by Jordan!

If you profess to be the people of God, we count you among his children: you are written among the living in Zion; but what an awful thing it would be if your name should not be written in the Lamb's Book of Life at the last! What if you should lie on the threshing-floor in the great heap before the winnowing, but should be gone with the chaff as soon as the

Lord has come, "whose fan is in his hand"! Oh, that none of us may provoke the Lord to swear in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest!

Learn, first, that no man is, was, or ever shall be saved without faith. "He that believeth not shall be damned" is our Lord's solemn declaration. It is written, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." This is as true to-day as when it was first spoken.

Learn, next, that no privilege can supply the lack of faith. We read that they heard, as you do; but some, when they had heard, did provoke." Their provocation lay mainly in their unbelief. No hearing, nay, not hearing the apostles themselves, could save you without faith. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Hearing may minister to condemnation if the truth is not believed.

These people went a certain way with Moses towards the Lord's promised rest. They did come out of Egypt, they were numbered with Jehovah's people, in the numbering at Sinai, they were separated from all the world in the quietude of the wilderness; but we read there was in them "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." In heart they went back into Egypt. It is not enough to begin well: "he that endureth to the end shall be saved," and no other. They had ceremonies in abundance, but they were not saved by them. They had the morning and the evening lambs; they were circumcised; they ate the Passover; they kept the Day of Atonement; but all these things together did not save them from dying in the desert, shut out of Canaan by unbelief. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Nothing can make up for the absence of faith. They had nothing to do all the day long in the wilderness, but to learn the lessons of God. They had time for thought, and they had the best of teachers to instruct them, and the best of school-books in the ceremonial law, and yet their knowledge did not preserve them from leaving their carcasses in the desert. They had plenty of time for meditation and contemplation; they had no care about temporals, for their bread was given them, and their waters were sure; and yet because of want of faith they did not learn that elementary truth which would have ministered to

them an entrance into rest.

But none perished who had faith; no, not one. All those who believed God, and held fast to him, were made inheritors of the land. Caleb and Joshua—these two saw the land, and took their places in it. If thou believest, whatever thy name may be, thou shalt be saved; for "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is written, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Caleb and Joshua by faith entered into the land promised to the fathers, and thou, my hearer, canst only enter in by faith. Have faith in God, and thou hast all things; but without faith it is impossible to please God.

Mark this: while it was faith alone which saved them, faith gave these men notable characters. We read of "my servant Caleb." He that believes God becomes a servant of God, and counts it all joy to obey his Lord. Faith is the mother of obedience. The Lord said that Caleb "had another spirit with him": faith puts quite another spirit into a man: it is not a murmuring or a mutinous spirit; it is not an ungrateful or distrustful Spirit; neither is it a haughty, wilful, rebellious spirit; but it is a spirit of love, of hope, of confidence in God. The faithful man is of another spirit from that of the world; for the Holy Spirit abides in him. Such a man chooses the way of God, so that the Lord says, "He hath followed me fully." This was well: it is wise not to run before God, nor to run away from God, but to follow him step by step. It is wise not to follow man but wholly to follow the Lord. It is commendable to follow him fully with undivided, unwavering, unquestioning, untiring step. The Lord will see that his servant Caleb enters into his rest: there is rest for good servants. As Caleb followed the Lord fully, it was meet that he should enter in where his Lord abides. Men of faith are not idle men, but servants: they are not wicked men, but they follow the Lord; they are not halfhearted men, they follow him fully. It is not their holiness that saves them; but their faith saves them: nevertheless, where there is no holiness, there is no fruit of faith, and no evidence of salvation.

As for Joshua, he was like to Caleb. He was a brave and truthful man, a true servant of God; and though we have his life given somewhat at length, yet we discover no flaw in his character. It is almost a rare thing in the Word of God to find a life written at any length without a record of

infirmity and sin; for the biographies of Scripture are truthful, and they mention men's faults as well as their virtues. As there is no recorded fault in Joshua's career, we gather that he was of a noble character. "The Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him." So that the faith which took these two men into Canaan was in them the creator of a noble character.

Now, what say you, beloved friends? Do you believe God? Do you believe his Word? Or are you of a captious and dubious spirit? Do you believe like children? Is God your Father, and therefore is his Word your Father's Word, which you cannot think of questioning? Will you follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, against giants or Canaanites? Will you believe God, whatever may give him the lie? If so, you shall dwell in the land that floweth with milk and honey, and you shall have your portion when the Lord appeareth. But if you do not truly believe, whatever profession you may make, your carcasses must fall in the wilderness. Woe is me that I have to deliver such a prophecy! Greater woe to you if it should be fulfilled in you. Believe the Lord, and you shall prosper. This day as you are preparing for the census of the nation, bethink you of the time when God shall make up his last account of natives in his holy city. Will you be numbered with his people, or will your names be left out at the reading of the muster-roll? God give us a place among his redeemed, and to his name shall be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

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The Great Change

"Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found."—Hosea 14:8.

This passage is in very vivid contrast to what Ephraim had previously said, as it is recorded in the early part of Hosea's prophecy. If you turn to the second chapter, and the fifth verse, you will find this same Ephraim saying, "I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." These lovers were the idol gods, and Ephraim was determined to go after them, for she ascribed to them her various comforts, her bread and her water, her wool and her flax, her oil and her drink. So desperately set was this Ephraim upon going after her idols that God had much ado to drag her away from them, for that second chapter continues, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them." So, you see, this people had been desperately set upon following after idols; yet, before the prophecy is ended, we find this same Ephraim saying, "What have I to do any more with idols?" What a change the grace of God works in the heart! It reverses the action of the entire machinery of our being. It puts, "No," for "Yes," and "Yes," for "No." It is a radical change; that which we hated, we come to love; and that which we loved, we come to hate. Whereas we said, concerning this and that, "I will," and "I shall," the grace of God makes us change our note and we say "I will not; by God's grace, I will not act as I said I would, for what have I to do any more with idols?"

At the beginning of this discourse, I would like to put to each one whom I am addressing this question, "Have you, my friend, ever experienced this great and total change?" Remember, if you have not, it is imperatively necessary that you should if you desire to be numbered among the Lord's people. "Ye must be born again," and this being born again is not the evolving of some good thing out of you that is already there hidden away, but the putting into you of something which is not there. It is the

quickenings of you from your death in sin. It is a change in you as great as was wrought upon the person of our Lord Jesus when, after lying in the grave dead, he was brought to life. Nothing short of this new birth, this resurrection, this thorough, total, radical change will make you meet to enter heaven. You have no right to expect that you will ever stand within yon gates of pearl unless you have been created anew in Christ Jesus. He that sitteth on the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new;" and he must make you new, or else, into the new kingdom where there is a new heaven and a new earth, you can never come; nay, you cannot even see that kingdom, for our Lord's words are as true to-day as when he said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Let that searching thought remain with you, and try yourselves by it.

But now I shall take you at once to the words of the text, that we may think of the change which was wrought upon Israel, or Ephraim. We will consider, first, the character of this change: "Ephraim shall say, What have I any more to do with idols?" Then, secondly, let us note the cause of this change; and, thirdly, the effect of this change.

I. First, then, we are to consider THE CHARACTER OF THIS CHANGE.

Ephraim had been besotted with her idolatry. The Israelites were never contented with idols of one sort; they went to Moab, to Egypt, to Philistia, to Assyria, to the Hittites, and to any other ites, to borrow idols. They introduced fresh idols from distant countries, they were never satisfied with the number of their images; yet now, when God has effectually wrought upon their hearts, they say, one voice speaking for all, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Notice, that this change was a very hearty and spontaneous one. Ephraim did not say, "I should like to worship idols, yet I dare not." She did not say, "I should like to set up graven images, but I must not." On the contrary, she herself said, "What have I to do any more with idols?" I wish that some people whom I might mention understood what conversion means. They say to us, "So you do not attend the theatre; what a denial it must be to you!" It is nothing of the kind, for we never have a wish or desire to go there. What have we, the twice-born, to do with these

vain things of the world? "Oh, but the drunkard's cup—it must be a very great piece of self-denial to you to abjure it!" On the contrary, it is loathsome to us; we have come to feel as if the most nauseous medicine that could be mixed would be sweeter to us than that cup. What have we to do any more with idols?

So, each thing that is evil becomes to the real convert a disgusting and distasteful thing. He does not say, "Oh, how I should like it! How I long for it! What a hungering I have after it!" If he detects in himself the least hankering after evil of any kind, he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But as far as the work of God's Spirit has been wrought upon him, he has a thorough hearty severance and divorce from those things which he once loved, and he has as great a horror of them as once he had a desire for them. Now he sings,

—

"Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me;
Once I admired its trifles too,
But grace has set me free.

"Its pleasures now no longer please,
No more content afford;
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord.

"As by the light of opening day
The stars are all conceal'd;
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is reveal'd."

I say again, the change is a very spontaneous and hearty one. Ephraim shall herself freely say, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have done with those things, and I am glad to have done with them. Oh, that I had done with them once for all!" I asked a convert, this last week, perhaps to a dozen I have put the same question, "My dear brother, are

you perfect?" "No, sir," each one has said, "I am not." Then when I have enquired, "Would you not like to be perfect?" the answer in every case has been, "Yes, indeed I would; it would be heaven on earth if I could but be perfectly holy. Oh, that I were clean rid of sin!" So we sing, with Cowper—

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee."

Let the idols go; smash them all up, break them in pieces like potter's vessels. If there be a lust, if there be a passion, if there be a joy, if there be a desire, that is not according to the mind of God, away with it. We cannot endure the evil thing, and want to get rid of it. Ephraim shall say, and shall say it cheerfully, spontaneously, heartily, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Observe also, that this change is the work of God's effectual grace. Notice the wording of the text: "Ephraim shall say." It is God who says, Ephraim shall say." Perhaps you ask me, "Did you not say that Ephraim said this voluntarily, spontaneously, with all her heart, and of her own free will?" Yes, that is so; but the Holy Spirit, without violating the freedom of man's will, is the Master of that will. There used to be great wars and fightings among Christian people about free will and free grace; and when I read the reports of those controversies, I am struck with the great amount of truth that was spoken on both sides. When I hear a man stoutly affirm that, if there be any good thing, it is all of the grace of God, I know that it is so; but when another declares that man is a free agent, and that, if he acts virtuously at all, his free will must consent to it, and that this condition is essential to the very making of virtue, is not that also true? Certainly it is, and why should we not believe both? Ephraim cheerfully says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" and yet at the back of that, is the great mysterious energy and work of the Holy Ghost bringing to pass the eternal purpose and decree of God, so that they are fulfilled. For God to work his will with mere materialism, with dead blocks of wood or stone, with rivers or with tempests, is but ordinary omnipotence; but for

God to leave men absolutely and responsible agents, and never to interfere with the freedom of their agency, and yet for him to accomplish his eternal purposes concerning them to every jot and tittle, this is, if I may so say, omnipotent omnipotence, this is almighty power carried to a climax. It is just so with the grace of God; we spontaneously quit our sin, but it is because almighty grace is working within us to will and to do of God's own good pleasure. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" because God in his effectual grace has weaned her from her idols.

Notice next, dear friends, that this change is always a very personal one. Ephraim says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" She does not say, "What have the nations to do with idols?" That would be a wise question; but, as a rule, national or general religion does not amount to much; we say, with Mr. Bunyan, "Those are generals, man, come to particulars." Believe all truth with the general company of those who hold it; but mind that you come to particulars, and say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Do not ask, "What has my mother to do with idols? What has my brother to do with idols? What has my neighbour to do with idols?" but, "What have I to do with idols?" If all other men go into sin, I must not. I ask each believing one to who I am speaking to feel, "God has done so much for me that I must turn away from sin. To me, wilful wickedness would be a horrible thing. I must quit all iniquity. Whatever all the rest of the world may do, I must not go with the multitude to do evil; I must loathe it and leave it. 'As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.' 'Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?'" Abhor selfishness and egotism; but, at the same time, be very personal and individual about your own religion. You were born alone, and you will die alone, and you have need to be born again individually and personally; and it must come to a personal transaction between yourself and God, so that you can for yourself say, as we did in our singing,—

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and he is mine:
He drew me, and I follow'd on,
Charm'd to confess the voice divine.

"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,

That vow renewed shall daily hear;
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

"What have I to do any more with idols?" The change here implied must be spontaneous and hearty; it must be the result of divine grace; and it must be personal.

And then, dear friends, it must also be a truly repentant change: "What have I to do any more with idols?" There is in that question a confession that the speaker has had to do with idols already. Let the time past suffice us to have wrought the will of the flesh. Brother, if thou art resolved to serve God, through his grace, yet ere thou beginnest that service, remember how thou hast in the past served the devil. Quit not thy old way without many a tear of regret, and many a blush of deep humiliation, for whatever thou mayest do in the future, thou canst not undo the past. Thy wasted time, thy injured faculties, thy angered God, thy friends about thee influenced for evil by thy example, thou canst not blot out all these; therefore, at least stay thou a while, and shed penitent tears over the graves of thy dead sins, and ask thy God to help thee to feel that thou hast had enough of thy evil ways, and sin, and neglect. Say, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have had far too much to do with them already. O Satan, O self, O world, I have served you all too long; and now, my God, with deep regret for all the past, I turn my face to thee!"

This change must also be, dear friends, life-long. Notice two words in our text, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Where the grace of God really converts a man, he is not converted merely for the next quarter of a year, with the possibility of falling from grace afterwards. That is a human conversion which can ever come to an end; but if God converts you, you can never be unconverted. As conversion is the work of the Spirit of God, it is clear that it must need the same power to undo it as first did it. He who has made you a Christian will keep you a Christian; and unless a stronger than he shall come in, and undo his work, you shall never go back to your old idols again.

"Where God begins his gracious work,
That work he will complete,
For round the objects of his love,
All power and mercy meet.

"Man may repent him of his work,
And fail in his intent;
God is above the power of change,
He never can repent.

"Each object of his love is sure
To reach the heavenly goal:
For neither sin nor Satan can
Destroy the blood-wash'd soul."

Oh, how I love to preach this glorious doctrine of everlasting salvation! The salvation that only carries you a little bit of the way to heaven, I never thought worthy of my acceptance, I would not have it as a gift, and I never thought it worth preaching to you. I remember hearing one of the revival preachers say that there are some who go on the road to heaven, and just take a ticket to the next station; then they get out and take a new ticket, and rush back to the train; and so they keep on. "But," said the man, "when I started I took a ticket all the way through." That is the way to travel to heaven; when you start, get a ticket all the way through. Listen to these words of Christ: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them to me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Listen also to the words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." O my brothers, God does not play at saving men; first doing the work, and then undoing it. If he saves you, you are saved. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." There is the gospel which we are sent to preach to you; so that, when once converted, truly converted, you will say, "What have I any more to do with idols?"

Perhaps someone asks, "Ay, but do not some professors go back, and do you say that, if men, after making a profession of religion, live in sin, they shall be saved?" Certainly we say nothing of the kind; we say, on the contrary, that if truly converted they will not live in sin, but if the work of grace be wrought in them, they will be kept from sin; or if they shall, through sudden temptation, fall, they shall be speedily restored; weeping and sighing, they shall be brought back again to the good way. We never said that men could live in sin, and yet go to heaven. That were damnable talk, not fit for a Christian to utter; but he who is truly saved is saved once for all, and he can say, "What have I any more to do with idols?" Throughout the rest of his life he will have done with them, he will have quitted them. He will burn his boats behind him, never to go back to the country which he has quitted once for all. This is a salvation worth having; wherefore, I pray you, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be a partaker of it.

Yet once more, notice that this is a very thorough change: "What have I to do any more with idols?" O you who have done with idols, remember that you have also done with the idol temples, you have done with the false priests, you have done with the so-called "sacred thread" and other idolatrous tokens; you have done with everything appertaining to idolatry! You who once were drunkards have done for ever with the public-house and the drunkard's cup. You who once were lascivious, if the grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with fornication, what have you to do with any kind of uncleanness? You who were aforetime dishonest, if the grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with the tricks of the trade? What have you to do with fraudulent bankruptcies? What have you to do with cheating and lying? Let each true believer cry, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Begone, sin and Satan, bag and baggage! What has a man, who is bought with the blood of Christ, to do any more with idols? He quits them once for all, by God's good grace.

I find that the rest of my text would take up far too much time for me to expound it fully, so that I shall have to content myself with the second division of the subject.

II. This was to be, you will remember, THE CAUSE OF THE GREAT CHANGE.

The first cause of this change is the grace received. In the previous part of the chapter, we find the Lord saying, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." Then our text naturally follows, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" We cannot get you to give up sin, however earnestly we may exhort you to forsake it; but if, by God's grace, you receive Christ as your Saviour, then you will abandon sin as a natural consequence. What is the best way to keep chaff out of a bushel measure? Fill it full of wheat; and when the heart of a man is full of Christ, there will be no room for the world, the flesh, and the devil. These things cannot find an entrance where Christ has full possession. When God is as the dew of our soul, and we receive freely of his grace, then we do not need telling, and urging, and driving but we at once say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Another cause of this great change lies in our perception of the beauties of the Lord. I do not quite know whether what I am going to say is the exact teaching of the text, but I think it is. It is very difficult, sometimes, in these prophecies to know who is speaking. There are often dialogues, and the dialogues are not always so clearly marked that we can tell who is the speaker. I have always thought, when I have read this chapter that it was the Lord who said, "I have heard him, and observed him;" but on thinking the passage over very carefully, I am not quite sure that it is so. Let me give you another version, which I met with in two verses by an unknown poet; and then see whether this is not the, meaning of the passage:—

"I have heard him, and observed him,
Seen his beauty rich and rare,
Seen his majesty and glory,
And his grace beyond compare.

"What have I to do with idols,
When such visions fill my eye?
How be occupied with shadows
When the substance passes by?"

Does the text mean, then, "I will have nothing more to do with idols, for I have heard my God, and I have observed him; I have heard Christ speak, and I have observed the excellence of his character"? This much I know,—whether that be the teaching of this passage, or not,—nothing weans the heart from idols like a sight of Christ. O you worldly Christians, who are getting to be so fond of this world, I am sure that you have not seen your Master lately! If you had, the world would sink in your esteem. O you who are beginning to be fond of human wisdom, you cannot have heard him speak of late, or else he would be made of God unto you wisdom, and everything else would be folly! O you who are seeking to live for self and for earthly gain, your heads have not been lately pillowed on the Saviour's bosom, you have not recently looked into those dear eyes which are more radiant than the glories of the morning! You cannot have known the fragrance of those garments which smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, or you would never be enamoured of this poor, foul, unsavoury world. "I have heard him, and observed him: what have I to do any more with idols?" "I have heard him say, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' I have observed him go up to the cross, and lay down his life for me; 'what have I to do any more with idols?'" When thou, as the bride of Christ, lovest thy first Husband as thou shouldst love him, then thy wanderings will be at an end. When all thy heart goes after the Well-beloved, and he enraptures thee with manifestations of his love and of his grace, then wilt thou say, "What have I to do with idols,—I so favoured, I so enriched with divine blessings, I who am on the road to heaven, I who am so soon to see the face of him I love,—what have I to do with idols?"

That seems to me to be a grand meaning perfectly consistent with earnest Christian experience, so I leave it with you. This great change, then, is wrought in us by the grace of God, and by a sight of the true beauties of our Lord.

But now, taking the text as it is generally understood, you will get another meaning. One cause for this great change is the sense of answered prayer: Ephraim shall say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" And God says of Ephraim, "I have heard him." I recollect, even as a child, God hearing my prayer; I cannot tell you what it was about, it may have been

concerning a mere trifle, but to me as a child it was as important as the greatest prayer that Solomon ever offered for himself, and God heard that prayer, and it was thus early established in my mind that the Lord was God. And afterwards, when I came really to know him,—afterwards, when I came to cry to him intelligently, I had this prayer answered, and that petition granted, and many a time since then,—I am only speaking what any of you who know the Lord could also say,—many a time since then he has answered my requests. I cannot tell you all about this matter; there is many a secret between me and my dear Lord. This very week, I have had a love-token from him which, if I could tell you about it, would make your eyes wonder and fill with tears. I asked, and I received, as manifestly as if I had spoken to my brother in the flesh, and he had said, "Yes, there, take all you need." Well now, I always find that, in proportion as I am conscious that God is answering my prayers, my heart says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" If I can have from my God whatever I ask for, why need I cringe and bow my knees to men? If I have but to go to God, and wait upon him, and he will give me the desires of my heart, what have I to do with the fretting, and fuming, and being anxious? What have I to do with idols? If there is everything in Christ, and that everything is to be had for the asking, what have I to do with idols? It is wonderful how you are weaned from the dry breasts of the world when you can drink in all that your soul desires from the living God. If God, the Jehovah of hosts, be no more to you than the gods of the heathen, or the gods of the men of the world, why then you will have to do with idols; but if your God is the God that heareth prayer, and if you live in his presence, and you speak to him, and he speaks to you, if you keep up perpetual intercourse with him, so that God can say to you, "I have heard him, and observed him," then I am sure that you will also say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

If I am addressing any poor soul that has been craving mercy from God, one who has been crying for months to God to give him forgiveness through Jesus Christ, why, dear heart, if you will only believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall get all that you are asking, you shall receive peace, and pardon, and joy, and rest; and then you will say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

"Oh!" says one, "my dear sir, I have been trying to overcome sin, and I cannot." I know you cannot; but if you begin by receiving Christ, by praying to God, and getting the answer, then you will be able to say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" You want to wash yourself first, and then to come to the fountain. That will not do; you must come, black as you are, and wash, and be cleansed. You want to get rich spiritually, and then to come to God to enrich you. No; you must come to him poor, come without anything of your own, just as you are, and trust the boundless mercy of God in Christ Jesus, he will give you all you need, and then you will say, "What have I to do any more with idols, for God has heard me, and he doth observe my soul?"

You see, then, some of the ways in which this very great and wonderful change is wrought. I had to omit many other points on which I meant to speak, but I do pray that this change may be wrought in every one of you. Do not wait to have the change wrought, and then come to God, but come to God for it. If you have a broken heart, come to Christ with it; but if you do not feel your sin, come to Christ that you may be made to feel it. If there is any good thing in you, thank God for it, and come to him for more; but if there is no good thing whatever in you, come without any good thing, and let Christ begin at the very beginning with you, in all your emptiness, and need, and spiritual beggary and loathsomeness. Come to him just as you are, for he still says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." May his sweet Spirit graciously attract every one of you till you shall be drawn to him, and so drawn from your idols, and to him shall be glory, for ever and ever! Amen.

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"My Garden"—"His Garden"

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his

garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."—Song of Solomon 4:16.

What a difference there is between what the believer was by nature and what the grace of God has made him! Naturally, we were like the waste howling wilderness, like the desert which yields no healthy plant or verdure. It seemed as if we were given over to be like a salt land, which is not inhabited; no good thing was in us, or could spring out of us. But now, as many of us as have known the Lord are transformed into gardens; our wilderness is made like Eden, our desert is changed into the garden of the Lord. "I will turn unto you," said the Lord to the mountains of Israel when they were bleak and bare, "I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown;" and this is exactly what he said to the barrenness of our nature. We have been enclosed by grace, we have been tilled and sown, we have experienced all the operations of the divine husbandry. Our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "My Father is the husbandman," and he has made us to be fruitful unto his praise, full of sweetness where once there was no fruit, and nothing that could give him delight.

We are a garden, then, and in a garden there are flowers and fruits, and in every Christian's heart you will find the same evidences of culture and care; not in all alike, for even gardens and fields vary in productiveness. In the good ground mentioned by our Lord in the parable of the sower, the good seed did not all bring forth a hundredfold, or even sixty-fold; there were some parts of the field where the harvest was as low as thirty-fold, and I fear that there are some of the Lord's gardens which yield even less than that. Still, there are the fruits and there are the flowers, in a measure; there is a good beginning made wherever the grace of God has undertaken the culture of our nature.

I. Now coming to our text, and thinking of Christians as the Lord's garden, I want you to observe, first, that **THERE ARE SWEET SPICES IN BELIEVERS.**

The text assumes that when it says, "Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." There are in the Lord's garden sweet flowers that drip with honey, and all manner of delightful perfumes. There are such sweet apices within the believer's heart; let us think of them for a

few minutes, and first, let me remind you of the names of these sweet spices.

For instance, there is faith; is there anything out of heaven sweeter than faith,—the faith which trusts and clings, which believes and hopes, and declares that, though God shall slay it, yet will it trust in him? In the Lord's esteem, faith is full of fragrance. He never delighted in the burning of bulls and the fat of fed beasts, but he always delighted in the faith which brought these things as types of the one great sacrifice for sin. Faith is very dear to him. Then comes love; and again I must ask,—Is there to be found anywhere a sweeter spice than this,—the love which loves God because he first loved us, the love which flows out to all the brotherhood, the love which knows no circle within which it can be bounded, but which loves the whole race of mankind, and seeks to do them good? It is exceedingly pleasing to God to see love growing where once all was hate, and to see faith springing up in that very soul which was formerly choked with the thorns and briers of doubt and unbelief. And there is also hope, which is indeed an excellent grace, a far-seeing grace by which we behold heaven and eternal bliss. There is such a fragrance about a God-given hope that this poor sin-stricken world seems to be cured by it. Wherever this living, lively hope comes, there men lift up their drooping heads, and begin to rejoice in God their Savior. You do not need that I should go over all the list of Christian graces, and mention meekness, brotherly kindness, courage, uprightness, or the patience which endures so much from the hand of God; but whatsoever grace I might mention, it would not be difficult at once to convince you that there is a sweetness and a perfume about all grace in the esteem of him who created it, and it delights him that it should flourish where once its opposite alone was found growing in the heart of man. These, then, are some of the saints' sweet spices.

Next notice, that these sweet spices are delightful to God. It is very wonderful that we should have within us anything in which God can take delight; yet when we think of all the other wonders of his grace, we need not marvel at all. The God who gave us faith may well be pleased with faith. The God who created love in such unlovely hearts as ours may well be delighted at his own creation. He will not despise the work of his own

hands; rather will he be delighted with it, and find sweet complacency therein. What an exaltation it is to us worms of the earth that there should ever be anything in us well-pleasing unto God! Well did the psalmist say, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" But God is mindful of us, and he does visit us. Of old, before Christ came into this world-in human form, his delights were with the sons of men; much more is it so now that he has taken their nature into heaven itself, and given to those sons of men his own Spirit to dwell within them. Let it ravish your heart with intense delight that, though often you can take no complacency in yourself, but go with your head bowed down, like a bulrush, and cry, "Woe is me!" yet in that very cry of yours God hears a note that is sweet and musical to his ears. Blessed is repentance, with her tear-drops in her eyes, sparkling like diamonds. God takes delight even in our longings after holiness, and in our loathings of our own imperfections. Just as the father delights to see his child anxious to be on the best and most loving terms with him, so does God delight in us when we are crying after that which we have not yet reached, the perfection which shall make us to be fully like himself. O beloved, I do not know anything that fills my soul with such feelings of joy as does the reflection that I, even I, may yet be and do something that shall give delight to the heart of God himself! He has joy over one sinner that repenteth, though repentance is but an initial grace; and when we go on from that to other graces, and take yet higher steps in the divine life, we may be sure that his joy is in us, and therefore our joy may well be full.

These spices of ours are not only delightful to God, but they are healthful to man. Every particle of faith that there is in the world is a sort of purifier; wherever it comes, it has a tendency to kill that which is evil. In the spiritual sanitary arrangements which God made for this poor world, he put men of faith, and the faith of these men, into the midst of all this corruption, to help to keep other men's souls alive, even as our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." The sweet perfumes that flow out from the flowers which God cultivates in the garden of his Church are scattering spiritual health and sanity all around. It is a blessed thing that the Lord has provided these sweet spices to overpower and counteract the unhealthy odours that float on every breeze. Think, then, dear friends, of the importance of being God's

fragrant flowers, which may yield perfumes that are delightful to him, and that are blessed and healthful to our fellow-men. A man of faith and love in a church sweetens all his brethren. Give us but a few such in our midst, and there shall be no broken spiritual unity, there shall be no coldness and spiritual death; but all shall go well where these men of God are among us as a mighty influence for good. And, as to the ungodly around us, the continued existence in the earth of the Church of Christ is the hope of the world. The world that hates the Church knows not what it does, for it is hating its best friend. The spices with which God is conserving this present evil age, lest his anger should destroy it because of the growing corruption, are to be found in the flowers which he has planted in the garden of his Church.

It sometimes happens that these sweet odours within God's people lie quiet and still. There is a stillness in the air, something like that which the poet Coleridge makes "The Ancient Mariner" speak of in his graphic description of a calm within the tropics. Do you, dear friends, never get into that becalmed condition? I recollect, when I was young, reading an expression,—I think of Erskine's,—in which he says that he lincs a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil. It struck me then that, if I could keep the devil always asleep, it would be the best thing that could possibly happen for me; but now I am not so sure that I was right. At all events, I know this, when the old dog of hell barks very loudly, he keeps me awake; and when he howls at me, he drives me to the mercy-seat for protection; but when he goes to sleep, and lies very quiet, I am very apt to go to sleep, too, and then the graces that are within my soul seem to be absolutely hidden. And, mark you, hidden grace, which in no way reveals itself by its blessed odours, is all the same as if there were none, to those that watch from the outside, and sometimes to the believer himself. What is wanted, in order that he may know that he has these sweet perfumes, is something outside himself. You cannot stir your own graces, you cannot make them more, you cannot cause their fragrance to flow forth. True, by prayer, you may help to this end; but then, that very prayer is put into you by the Holy Spirit, and when it has been offered to the Lord, it comes back to you laden with blessings; but often, something more is needed, some movement of God's providence, and much more, some mighty working of his grace, to come and shake the flower bells in his garden,

and make them shed their fragrance on the air. Alas! on a hot and drowsy day, when everything has fallen into a deep slumber, even God's saints, though they be wise virgins, go as soundly asleep as the foolish virgins, and they forget that "the Bridegroom cometh." "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept;" and, sometimes, you and I must catch ourselves nodding when we ought to be wide awake. We are going through a part of that enchanted ground which John Bunyan describes, and we do not know what to do to keep ourselves awake.

At such times, a Christian is very apt to ask, "Am I indeed planted in God's garden? Am I really a child of God?" Now, I will say what some of you may think a strong thing; but I do not believe that he is a child of God who never raised that question. Cowper truly wrote,—

"He has no hope who never had a fear;
And he who never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps,—perhaps he may—too late."

I have sung, and I expect that I may have to sing again,—
"'Tis a point I long to know;
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?"

I cannot bear to get into that condition, and I cannot bear to keep in it when I am in it, but still, there must be anxious thought about this all-important matter. Because you happened to be excited on a certain occasion, and thought you were converted and were sure of heaven, you had better look well to the evidence on which you are relying. You may be mistaken after all; and while I would not preach up little faith, I would preach down great presumption. No man can have a faith too strong, and no assurance can be too full, if it comes really from God the Holy Spirit; but if it comes merely out of your fancying that it is so, and, therefore, will not examine yourself, whether you be in the faith, I begin to make up my mind that it is not so, because you are afraid to look into the matter. "I know that I am getting rich," says a merchant, "I never keep any books, and I do not want any books, but I know that I am getting on well in my business." If, my dear sir, I do not soon see your name in the Gazette, I

shall be rather surprised.

Whenever a man is so very good that he does not want to esquire at all into his position before God, I suspect that he is afraid of introspection, and self-examination, and that he dare not look into his own heart. This I know; as I watch the many people of God committed to my care here, I see some run on for ten years or more serving God with holy joy, and having no doubt or fear. They are not generally remarkable for any great depth of experience, but when God means to make mighty men of them, he digs about them, and soon they come to me crying, and craving a little comfort, telling me what doubts they have, because they are not what they want to be. I am glad when this is the case, I rejoice because I know that they will be spiritually better off afterwards. They have reached a higher standard than they had previously attained, they have a better knowledge now of what they ought to be. It may be that, before, their ideal was a low one, and they thought that they had reached it. Now, God has revealed to them greater heights, which they have to climb; and they may as well gird up the loins of their mind to do so by divine help. As they get higher, they perhaps think, "Now we are at the top of the mountain," when they are really only on one of the lower spurs of it. Up they go, climbing again. "If once I can reach that point, I shall soon be at the summit," you think. Yes, and when you have at length got there, you see the mountain still towering far above you. How deceptive is the height of the Alps to those who have not seen them before! I said to a friend once, "It will take you about thirteen hours to get to the top of that mountain." "Why," he replied, "I can run up in half-an-hour." I let him have a try, and he had not gone far before he had to sit down to pant and rest. So you think of a certain height of grace, "Oh, I can easily reach that!" Yea, just so; but you do not know how high it is; and those who think that they have reached the top do not know anything about the top; for he who knows how high is the holiness to which the believer can attain will go on clambering and climbing, often on his hands and knees, and when he has reached that point which he thought was the summit, he will sit down and say, "I thought I had reached the top, but now I find that I have but begun the ascent." Or he may say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear:" (and then I did not know much of thee, or of myself either,) "but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and

repent in dust and ashes."

You see, then, that there are sweet spices lying in Christians, like hidden honey and locked-up perfume within the flowers on a hot day.

II. What is wanted is that **THOSE SWEET ODORS SHOULD BE DIFFUSED**. That is to be our second head. Read the text again: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

Observe, first, that until our graces are diffused, it is the same as if they were not there. You may go through a wood, and it may be abounding in game, yet you may scarcely see a hare or notice a pheasant anywhere about. There they lie all quiet and undisturbed; but, by-and-by, the beaters go through the wood making a great noise, and away the pheasants fly, and you may see the timid hares run like hinds let loose, because they are disturbed and wakened up. That is what we sometimes need, to be aroused and stirred from slumber. We may not know that we have any faith till there comes a trial, and then our faith starts boldly up. We can hardly know how much we love our Lord till there comes a test of our love, and then we so behave ourselves that we know that we do love him. Oftentimes, as I have already reminded you, something is needed from without to stir the life that lies hidden within. It is so with these sweet flowers in the Beloved's garden, they need either the north wind or the south wind to blow upon them that they may shed abroad their sweet odours.

Notice next, that it is very painful to a Christian to be in such a condition that his graces are not stirring. He cannot endure it. We who love the Lord were not born again to waste our time in sinful slumber; our watchword is, "Let us not sleep, as do others." We were not born to inaction; every power that God has put within us was meant to be used in working, and striving, and serving the Lord. So, when our graces are slumbering, we ourselves are in an unhappy state. Then we long for any agency that would set those graces moving. The north wind? Oh, but if it shall blow, then we shall have snow! Well, then, let the snow come, for we

must have our graces set in motion, we cannot bear that they should continue to lie quiet and still. "Awake, O north wind!"—a heavy trial, a bleak adversity, a fierce temptation,—anything so long as we do but begin to diffuse our graces. Or if the north wind be dreaded, we say, "Come, thou south!" Let prosperity be granted to us; let sweet fellowship with our brethren rouse us, and holy meditations, full of delight, stir our souls; let a sense of the divine life, like a soft south wind, come to our spirit. We are not particular which it is, let the Lord send which he pleases, or both together, as the text seems to imply, only do let us be aroused. "Quicken thou me, O Lord, according to thy Word,"—whichever Word thou shalt choose to apply, only do quicken thy servant, and let not the graces within me be as if they were dead!

Remember, however, that the best Quickener is always the Holy Spirit; and that blessed Spirit can come as the north wind, convincing us of sin, and tearing away every rag of our self-confidence, or he may come as the soft south wind, all full of love, revealing Christ, and the covenant of grace, and all the blessings treasured for us therein. Come, Holy Spirit! Come as the Heavenly Dove, or as the rushing mighty wind; but do come! Drop from above, as gently as the dew, or come like rattling hail, but do come, blest Spirit of God! We feel that we must be moved, we must be stirred, our heart's emotions must once again throb, to prove that the life of God is really within us; and if we do not realize this quickening and stirring, we are utterly unhappy.

You see also, dear friends, from this text, that when a child of God sees that his graces are not diffused abroad, then is the time that he should take to prayer. Let no one of us ever think of saying, "I do not feel as if I could pray, and therefore I will not pray." On the contrary, then is the time when you ought to pray more earnestly than ever. When the heart is disinclined for prayer, take that as a danger-signal, and at once go to the Lord with this resolve,—

"I will approach thee—I will force
My way through obstacles to thee:
To thee for strength will have recourse,
To thee for consolation flee!"

When you seem to yourself to have little faith, and little love, and little joy, then cry unto the Lord all the more, "cry aloud, and spare not." Say, "O my Father, I cannot endure this miserable existence! Thou hast made me to be a flower, to shed abroad my perfume, yet I am not doing it. Oh, by some means, stir my flagging spirit, till I shall be full of earnest industry, full of holy anxiety to promote thy glory, O my Lord and Master!" While you are thus crying, you must still believe, however, that God the Holy Spirit can stir your spirit, and make you full of life again. Never permit a doubt about that fact to linger in your bosom, else will you be unnecessarily sad. You, who are the true children of God, cannot ever come into a condition out of which the Holy Spirit cannot uplift you. You know the notable case of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot, and therefore so nauseous to the great Lord that he threatened to spue her out of his mouth, yet what is the message to the angel of that church?" Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." This is not said to sinners, it is addressed to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Oh, matchless grace! He is sick of these lukewarm professors, yet he promises to sup with them, and that they shall sup with him. That is the only cure for lukewarmness and decline, to renew heart-fellowship with Christ; and he stands and offers it to all his people now. "Only do you open the door, and I will sup with you, and you shall sup with me." O you whose graces are lying so sinfully dormant, who have to mourn and cry because of "the body of this death"—for death in you seems to have taken to itself a body, and to have become a substantial thing, no mere skeleton now, but a heavy, cumbrous form that bows you down,—cry still to him who is able to deliver you from this lukewarm and sinful state! Let every one of us put up the prayer of our text, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

III. Our third and closing head will help to explain the remaining portion of our text: "Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." These words speak of **THE COMPANY OF CHRIST AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF OUR FRUIT BY CHRIST.**

I want you, dear friends, specially to notice one expression which is used

here. While the spouse was, as it were, shut up and frozen, and the spices of the Lord's garden were not cowing out, she cried to the winds, "Blow upon my garden." She hardly dared to call it her Lord's garden; but now, notice the alteration in the phraseology: "Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." The wind has blown through the garden, and made the sweet odours to flow forth; now it is no longer "my garden," but "his garden." It is wonderful how in increase of grace transfers our properties; while we have but little grace, we cry, "my," but when we get great grace, we cry "his." Wherein you are sinful and infirm, brother, that is yours, you rightly call it "my"; but when you become strong, and joyous, and full of faith, that is not yours, brother, and you rightly call it "his." Let him have all the glory of the change while you take all the shame and confusion of face to yourself that ever you should have been so destitute of grace. As the spouse says, "Let my Beloved come into his garden. Here are all the sweet perfumes flowing out; he will enjoy them, let him come and feel himself at home amongst them. He planted every flower, and gave to each its fragrance; let him come into his garden, and see what wonders his grace has wrought."

Do you not feel, beloved, that the one thing you want to stir your whole soul is that Christ's should come into it? Have you lost his company lately? Oh, do not try to do without it! The true child of God ought not to be willing to bear broken communion for even five minutes; but should be sighing and crying for its renewal. Our business is to seek to "walk in the light as God is in the light," fully enjoying communion with Christ our Lord; and when that fellowship is broken, then the heart feels that it has cast all its happiness away, and it must robe itself in sackcloth, and sorrowfully fast. If the presence of the Bridegroom shall be taken away from thee, then indeed shalt thou have cause to fast and to be sad. The best condition a heart can be in, if it has lost fellowship with Christ, is to resolve that it will give God no rest till it gets back to communion with him, and to give itself no rest till once more it finds the Well-beloved.

Next observe that, when the Beloved comes into his garden, the heart's humble but earnest entreaty is, "Let him eat his pleasant fruits." Would you keep back anything from Christ? I know you could not if he were to come into his garden. The best things that you have, you would first

present to him, and then everything that you have, you would bring to him, and leave all at his dear feet. We do not ask him to come to the garden, that we may lay up our fruits, that we may put them by and store them up for ourselves; we ask him to come and eat them. The greatest joy of a Christian is to give joy to Christ; I do not know whether heaven itself can overmatch this pearl of giving joy to the heart of Jesus Christ on earth. It can match it, but not overmatch it, for it is a superlative joy to give joy to him,—the Man of sorrows, who was emptied of joy for our sakes, and who now is filled up again with joy as each one of us shall come and bring his share, and cause to the heart of Christ a new and fresh delight.

Did you ever reclaim a poor girl from the streets? Did you ever rescue a poor thief who had been in prison? Then I know that, as you have heard of the holy chastity of the one, or of the sacred honesty of the other of those lives that you have been the means of restoring, you have said, "Oh, this is delightful! There is no joy equal to it. The effort cost me money, it cost me time, it cost me thought, it cost me prayer, but I am repaid a thousand times." Then, as you see them growing up so bright, so transparent, so holy, so useful, you say, "This work is worth living for, it is a delight beyond measure." Often, persons come to me, and tell me of souls that were saved through my ministry twenty years ago. I heard, the other day, of one who was brought to Christ by a sermon of mine nearly thirty years ago, and I said to the friend who told me, "Thank you, thank you; you could not tell me anything that would give my heart such joy as this good news that God has made me the instrument of a soul's conversion." But what must be the joy of Christ who does all the work of salvation, who redeems us from sin, and death, and hell, when he sees such creatures as we are, made to be like himself, and knows the divine possibilities of glory and immortality that lie within us?

What are we going to be, brothers and sisters, we who are in Christ? We have not any idea of what holiness, and glory, and bliss, shall yet be ours. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." We may rive even while on earth to great heights of holiness,—and the higher the better; but there is something better for us than mortal eye has ever seen or mortal ear has ever heard. There is more grace to be in the saints than we have ever seen

in them, the saintliest saint on earth was never such a saint as they are yonder who are before the throne of the Most High; and I know not but that, even when they get there, there shall be a something yet beyond for them, and that through the eternal ages they shall still take for their motto, "Onward and upward!" In heaven, there will be no "Finis." We shall still continue to develop, and to become something more than we have ever been before; not fuller, but yet capable of holding more, ever growing in the possibility of reflecting Christ, and being filled with his love; and all the while our Lord Jesus Christ will be charmed and delighted with us. As he hears our lofty songs of praise, as he sees the bliss which will ever be flashing from each one of us, as he perceives the divine ecstasy which shall be ours for ever, he will take supreme delight in it all. "My redeemed," he will say, "the sheep of my pasture, the purchase of my blood, borne on my shoulders, my very heart pierced for them, oh, how I delight to see them in the heavenly fold! These my redeemed people are joint heirs with me in the boundless heritage that shall be theirs for ever; oh, how I do delight in them!"

"Wherefore, comfort one another with these words," beloved, and cry mightily that, on this church, and on all the churches, God's Spirit may blow, to make the spices flow. Pray, dear friends, all of you, for the churches to which you belong; and if you, my brother, are a pastor, be asking especially for this divine wind to blow through the garden which you have to cultivate, as I also pray for this portion of the garden of the Lord: "Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." The Lord be with each one of you, beloved, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

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**Alas For Us, If Thou Wert All, And Nought
Beyond, O Earth**

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. - 1 Corinthians 15:19

You will understand that the apostle is arguing with professedly Christian people, who were dubious about the resurrection of the dead. He is not saying that all men are now miserable if there be no hope of the world to come, for such an assertion would be untrue. There are very many who never think of another life, who are quite happy in their way, enjoy themselves, and are very comfortable after a fashion. But he speaks of Christian people—"If we, who have hope in Christ, are led to doubt the doctrine of a future state and of a resurrection, then we are of all men most miserable." The argument has nothing to do with some of you who are not Christians; it has nothing to do with you who have never been brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace; it only respects those who are real, living followers of the Savior, and who are known by this, that they have hope in Christ—hope in his blood for pardon, in his righteousness for justification, in his power for support, in his resurrection for eternal glory. "If we who have hope in Christ, have that hope for this life only, then we are of all men most miserable." You understand the argument; he is appealing to their consciousness; they, as Christians, had real enjoyments, "but," says he, "you could not have these enjoyments if it were not for the hope of another life; for once take that away, if you could still remain Christians and have the same feelings which you now have, and act as you now do, you would become of all men most miserable," therefore to justify your own happiness and make it all reasonable, you must admit a resurrection; there is no other method of accounting for the joyous peace which the Christian possesses. Our riches are beyond the sea; our city with firm foundations lies on the other side the river: gleams of glory from the spirit-world cheer our hearts, and urge us onward; but if it were not for these, our present joys would pine and die.

We will try and handle our text this morning in this way. First, we are not of all men most miserable; but secondly, without the hope of another life we should be—that we are prepared to confess—because thirdly, our chief

joy lies in the hope of a life to come; and thus, fourthly, the future influences the present; and so, in the last place, we may to-day judge what our future is to be.

I. First then, WE ARE NOT OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE. Who ventures to say we are? He who will have the hardihood to say so knoweth nothing of us. He who shall affirm that Christianity makes men miserable, is himself an utter stranger to it, and has never partaken of its joyful influences. It were a very strange thing indeed, if it did make us wretched, for see to what a position it exalts us! It makes us sons of God. Suppose you that God will give all the happiness to his enemies, and reserve all the mourning for his sons? Shall his foes have mirth and joy, and shall his own home-born children inherit sorrow and wretchedness? Are the kisses for the wicked and the frowns for us? Are we condemned to hang our harps upon the willows, and sing nothing but doleful dirges, while the children of Satan are to laugh for joy of heart? We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. Shall the sinner, who has no part nor lot in Christ, call himself happy, and shall we go mourning as if we were penniless beggars? No, we will rejoice in the Lord always, and glory in our inheritance, for we "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The rod of chastisement must rest upon us in our measure, but it worketh for us the comfortable fruits of righteousness; and therefore by the aid of the divine Comforter, we will rejoice in the Lord at all times. We are, my brethren, married unto Christ; and shall our great Bridegroom permit his spouse to linger in constant grief? Our hearts are knit unto him: we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, and though for awhile we may suffer as our Head once suffered, yet we are even now blessed with heavenly blessings in him. Shall our Head reign in heaven, and shall we have a hell upon earth? God forbid: the joyful triumph of our exalted Head is in a measure shared by us, even in this vale of tears. We have the earnest of our inheritance in the comforts of the Spirit, which are neither few nor small. Think of a Christian! He is a king, and shall the king be the most melancholy of men? He is a priest unto God, and shall he offer no sweet incense of hallowed joy and grateful thanksgiving? We are fit companions for angels: he hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and shall we have no

days of heaven upon earth? Is Canaan ours from Dan to Beersheba, and shall we eat no fruit from Eshcol's vine on this side of Jordan? Shall we have no taste of the figs, and of the pomegranates, and of the flowing milk and honey? Is there no manna in the wilderness? Are there no streams in the desert? Are there no streaks of light to herald our eternal sunrising? Heritors of joy for ever, have we no foretastes of our portion? I say again, it were the oddest thing in the world if Christians were more miserable than other men, or not more happy. Think again of what God has done for them! The Christian knows that his sins are forgiven; there is not against the believer a single sin recorded in God's book. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." More than that, the believer is accounted by God as if he had perfectly kept the law, for the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he stands clothed in that fair white linen which is the righteousness of the saints, And shall the man whom God accepts be wretched? Shall the pardoned offender be less happy than the man upon whom the wrath of God abideth? Can you conceive such a thing? Moreover, my brethren, we are made temples of the Holy Ghost, and is the Holy Ghost's temple to be a dark, dolorous place, a place of shrieks, and moans, and cries, like the Druidic groves of old? Such is not like our God. Our God is a God of love, and it is his very nature to make his creatures happy; and we, who are his twice-made creatures, who are the partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, is it to be supposed that we are bound by a stern decree to go mourning all our days? Oh! if ye knew the Christian's privilege, if ye understood that the secret of the Lord is laid open to him, that the wounds of Christ are his shelter, that the flesh and blood of Christ are his food, that Christ himself is his sweet companion and his abiding friend, oh! if ye knew this, ye would never again foolishly dream that Christians are an unhappy race. "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?" Who can be compared with the man who is "satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord." Well might the evil prophet of Bethor exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

We will go a step farther. We will not only say that from the nature of his position and privileges, a Christian should be happy, but we declare that

he is so, and that among all men there are none who enjoy such a constant peace of mind as believers in Christ. Our joy may not be like that of the sinner, noisy and boisterous. You know what Solomon says—"The laughter of fools is as the crackling of thorns under a pot"—a great deal of blaze and much noise, and then a handful of ashes, and it is all over. "Who hath woe, who hath redness of the eyes? They that tarry long at the wine-men of strength to mingle strong drink." The Christian, in truth, does not know much of the excitement of the bowl, the viol and the dance, nor does he desire to know; he is content that he possesses a calm deep-seated repose of soul. "He is not afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." He is not disturbed with any sudden fear: he knows that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." He is in the habit in whatever society he may be, of still lifting up his heart to God; and therefore he can say with the Psalmist, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."

"He waits in secret on his God;
His God in secret sees;
Let earth be all in arms abroad,
He dwells in heavenly peace.

His pleasures rise from things unseen,
Beyond this world and time,
Where neither eyes nor ears have been,
Nor thoughts of sinners climb.

He wants no pomp nor royal throne
To raise his figure here:
Content and pleased to live unknown,
Till Christ his life appear.

"There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God." Believers drink of that river and thirst not for carnal delights. They are made "to lie down in green pastures," and are led "beside the still waters." Now this solid, lasting joy and peace of mind sets the Christian so on high above all others, that I boldly testify that there are no people in the world

to compare with him for happiness. But do not suppose that our joy never rises above this settled calm; for let me tell you, and I speak experimentally, we have our seasons of rapturous delight and overflowing bliss. There are times with us when no music could equal the melody of our heart's sweet hymn of joy. It would empty earth's coffers of every farthing of her joy to buy a single ounce of our delight. Do not fancy Paul was the only man who could say, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth," for these ecstasies are usual with believers; and on their sunshiny days when their unbelief is shaken off and their faith is strong, they have all but walked the golden streets; and they can say, "If we have not entered within the pearly gate, we have been only just this side of it; and it we have not yet come to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, if we have not joined the great congregation of the perfect in actual body, yet still—

"E'en now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
On the eternal shore."

I would not change one five minutes of the excessive joy my soul has sometimes felt for a thousand years of the best mirth that the children of this world could give me. O friends, there is a happiness which can make the eye sparkle and the heart beat high, and the whole man as full of bounding speed of life as the chariots of Amminadib. There are raptures and high ecstasies, which on festival days such as the Lord allotteth to his people, the saints are permitted to enjoy. I must not fail to remind you that the Christian is the happiest of men for this reason, that his joy does not depend upon circumstances. We have seen the happiest men in the most sorrowful conditions. Mr. Renwick, who was the last of the Scotch martyrs, said a little before his death, "Enemies think themselves satisfied that we are put to wander in mosses and upon mountains, but even amidst the storm of these last two nights I cannot express what sweet times I have had when I have had no coverings but the dark curtains of night: yea, in the silent watch my mind was led out to admire the deep and inexpressible ocean of joy wherein the whole family of heaven do swim. Each star led me to wonder what He must be who is the

star of Jacob, and from whom all stars borrow their shining." Here is a martyr of God driven from house and home and from all comforts, and yet having such sweet seasons beneath the curtains of the black night as kings do not often know beneath their curtains of silk. A minister of Christ going to visit a very, very poor man, gives this description. He says, "I found him alone, his wife having gone out to ask help of some neighbor. I was startled by the sight of the pale emaciated man, the living image of death, fastened upright in his chair by a rude mechanism of cords and belts hanging from the ceiling, totally unable to move hand or foot, having been for more than four years entirely deprived of the use of his limbs, and suffering extreme pain from swellings in all his joints. I approached him full of pity, and I said, "Are you left alone, my friend, in this deplorable situation?" He answered with a gentle voice—his lips were the only parts of his body which he appeared to have power to move—"No, sir, I am not alone, because the Father is with me." I began to talk with him, and I soon observed what was the source of his consolation, for just in front of him lay the Bible upon a pillow, his wife having left it open at some choice Psalm of David so that he might read while she was gone, as he had no power to turn over the leaves. I asked him what he had to live upon, and found that it was a miserable pittance, scarcely enough to keep body and soul together, "But," said he, "I never want anything, for the Lord has said, 'Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure,' and I trust in him, and I shall never want while God is faithful to his promise." "I asked him," says this minister "whether he did not often repine on account of suffering so acutely for so many years. "Sir," said he, "I did repine at first, but not for the last three years, blessed be God for it, for I know whom I have believed, and though I feel my own weakness and unworthiness more and more, yet I am persuaded that he will never leave me nor forsake me; and so graciously does he comfort me that when my lips are closed with lock-jaw and I cannot speak a word for hours together, he enables me to sing his praises most sweetly in my heart." Now here was a man to whom the sun of all earthly comfort was set, and yet the sun of heaven shone full in his face, and he was more peaceful and happy in deep poverty and racking pain than all you or I have been in the health and strength of youth. John Howard spent his time in visiting the gaols and going from one haunt of fever to another, he was asked how he could find any ground of happiness when he was living in miserable

Russian villages, or dwelling in discomfort in an hospital or a gaol. Mr. Howard's answer was very beautiful. "I hope," said he, "I have sources of enjoyment which depend not upon the particular spot I inhabit. A rightly cultivated mind, under the power of divine grace and the exercise of a benevolent disposition affords a ground of satisfaction that is not to be affected by heres and theres." Every Christian will bear you his witness that he has found his sad times to be his glad times, his losses to be his gains, his sicknesses means to promote his soul's health. Our summer does not depend upon the sun, nor our flood-tide upon the moon. We can rejoice even in death. We look forward to that happy hour when we shall close our eyes in the peaceful slumbers of death, believing that our last day will be our best day. Even the crossing of the river Jordan is but an easy task, for we shall hear him say, "Fear not; I am with thee: be not dismayed, I am thy God; when thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee, and the floods shall not overflow thee." We dare to say it, then, very boldly, we are not of all men most miserable: we would not change with unconverted men for all their riches, and their pomp, and their honor thrown into the scale.

"Go you that boast in all your stores,
And tell how bright they shine,
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
And my Redeemer's mine.

II. This brings us to the second point—WITHOUT THE HOPE OF ANOTHER LIFE, WE WILL ADMIT, THAT WE SHOULD BE OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE.

Especially was this true of the apostles. They were rejected by their countrymen; they lost all the comforts of home; their lives were spent in toil, and were daily exposed to violent death. They all of them suffered the martyr's doom, except John, who seems to have been preserved not from martyrdom, but in it. They were certainly the twelve most miserable of men apart from that hope of the world to come, which made them of all men the most happy. But this is true, dear friends, not merely of persecuted, and despised, and poverty-stricken Christians, but of all

believers. We are prepared to grant it, that take away from us the hope of the world to come we should be more miserable than men without religion. The reason is very clear, if you think that the Christian has renounced those common and ordinary sources of joy from which other men drink. We must have some pleasure: it is impossible for men to live in this world without it, and I can say most truthfully I never urge any of you to do that which would make you unhappy. We must have some pleasure. Well then, there is a vessel filled with muddy filthy water which the camels' feet have stirred: shall I drink it? I see yonder a rippling stream of clear flowing water, pure as crystal and cooling as the snow of Lebanon, and I say, "No, I will not drink this foul, muddy stuff; leave that for beasts; I will drink of you clear stream." But if I be mistaken, if there be no stream yonder, if it be but the deceitful mirage, if I have been deluded, then I am worse off than those who were content with the muddy water, for they have at least some cooling draughts; but I have none at all. This is precisely the Christian's case. He passes by the pleasures of sin, and the amusements of carnal men, because he says, "I do not care for them, I find no pleasure in them: my happiness flows from the river which springs from the throne of God and flows to me through Jesus Christ—I will drink of that," but if there were no hereafter, if that were proved to be a deception, then were we more wretched than the profligate and licentious.

Again, the Christian man has learned the vanity of all earthly joys. We know when we look upon pomp that it is an empty thing. We walk through the world, not with the scorn of Diogenes, the cynical philosopher, but with something of his wisdom, and we look upon the common things in which men rejoice, and say with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And why do we say this? Why, because we have chosen eternal things in which there is no vanity, and which are satisfying to the soul. But, my brethren, it is the most unhappy piece of knowledge which a man can acquire, to know that this world is vain, if there be not another world abundantly to compensate for all our ills. There is a poor lunatic in Bedlam, plaiting straw into a crown which he puts upon his head, and calls himself a king, and mounts his mimic throne and thinks that he is monarch over all nations, and is perfectly happy in his dream. Do you think that I would undeceive him? Nay, verily, if I could, I would

not. If the delusion makes the man happy, by all means let him indulge in it; but, dear friends, you and I have been undeceived; our dream of perfect bliss beneath the skies is gone for ever; what then if there be no world to come? Why then it is a most sorrowful thing for us that we have been awakened out of our sleep unless this better thing which we have chosen, this good part which shall not be taken from us, should prove to be real and true, as we do believe it is.

Moreover, the Christian man is a man who has had high, noble, and great expectations, and this is a very sad thing for us if our expectations be not fulfilled, for it makes us of all men most miserable. I have known poor men waiting and expecting a legacy. They had a right to expect it, and they have waited, and waited, and borne with poverty, and the relative has died and left them nothing; their poverty has ever afterwards seemed to be a heavier drag than before. It is an unhappy thing for a man to have large ideas and large desires, if he cannot gratify them. I believe that poverty is infinitely better endured by persons who were always poor, than by those who have been rich and have had to come down to penury, for they miss what the others never had, and what the originally poor would look upon as luxuries they consider to be necessary to their existence. The Christian has learned to think of eternity, of God, of Christ, of communion with Jesus, and if indeed it be all false, he certainly has dreamed the most magnificent of all mortal visions. Truly, if any man could prove it to be a vision, the best thing he could do would be to sit down and weep for ever to think it was not true, for the dream is so splendid, the picture of the world to come so gorgeous, that I can only say, if it be not true, it ought to be—if it be not true, then there is nothing here worth living for, my brethren, and we are disappointed wretches indeed—of all men most miserable.

The Christian, too, has learned to look upon everything here on earth as fleeting. I must confess every day this feeling grows with me. I scarce look upon my friends as living. I walk as in a land of shadows, and find nothing enduring around me. The broad arrow of the great skeleton king is, to my eye, visibly stamped everywhere. I go so often to the grave, and with those I least expected to take there, that it seems to be rather a world of dying than of living men. Well, this is a very unhappy thing—a very

wretched state of mind for a man to be in, if there be no world to come. If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is the Christian indeed committed to a state of mind the most deplorable and pitiable. But, O my brethren, if there be a world to come, as faith assures us there is, how joyous it is to be weaned from the world, and to be ready to depart from it! To be with Christ is far better than to tarry in this vale of tears.

"The cords that bound my heart to earth
Are broken by his hand;
Before his cross I find myself,
A stranger in the land.

My heart is with him on his throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Make haste, and come away.'"

May I not pant to be in my own sweet country with my own fair Lord, to see him face to face? Yet, if it be not so and there be no resurrection of the dead, "we are of all men most miserable."

III. OUR CHIEF JOY IN THE HOPE OF THE WORLD TO COME. Think of the world to come, my brethren, and let your joys begin to kindle into flames of delight, for heaven offers you all that you can desire. You are, many of you, weary of toil; so weary, perhaps, that you can scarcely enjoy the morning service because of the late hours at which you have had to work at night. Ah! there is a land of rest—of perfect rest, where the sweat of labor no more bedews the worker's brow, and fatigue is for ever banished. To those who are weary and spent, the word "rest" is full of heaven. Oh! happy truth, there remaineth a rest for the people of God. "They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." Others of you are always in the field of battle; you are so tempted within, and so molested by foes without, that you have little or no peace. I know where your hope lies. It lies in the victory, when the banner shall be waved aloft, and the sword shall be sheathed, and you shall hear your Captain say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast fought a good fight; thou hast finished thy course: henceforth wear thou the crown of life which

fadeth not away." Some of you are tossed about with many troubles; you go from care to care, from loss to loss: it seems to you as if all God's waves and billows had gone over you; but you shall soon arrive at the land of happiness, where you shall bathe your weary soul in seas of heavenly rest, You shall have no poverty soon; no mud-hovel, no rags, nor hunger. "In my Father's house are many mansions," and there shall you dwell, satisfied with favor, and full of every blessing. You have had bereavement after bereavement; the wife has been carried to the tomb, the children have followed, father and mother are gone, and you have few left to love you here; but you are going to the land where graves are unknown things, where they never see a shroud, and the sound of the mattock and the spade are never heard; you are going to your Father's house in the land of the immortal, in the country of the hereafter, in the home of the blessed, in the habitation of God Most High, in the Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all. Is not this your best joy, that you are not to be here for ever, that you are not to dwell eternally in this wilderness, but shall soon inherit Canaan? With all God's people their worst grief is sin. I would not care for any sorrow, if I could live without sinning. Oh! if I were rid of the appetites of the flesh and the lusts thereof, and the desires which continually go astray, I would be satisfied to lie in a dungeon and rot there, so as to be delivered from the corruption of sin. Well but, brethren, we shall soon attain unto perfection. The body of this death will die with this body. There is no temptation in heaven, for the dog of hell can never cross the stream of death; there are no corruptions there, for they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; there shall by no means enter into that kingdom anything which defileth. Methinks as I hear the joyous song of the glorified this morning, as I catch floating down from heaven the sound of that music which is like many waters and like the great thunder, and as I hear the harmony of those notes which are sweet as harpers harping with their harps, my soul desireth to stretch her wings, and fly straight to yonder worlds of joy. I know it is so with you, my brethren in the tribulation of Christ—as you wipe the sweat your brow, is not this the comfort: there is rest for the people of God? As you stand out against temptation and suffer for Christ's sake, is not this your comfort: "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." When you are slandered and despised by men, is not this your hope: "He will remember me when he cometh into his

kingdom. I shall sit upon his throne, even as he has overcome, and sitteth down upon his Father's throne?" Oh! yes, this is the music to which Christians dance; this is the wine which maketh glad their hearts; this is the banquet at which they feast. There is another and a better land, and we, though we sleep with the clods of the valley, shall in our flesh see God, when our Redeemer shall stand in the latter days upon the earth. I think you catch my drift—we are not of all men most miserable; apart from the future hope we should be, for our hope in Christ for the future is the mainstay of our joy.

IV. Now, dear friends, this brings me to a practical observation in the fourth place, which is, that **THUS THE FUTURE OPERATES UPON THE PRESENT.**

I had some time ago a conversation with a very eminent man whose fame is familiar to you all, but whose name I do not feel justified in mentioning, who was once a professed believer but is now full of scepticism. He said to me in the course of our argument, "Why, how foolish you are, and all the company of preachers. You tell people to think about the next world, when the best thing they could do would be to behave themselves as well as they can in this!" I granted the truth of the observation; it would be very unwise to make people neglect the present, for it is of exceeding great importance, but I went on to show him that the very best method to make people attend to the present was by impressing them with high and noble motives with regard to the future. The potent force of the world to come supplies us through the Holy Spirit with force for the proper accomplishment of the duties of this life. Here is a man who has a machine for the manufacture of hardware. He wants steam power to work this machine. An engineer puts up a steam engine in a shed at some considerable distance. "Well," saith the other, "I asked you to bring steam power here, to operate upon my machine." "That is precisely," says he, "what I have done. I put the steam engine there, you have but to connect it by a band and your machine works as fast as you like; it is not necessary that I should put the boiler, and the fire, and the engine close to the work, just under your nose: only connect the two, and the one will operate upon the other." So God has been pleased to make our hopes of the future a great engine wherewith the Christian man may

work the ordinary machine of every-day life, for the band of faith connects the two, and makes all the wheels of ordinary life revolve with rapidity and regularity. To speak against preaching the future as though it would make people neglect the present is absurd. It is as though somebody should say, "There, take away the moon, and blot out the sun. What is the use of them—they are not in this world?" Precisely so, but take away the moon and you have removed the tides, and the sea becomes a stagnant, putrid pool. Then take away the sun—it is not in the world—take it away, and light, and heat, and life; everything is gone. What the sun and moon are to this natural world, the hope of the future is to the Christian in this world. It is his light—he looks upon all things in that light, and sees them truly. It is his heat; it gives him zeal and energy. It is his very life: his Christianity, his virtue would expire if it were not for the hope of the world to come. Do you believe, my brethren, that apostles and martyrs would ever have sacrificed their lives for truth's sake if they had not looked for a hereafter? In the heat of excitement, the soldier may die for honor, but to die in tortures and mockeries in cold blood needs a hope beyond the grave. Would you poor man go toiling on year after year, refusing to sacrifice his conscience for gain; would you poor needle-girl refuse to become the slave of lust if she did not see something brighter than earth can picture to her as the reward of sin? O my brethren, the most practical thing in all the world is the hope of the world to come; and you see the text teaches this, for it is just this which keeps us from being miserable; and to keep a man from being miserable, let me say, is to do a great thing for him, for a miserable Christian—what is the use of him? Keep him in a cupboard, where nobody can see him; nurse him in the hospital, for he is of no use in the field of labor. Build a monastery, and put all miserable Christians in it, and there let them meditate on mercy till they learn to smile; for really there is no other use for them in the world, But the man who has a hope of the next world goes about his work strong, for the joy of the Lord is our strength. He goes against temptation mighty, for the hope of the next world repels the fiery darts of the adversary. He can labor without present reward, for he looks for a reward in the world to come. He can suffer rebuke, and can afford to die a slandered man, because he knows that God will avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him. Through the Spirit of God the hope of another world is the most potent force for the product of virtue; it is a

fountain of joy; it is the very channel of usefulness. It is to the Christian what food is to the vital force in the animal frame. Let it be said of any of us, that we are dreaming about the future and forgetting the present, but let the future sanctify the present to highest uses. I fear our prophetic brethren err here. They are reading continually about the last vials, the seventy weeks of Daniel, and a number of other mysteries; I wish they would set to work instead of speculating so much, or speculate even more if they will, but turn their prophecies to present practical account. Prophetic speculations too often lead men away from present urgent duty, and especially from contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; but a hope of the world to come is, I think, the best practical power which a Christian can have.

V. And now, to conclude, this will let us see very clearly WHAT OUR FUTURE IS TO BE.

There are some persons here to whom my text has nothing whatever to say. Suppose there were no hereafter, would they be more miserable? Why, no; they would be more happy. If anybody could prove to them that death is an eternal sleep, it would be the greatest consolation that they could possibly receive, If it could be shown, to a demonstration, that as soon as people die they rot in the grave and there is an end of them—why some of you could go to bed at night comfortable, your conscience would never disturb you, you would be molested by none of those terrible fears which now haunt you. Do you see, then, this proves that you are not a Christian; this proves as plainly as twice two make four, that you are no believer in Christ; for if you were, the taking away of a hereafter would make you miserable. Since it would not tend to make you happy to believe in a future state, this proves that you are no believer in Christ. Well, then, what have I to say to you? Why just this—that in the world to come, you will be of all men most miserable. "What will become of you?" said an infidel once to a Christian man, "supposing there should be no heaven?" "Well," said he, "I like to have two strings to my bow. If there be no hereafter I am as well off as you are; if there be I am infinitely better off. But where are you? Where are you?" Why then we must read this text in the future—"If in this life there be indeed a hope of a life to come, then you shall be in the next life of all men most miserable." Do you see where

you will be? Your soul goes before the great Judge, and receives its condemnation and begins its hell. The trumpet rings; heaven and earth are astonished; the grave heaves; yonder slab of marble is lifted up, and up you rise in that very flesh and blood in which you sinned, and there you stand in the midst of a terrified multitude, all gathered to their doom. The Judge has come. The great assize has commenced. There on the great white throne sits the Savior who once said, "Come unto me, ye weary, and I will give you rest;" but now he sits there as a Judge and opens with stern hand the terrible volume. Page after page he reads, and as he reads he gives the signal, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," and the angels bind up the fares in bundles to burn them. There stand you, and you know your doom; you already begin to feel it. You cry to the lofty Alps to fall upon you and conceal you. "O ye mountains, can ye not find in your rocky bowels some friendly cavern where I may be hidden from the face of him who sits upon the throne?" In terrible silence the mountains refuse your petition and the rocks reject your cry. You would plunge into the sea, but it is licked up with tongues of fire; you would fain make your bed even in hell if you could escape from those dreadful eyes, but you cannot; for now your turn is come, that page is turned over which records your history; the Savior reads with a voice of thunder and with eyes of lightning. He reads, and as he waves his hand you are cast away from hope. You shall then know what it is to be of all men most miserable. Ye had your pleasure; ye had your giddy hour; ye had your mirthful moments; you despised Christ, and you would not turn at his rebuke; you would not have him to reign over you; you lived his adversary; you died unreconciled, and now where are you? Now, what will ye do, ye who forget God, in that day when he shall tear you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver you? In the name of my Lord and Master I do conjure you, fly away to Christ for refuge. "He that believeth in him shall be saved." To believe is to trust; and whosoever this morning is enabled by faith to cast himself upon Christ, need not fear to live, nor fear to die, You shall not be miserable here; you shall be thrice blessed hereafter if you trust my Lord.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
To Christ, and heal your wounds;
This is the welcome gospel-day

Wherein free grace abounds."

O that ye would be wise and consider your latter end! O that ye would reflect that this life is but a span, and the life to come lasts on for ever! Do not, I pray you, fling away eternity; play not the fool with such solemn things as these, but in serious earnestness lay hold upon eternal life. Look to the bleeding Savior; see there his five wounds, and his face bedewed with bloody sweat! Trust him, trust him, and you are saved. The moment that you trust him your sins are gone. His righteousness is yours; you are saved on the spot, and you shall be saved when he cometh in his kingdom to raise the dead from their graves. O that the Lord might lead us all thus to rest on Jesus, now and ever. Amen.

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The Alarum

I myself will awake early. - Psalm 57:8

The proper subject to treat upon with such a text would be the propriety and excellence of early rising, especially when we are desirous of praising or serving God. The dew of dawn should be consecrated to devotion. The text is a very remarkable expression, and might fitly be made the early riser's motto. It is, in the original, a highly poetical phrase, and Milton and others have borrowed or imitated it. "I will awaken in the morning." So early would the psalmist arise for the praise of God that he would call up the day, and bid the sun arise from the chambers of the east, and proceed upon his journey. "I will awaken the morning." Early rising has the example of Old Testament saints to recommend it, and many modern saints having conscientiously practiced it, have been loud in its praise. It is an economy of time and an assistance to health, and thus it doubly

lengthens life. Late rising is the token of indolence, and the cause of disorder throughout the whole day. Be assured that the best hours are the first. Our City habits are to be deplored, because by late hours of retirement at night we find early rising difficult if not impossible. If we are able to escape the shackles of custom, and secure for devotion and contemplation the hour when the dew is on the grass, we may count ourselves thrice happy. If we cannot do all we would in this matter, at least let us do all we can.

That is not, however, the topic upon which I now desire to speak to you. I come at this time, not so much to plead for the early as for the awakening. The hour we may speak of at another time—the fact is our subject now. It is bad to awake late, but what shall be said of those who never awake at all? Better late than never: but with many it is to be feared it will be never. I would take down the trumpet and give a blast, or ring the alarm-bell till all the faculties of the sluggard's manhood are made to bestir themselves, and he cries with new born determination, "I myself will awake."

"Will awake." This is a world in which most men nowadays are alive to their temporal interests. If in these pushing times any man goes about his business in a sleepy, listless fashion, he very soon finds himself on an ebb-tide, and all his affairs aground. The wideawake man seizes opportunities or makes them, and thus those who are widest awake usually come to the front. Years ago affairs moved like the broad-wheel wagon, very sleepily, with sober pause and leisurely progression, and then the son of the snail had a chancel but now, when we almost fly, if a man would succeed in trade he must be all alive, and all awake. If it be so in temporals, it is equally so in spirituals, for the world, the flesh, and the devil are all awake to compete with us; and there is no resolution that I would more earnestly commend to each one of the people of God than this one: "I will awake; I will awake at once; I will awake early, and I will pray to God that I may be kept awake, that my Christian existence may not be dreamy, but that I may be to the fullest degree useful in my Master's service." If this were the resolve of each, what a change would come over the Christian church! I long to see the diligence of the shop exceeded by the closet, and the zeal of the market excelled by the church.

Each Christian is alive: but is he also awake? He has eyes, but are they open? He has lofty possibilities of blessing his fellow men, but does he exercise them? My heart's desire is that none of us may feel the dreamy influence of this age, which is comparable to the enchanted ground; but that each of us may be watchful, wakeful, vigorous, intense, fervent. Trusting that the Holy Spirit may bless our meditations to our spiritual quickening, we shall briefly turn our thoughts to the consideration of two or three things.

I. Our text is connected with the duty of praise, and therefore our first point shall be—IT IS MOST NECESSARY THAT OUR MINDS SHOULD BE IN A STATE OF WAKEFULNESS WHEN WE ARE PRAISING GOD. Therefore, as we ought to be always praising him, our mind ought always to be wakeful. It is a shame to pray with the mind half asleep: it is an equal shame to attempt to praise God till all the powers of the mind are thoroughly aroused. David is herein a most fit example, for he sings, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psalter and harp: I myself will awake early."

We should be fully awake when engaged in private thanksgiving; the song of our solitude should be full of living joy. I am afraid there is very little private singing nowadays. We often hear discourse concerning private prayer, but very seldom of private praise: and yet ought there not to be as much private praise as private prayer? I fear from the seldomness of its being mentioned, that private thanksgiving has grown to be a sleepy affair. Then as to public worship, how earnest ought it to be! Yet how seldom is it hearty and real! How often do we hear half-awake singing. Sometimes a sort of musical box, consisting of pipes, keys, and bellows, is set to do all the adoration. The heathens of Tibet turn the wind to account religiously, by making it turn their windmills and pray for them; and our brethren in England, by an ingenious adjustment of pipes, make the same motive power perform their praise. Where this machinery is not adopted, still the Lord is robbed of his praise by other methods, Sometimes half a dozen skilled voices of persons who would be equally as much at home at the opera or the theater as in the house of God, are formed into a choir to perform the psalmody; and it is supposed that God accepts their formal notes as the praise of the entire assembly. How far different is the

genuine song of gracious men who lift up their voices to the Lord because their hearts adore him! Oh, I love to hear every voice pouring out its note, especially if I can but hope that with every voice there is going forth a fervent heart. This warm hearted, joyful singing—why, it makes the congregation on earth to be like the assembly of the skies; and causes the meeting-place of the saints to be a faint type of the gathering of the angels and glorified spirits before the throne of God. To drone or to whisper in such a delightful exercise is criminal. If ever we should exhibit the angels' wakefulness, it should be when we are emulating their employment.

Our praise ought to be performed with a fully awakened mind: first, that we may recollect what we are praising God for. We should have a vivid sense of the mercies we have received, or we cannot bless God aright for them. You who have not yet received spiritual blessings, should not be forgetful of his temporal mercies: it is surely sufficient cause for lively thanksgiving that you are not upon a bed of sickness; that you are not in the lunatic asylum; that you are not in the workhouse; that you are not on the borders of the grave; that you are not in hell; that you still have food and raiment, and that you are where the gospel is graciously presented to you. Should not all this be thought of? Should not this be fuel for the flame of gratitude? As for us who have tasted spiritual blessings, if our minds were awake, we should think of eternal love and its going forth from eternity; of redeeming love, and the streams that flow from the fount of Calvary; of God's immutable love, and his patience with our ill-manners in the wilderness; of covenant mercy, of mercies yet to come, of heaven, and the bliss hereafter. Such recollections should call up our whole man to praise the Lord. If the innumerable benefits which we receive were thought of and dwelt upon, the contemplation would put a force, a volume, a body into our song, and make it far more than the flaming ethereal thing which it ought to be.

We want our souls awakened, next, so that we may remember to whom our praise is offered. Before no man kind do we bow the knee of homage. To praise God is to stand in the immediate presence of the blessed and only Potentate. Do not even seraphs veil their faces in that august presence? With what lowliness ought we bow! With what earnestness of spirit should we praise! "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place

whereon thou standest is holy ground." Courtiers are not expected to nod with drowsiness in the presence of their king; and if they came to present thanksgiving, it would seem strange if they were to yawn as men half asleep. Surely, it would be hypocritical congratulation and insulting behavior if they should be detected in a sleepy condition! If we come together to praise God, let us really do it. If we cannot praise him, let us know and mourn that we cannot do it, and let us be sure that the spirit is willing, even if the flesh is weak. Let all sleepiness be put away in the presence of the ever-wakeful Jehovah, before whose eyes all things are naked and open. He never slumbereth nor sleepeth, so as to make a pause in his mercy to us: let not our slumbering spirits cause an omission of our grateful song.

We need that we should be awake in praise, that our whole hearts may be thoroughly warm in the exercise. Under Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, the acceptableness of our praise depends very much upon the warmth of it. As cold prayers virtually ask God to deny them, so cold praises ask God to reject them. Cold praises are a sort of semi-blasphemy: they do, as it were, say, "Thou art not worthy to be ardently praised. O God, we bring thee these poor thanksgivings: they are good enough for thee." Surely if we treated our heavenly Father as we should, every sacred passion would glow in our hearts like a furnace: our whole heart would catch fire, and as Elijah went up into heaven with horses of fire and chariots of fire, so, too, our souls, as we thought upon the goodness and the graciousness of God, would ascend to heaven in vehement joy of adoration. Our praises would not be like the incense in the censer, sweet, but cold; but coals of fire would be put in with the incense, and then, like a holy cloud of smoke, our gratitude would ascend to heaven. Mark with what exhilaration the psalmist rendered praise unto God, and imitate him therein. See him dancing before the ark, and hear him cry aloud, "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises."

Brethren, we have need to wake up our souls in praise, or else we shall at all times fail altogether in the duty. Only the wakeful are praiseful. Sleeping birds sing now., The very best praises God receives from earth are from his troubled saints; but then they are awake; the strokes of the rod have aroused them. When the three holy children sung in the fire,

their song was sweet indeed; yet had they not been thoroughly in earnest, they had poured forth no holy hymn. When martyrs have magnified God standing on the burning fagot, they have given God better praise than even the angels can. It was the old fable, that the nightingale was made to sing by the thorn that pricked her breast: and many a child of God has poured forth his sweetest music when the thorn of affliction has pierced his heart. Wake up your souls—you that are desponding, you that are depressed, you that have a dead child at home, you that are expecting soon to go to the grave with those you love, you that have been losing your property, you that are pinched with poverty—wake up your souls to praise God still, for unless well awake you will forget to extol him. Remember what Job did. When he sat on the dunghill, scraping himself with a bit of broken pot, yet he praised God and said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." It was grand of thee, O patriarch of Uz, to be able thus to extol thy Lord: then was thy soul fully awake. Beloved friends, may our inmost souls be so energetic with the power of grace that we may spontaneously and earnestly bless the Lord at all times and under all circumstances.

Do you believe, my brethren, that amongst all the throng of those who see Jehovah face to face, there is one dull, cold, careless worshipper? Look through the seraphim and cherubim: they are flaming ones, burning with intense desire and fervent adoration. Look through the hosts of angels: they are all his minsters that do his pleasure, and bless him while they do it. Search through all those sanctified and glorified hands of spirits, and you shall not find one with half-closed eye wearily praising his Maker. Heaven consists in joyful praise. Look at the very birds on earth how they shame us! Dear little creatures, if you watch them when they are singing, you will sometimes wonder how so much sound can come out of such diminutive bodies. How they throw their whole selves into the music, and seem to melt themselves away in song! How the wing vibrates, the throat pulsates, and every part of their body rejoices to assist the strain! This is the way in which we ought to praise God. IF birds that are sold at three for two farthings yet render God such praise, how much more heartily ought we to sing before him? Let it be a resolution with us at this hour that we will praise God more; that we will sing to him more at home, about our business, and in all proper places; and that whenever we do

sing we will do it heartily, waking up our tongue and all the powers of our mind and body to bless and praise the name of God.

II. Now, secondly, we shall notice that WAKEFULNESS IS A GREAT NEED IN THE ENTIRE SPIRITUAL LIFE. I believe it to be one of the great wants of the church now. I question whether most of us are awake spiritually. I question whether I am. I wish to be wakened far more to a sensibility of the power of the world to come, and a tenderness in regard to spiritual truth. Slumber is so natural to us. "Well," says one, "but we talk about the things of God." Yes, but people talk when they are asleep, and a good deal of Christian conversation is very much like the talk of sleepers. There is not the force in it—the life in it that there would be in conversation if we were really awakened to feel the power of eternal verities. "Yet," says one, "I hope we act consistently." I trust you do, but there are many people who walk in their sleep, and, alas! I know some Christian professors who appear to be trying very hazardous feats of sleep-walking just now. Some somnambulists have been able to walk on places where, had they been awake, they never would have been able to endure the dizzy height; and I see some Christians, if indeed they be Christians, running awful risks which I think they would never venture upon unless they had fallen into the deep sleep of carnal security. Speak of a man slumbering at the mast-head, it is nothing to a professor of religion at ease while covetousness is his master, or worldly company his delight. If professors were awake, they would see their danger, and avoid sinful amusements and ungodly associations, as men fly from fierce tigers or deadly cobras. "Well, but we are doing much good and useful work," says one: "teaching in Sabbath schools, distributing religious tracts, or labouring in some other form of service; we are spending our time in commendable engagements." I am glad to hear it; but people can do a great deal in their sleep. We have heard many strange instances of how habit at last has enabled persons to pursue their callings, to answer signals, and keep up all the appearance of industry, and yet they have been at the time asleep. Oh, it is a very shocking thing that so many of our churches in England are in a deep sleep! Dissenting churches I know best about, and there are many where the minister preaches in his sleep, where the people sing in their sleep, where prayer is offered in sleep, and even the communion is celebrated amid a profound spiritual slumber.

Have you never been at a prayer-meeting where half, if not all, both of those who prayed vocally and those who listened, were in a lethargy as rigid as death? Talk of sleeping women who have been in a swoon by the month together, the wonder may be a lying one in the natural world, but in the spiritual world it is as common as daisies in the meadows. Adam slept soundly when the taking away of his rib did not wake him, but what shall we say of those who startle not though they are losing all the strength and glory of their souls? Alas! for some congregations, it is long since they had a revival, they have lost the very idea of vigorous piety and vital energy. All the week round they are all asleep, and if a real, earnest, living, stirring sermon were preached among them, it would be almost as if the King of Prussia's Krupp guns had dropped a live shell into their midst. I wish a spiritual live shell could fall into some congregations, and burst among them, killing their conventionality, and wounding their self satisfaction with a deadly wound. Men may attend to outward worship with unimpeachable decorum and correctness and yet there may be no wakefulness in it, and consequently no acceptableness with God Most High.

Come, ourselves, and we must do so because we are in an enemy's country; it will not do to sleep here. This side of heaven we are in every place and at all hours surrounded by foes. What did the Master say? "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!" Be like sentries at your post, for otherwise the enemy will soon betray you. Will you not grieve the Holy Spirit if you are lethargic? Will you not dishonour your Master if you fall asleep? Remember also, that the devil seeks your destruction, and can never do you so much mischief awake as he can if he finds you sleeping. Let the growling of the old lion arouse you. If nothing else will bestir you, remember the fiery darts of the wicked one. Saul would not have lain so quiet if he had known that Abishai was holding the spear over him, and longing to pin him to the earth: yet this is the condition of professors who are given to slumber. Samson would have scarcely slept on Delilah's lap if he had foreseen that his hair would be cut, and his eyes put out by the Philistines. Up, then, ye drowsy professors, for the Philistines are upon you!

Moreover, brethren, slumber impoverishes us. The sluggard, and the

thistle and thorn, always go together, and rags and poverty follow close behind. You may miss by your sleep great spiritual profit., You cannot expect sleepy Christians to grow in grace. They will miss many instructive things in God's word, many precious promises meant only for the wakeful. They will lose high enjoyments and spiritual banquetings, for the king's entertainments are not for those who fold their arms, and toss upon the bed of indolence. Wealth lies in the field of the wakeful, but the lover of ease shall have want come upon him as an armed man. I blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in God's holy mountain, for it is high time to awake out of sleep.

Awaken too, my brother, for you are losing opportunities for usefulness. While you sleep men are dying. See how the cemeteries are becoming crowded, how the area of them has to be enlarged. Day by day you see wending through the streets the funeral procession: men gone beyond the reach of your instructions and your warnings are carried to their long homes. Awake then, awake, for death is busy everywhere. Meanwhile, those who do not die before you may be removed beyond the sphere of your usefulness; they go where at least you cannot reach them, where perhaps no one ever will, and their blood may lie upon your head, and that for ever. Awake, for perhaps while you are asleep another heart that is now accessible to the gospel may become finally hardened. Conscience will soon become seared, and then there is nothing for zeal and earnestness to work upon. It will be too late for you to put the seal upon the wax when once it is cool. Quick, sir; while the wax is soft put the seal down! How many opportunities for good we all miss! But those who are asleep lose all their opportunities, and they will be surely required of them when the Master comes.

Awake! I pray you, because you will insensibly lose the power, the joy of your spiritual life. Communion with God will become more and more scarce with you as you become more sleepy. Awake, lest you backslide, lest you all become apostate, and prove yourself not to be a child of God. Awake, for your power with others will certainly depart from you as your wakefulness departs. A sleepy preacher never wins the souls of men. A dull, formal servant of God is of little or no use in the church of God. I think I said years ago, "Give me half a dozen thorough red hot Christians,

and I will do more, by God's grace, with them, than with a half a dozen hundred of ordinary professors." I am sure it is so. Crowds of professors are past all cure. I would as soon hunt with dead dogs, as try to work with them. They cannot be trained into heroes: they are dolts both by nature and by practice; much slothfulness has drained out their souls' life. The most you can hope for them is that they will remain decently Christianized, so as not altogether to disgrace us. But, O for thoroughly wideawake men, men who feel the life of God in their souls, and are, therefore, more than ordinarily earnest. Band together half a dozen such, and the Holy Spirit being with them, they will make all London feel their presence before long. O may God awaken all of us, for our spiritual life absolutely requires it.

III. Thirdly, I am going to mention CERTAIN WAYS OF KEEPING YOURSELVES AWAKE. "How can I be kept awake?" says one. Answer, first, make it a matter of prayer with the Lord to awaken you. No one can give you spiritual power and watchfulness but the Spirit of God. "All my fresh springs are in thee." Where life first comes from, there more life must be obtained. Christ has come that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly. He who first called us from the dead, must also arouse us from among the slumbering. He who brought us from the grave of our depravity must bring us from the couch of our indolence. Pray about the matter; make it a point with God: ask him to arouse you. On your knees is the posture in which to conquer sloth.

Next, means are to be used. We are not to leave the matter with God, and think there is nothing to be done by ourselves. Act towards yourselves about spiritual wakefulness as you would with natural wakefulness. Set your inventive faculties to work, and devise means for chasing away the sleep dragon. What would you do if you required to be awakened early? Perhaps you would set an alarum; a good thing, no doubt. Take care you set a spiritual alarum. Every Christian ought to keep one, and it should be so well set as to keep exact time, and so powerful as to arouse the most slumbering. A tender conscience, quick as the apple of the eye, is a precious preservative against sinful sleep; but it must never be tampered with, or its usefulness will soon end. When once the hour has come, down runs the alarum, the man starts up all at once, and says, "It is time to

rise;" so should my conscience be so well regulated, that when a temptation is near, or a sinner is near me whom I ought about warn, my soul should at once take the alarm and say, "Here is work to do—a sin to be conquered, or a soul to be instructed: now, therefore, perform the doing of it with all thy might! I hear the alarm, and I must bestir myself!" May we always maintain and retain such a special wakefulness that we may be at our post of duty or in our place of conflict with a punctuality which none can gainsay. O for the alarm of a tender conscience!

Many of our friends who have to be up early in the morning ask the policeman to call them at the appointed hour. I may not compare the Christian minister with a policeman in some respects; but yet he is one of God's officers, and it is part of his business to stir up drowsy professors. It is well to attend an earnest gospel ministry, where the minister's voice, under God's blessing, will be likely to wake you up. Faithful preachers are among God's best gifts. Cherish them, and be obedient to their admonitions. I have known persons become offended when a minister is "too personal;" but wise men always prize a ministry in proportion as it is personal to themselves. He who never tells me of my faults, nor makes me feel uneasy, is not likely to be the means of good to my soul. What is the use of a dog that never barks? Why have a doctor, and grow angry with him if he points out the source of your disease? Did God send us, as his messengers, to pander to your taste or flatter your vanity? We seek not your approval if it be not founded on right. I have often felt pleased when I have heard people confess, after their conversion, "I came to the Tabernacle, and at the first I could not endure the preaching. I hated the preacher, and raged at his doctrine; but I could not help coming again." Just so. Conscience makes men respect the gospel, even when their depravity makes them loathe it. They are held fast by the cords which they fain would cast from them. May it often be so, O my unregenerate believers, that while my plain dealing excites your anger, it may nevertheless have a power over you; and may every man and woman here, whether saved or unsaved, feel that the preaching is the truth of God to his or her soul; and, whether liked or not liked, may it become the permanent means of arousing from sleep, and ultimately bringing to Christ every one of you to whom these words shall come. Be sure and

attend an arousing ministry, and pray God to make the ministry which you now listen to more and more an arousing ministry to your own soul. Pray for the preacher, for he is in the same danger as yourselves, for he is too compassed with infirmity. The minister soon goes to sleep unless God wakens him; and what is more sad than to see the professed messenger of God become a traitor both to his Master and to men's souls by a lack of zealous affection? It is ill for the sheep if the shepherd himself be asleep. Woe to the camp where the sentry is given to slumber! May God deliver our country from being overrun with preachers whose souls are insensible concerning their grand work, and who love the bread of their office better than the glory of God or the good of their hearers.

I have known some persons adopt a plan for awaking in the morning which I can recommend spiritually at any rate. They have drawn up the blinds in the direction of the morning sun, that the sun might shine on their face and wake them. I know of no better way of waking for your soul, than letting the light, and the life, and the love of God shine full into your face. When the Sun of Righteousness arises he brings healing beneath his wings, and he brings awakening too. A man cannot think much of Christ, and love Christ much, and walk much in Christ's fellowship, and yet be asleep. The two who went to Emmaus in Immanuel's company, were their hearts cold? Nay, do not think so. "Did not our heart burn within us?" Yes, and your hearts will burn too, and your whole spiritual system will flame and glow if you walk in the company of Jesus. I can recommend constant fellowship with God as one of the best remedies for spiritual sloth, the surest provocative of holy zeal.

Many time people are awakened in the morning by the noise of the street in which they live. "I cannot sleep after such an hour," says one, "for I hear the tramp of those who are going into the city, and the grind of the street traffic." At a certain time you hear the hammer of the blacksmith, the scream of an engine, or the heaving of machinery, and after that sleep is gone. The activities of the world ought about awaken Christians. Are worldlings active? How active ought we to be! Do they labour and spend their sweat for earthly wages? How much more ought I to put forth my entire strength to serve so good a Master, whose reward of grace is everlasting bliss? The world is all astir to-day: let the church be all awake

too.

We ought to be stimulated to supreme efforts by the activity of our fellow Christians. I find it does me much service about read the biographies of eminent servants of Christ, such as martyrs, missionaries, and reformers. I rise from reading their memorials feeling ashamed to be of so dwarfish a stature compared with these spiritual giants. What a humbling effect such a reflection ought to have on the do-nothings who swarm in the churches! but alas! these are not soon moved to judge themselves. With this one word we leave them: think of what some are doing, and be ashamed that you are doing so little in proportion to what they accomplish.

There are many ways of waking, but here is one, with which I will close my observations on this point. Hear the trumpet of the second coming. "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him," was the cry that awakened the virgins when they all slumbered and slept: may it have the like arousing power at this moment. We know not when Christ will come, nor is it for us to utter prophecies about it: the times and seasons are hidden from us. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man." Whether it will be before the Millennium or after the Millennium, let those judge who can. I have no judgement upon it. I think, as you carefully read the Scriptures, you will feel more and more convinced that only this is clearly and certainly revealed—that the Lord will personally come in such an hour as we look not for him. Let that awaken us; let it keep us always watchful, with loins girt and lamps trimmed, proving our faithful love to our blessed Master.

These are, it is clear, very many ways by which Christians may be awakened. God grant that they may be effective to each and all. I think it was Sydney Smith who was once preaching a sermon about sleeping in church, and when he had done, he said, "Now, what good have I done? All those who sleep have been asleep through my sermon, and only those who are wakeful have heard me, and they did not need my rebukes and advice." I often feel that this is very much the preacher's case. Earnest people, when the congregation is exhorted to earnestness, take it home to themselves; but those persons who do nothing, and are most indolent, are

the very ones who say, "I do not see the need of it; I do not want to be disturbed." Of course not! It is not only the mark of the sluggard to sleep, but it is another characteristic of him that he is wrath with those who would compel him to rise. "A little more sleep," says he, "a little more slumber;" he turns his heavy head upon the pillow once again, and wishes no blessings upon those who knock at his door so heavily. You sleepy professors are likely to do the same, but I will not refrain from knocking till you refrain from dozing. I pray God that there may be very few in this church of the incorrigible order, whose life is one long dream, a dream of self-aggrandizement, meanness, and littleness. May you and I, and all of us, be thoroughly earnest in the service of our Master, and if we cannot arouse others by our precept, at least let us not fail to try the force of our example.

IV. I must close with a word upon that fourth point, which is this—THE GREAT AND URGENT NEED THAT THE UNCONVERTED SINNER SHOULD AWAKE. Hitherto I have spoken to the converted man: now let me address myself to the ungodly, and may the voice which shall call the dead to judgement now awaken him. You, you unconverted man, are asleep; a deep and horrible sleep holds you fast. If it were not so, you would perceive your danger, and you would be alarmed. You have broken God's law; the fact is certain and solemn, though you treat it lightly. Punishment must follow every breach of that law, for God will not be mocked nor suffer his government to be treated with contempt. For every transgression there is an appointed recompense of reward. The retribution which is your lawful due will not long be withheld: it is on its road towards you. The feet of justice are shod with wool: you hear not its coming, but it is as sure as it is silent. Its steps are swift, and its stroke overwhelming. Awaken, O man, and listen to this text: "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." No peril of plague, battle, shipwreck, or poison, can equal the hazard of an unpardoned soul. Beware, yet that forget God, for his terrors are past conception, and his wrath burneth as an oven.

If you were awakened, O sin-stricken transgressor, you would also perceive that there is a remedy for your disease, a rescue from your

present danger. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." Forgiveness of sin is guaranteed to every one that rests in the work of Jesus, and all other necessary blessings are secured to him. If thou wert awake, thou wouldst not remain an unconverted sinner another hour, but thou wouldst turn unto God with full purpose of heart. If God would awaken thee, thou wouldst tremble at the jaws of hell which are open to receive thee; thou wouldst turn to Christ, and say, "Jesus, save me! Save me now!" You are asleep, sinner—you are asleep, or you would not take matters so coolly. I am afraid for you, and bowed down with amazement and dread. The mercy is that you may be awakened: you are not yet among the slain that go down into the pit. O that that almighty grace would awaken you at this present moment, ere your doom is sealed and your damnation executed! Here I offer my fervent prayers for you, believing that he to whom I pray is able to bring to holy sensibility the most stolid of mankind.

Strange ways God has of awakening his elect ones from their deadly slumbers. Awake them he will, and he will shake heaven and earth sooner than let any one of them perish in unfeeling security. He will strike them down as he did Paul, or send an earthquake to shake them, as he did to the gaoler at Philippi; in his own way and time he will make them come to themselves and then to Christ. Remember the story of Augustine. To the grief of his dear mother, Monica, he had been leading a wicked life; but God's time had come, and as Augustine walked in the garden he heard a little child say, "Take! Read! Take! Read!" This induced him to take the Bible and read it. He no sooner read, than a passage came before his eyes which awakened him, and he sought a Saviour, and found him. Perhaps it will be a death in your house that will wake you—sad means, but often most effectual. A mother's death-bed has been a soul-saving sermon to many a family. Some sleepers need a thunderclap to arouse them. Pray, you dear people of God that are awake, that the sinner may be awakened, for there is this awful danger that he may sleep himself into hell. Spiritual sleep deepens, the slumberer becomes more heavy still, the stupor more dense, till the conscience grows seared, and the soul is unimpressionable; the flesh is turned into stone, the heart is harder than steel. It may be that some of those who hear these words of warning may never wake to think

about their souls till in hell they lift up their eyes. What an awful lifting up of the eyes will that be! O you who are now peaceful and secure, what a change awaits you! Hurlled from vainglorious security to blank despair in a moment! You took it all so easily: you said, "Let me alone; do not worry me; there's time enough. The preacher ought not to frighten us with these bugbears; we all have a great deal else to do besides listening to horrible stories of hell and damnation;" and so you wrapped it up, and so you smoothed it over, but the end thereof who shall describe? Have you never heard of the Indian in his boat upon one of the great rivers of America? Somehow his moorings had broken, and his canoe was in the power of the current. He was asleep, while his canoe was being borne rapidly along by the stream. He was sound asleep, and yet had good need to have been awake, for there was a tremendous cataract not far ahead. Persons on shore saw the canoe—saw that there was a man in it asleep; but their vigilance was of no use to the sleeper: it needed that he himself should be aware of his peril. The canoe quickened its pace, for the waters of the river grew more rapid as they approached the cataract; persons on the shore began to cry out, and raise alarm on all sides and at last the Indian was aroused. He started up, and began to use his paddle, but his strength was altogether insufficient for the struggle with the gigantic force of the waters around him. He was seen to spring upright in the boat and disappear—himself and the boat—in the fall. He had perished, for he woke too late! Some persons on their dying beds just wake up in time to see their danger, but not to escape from it: they are carried right over the cataract of judgement and wrath. They are gone, for ever gone, where mercy is succeeded by justice, and hope forbidden to enter. Let much prayer go up from believing hearts that God would awaken sinners now, and begin with those who come to the place of worship, and remain at ease in Zion. Ask for the arm of God to be revealed while the heavenly message is delivered; for his is our message: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." There is a man before me now asleep in his sins, whom God means to make a minister of Christ: he knows not the divine purpose, but there are lines of love in it for him. Arise oh slumberer, for Jesus calls thee! Awake, thou Saul of Tarsus, thou art a chosen vessel unto the Lord! Turn thou from thy sin: seek thou thy Saviour. There is one here who has been a great sinner but the Lord intends to wash him in the cleansing fount, and clothe him in

the righteousness of Christ. Come, thou guilty one, awake! for mercy waits for thee. There is a poor weeping woman here who has gone far in sin; but Jesus says, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Sister awake! Come and receive the mercy which Jesus Christ is ready to bestow upon thee! God give thee waking grace, and saving grace.

May you and I, beloved brethren in Christ, awake to the most earnest and intense form of life in Christ and life for Christ. At once let us bestir ourselves: we may think it early, but it will be none too early; may we awake now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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TEACHING CHILDREN

"Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD."—Psalm 34:11

It is a noteworthy, that good men frequently discover their duty when they are placed in the most humiliating situations. Never in David's life was he in a worse dilemma than that situation which prompted this Psalm to be written. It is, as you can read at the beginning, "A Psalm of David, when he faked insanity before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left."

David was carried before King Achish, the Abimelech of Philistia, and in order to make his escape, he pretended to be insane by acting in very degrading ways which easily gave the impression that he had positively lost his mind. He was driven away from the palace, and as usual, when such men are in the street, a number of children gather around him. Later, when he sang songs of praise to God, remembering how he had become the laughing—stock of little children, he seemed to say, "I have caused the future generations to think less of me because of my foolishness in the streets in front of the children; now I will endeavor to undo the mischief. Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

It is very possible, that if David had never been in such a position, he never would have thought of this duty; for I do not discover in any other Psalm that David said, "Come, my children, listen to me." He had the worries of the cities and his nation pressing upon him, and he paid very little attention to the education of the youth; but here, being brought into the most difficult position which a man could possibly be in, acting the part of a man without reason, he remembers his responsibility. The exalted, or wealthy Christian, does not always remember their responsibility to the lambs.

Departing, however, from this thought, let me address myself to the text, "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

Today I have broken the sermon into five segments:

1. I shall give you one Doctrine
2. I shall give you two Encouragements
3. I shall give you three Warnings
4. I shall give you four Instructions
5. I shall give you five Subjects for children

And all of these will be taken from our text.

I. ONE DOCTRINE

"Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

The doctrine is, that children are capable of being taught the fear of the Lord.

Commonly, men are the wisest after they have been the most foolish. David had been extremely foolish, and now he had become extremely wise; and being so it was not likely that he would speak foolish opinions, or give the type of directions that would be dictated by a weak mind.

We have heard it said by some that children cannot understand the great mysteries of Christianity. We even know some Sunday School teachers who cautiously avoid mentioning the great doctrines of the gospel, because they think the children are not prepared to receive them. The same mistake has crept into the pulpit, for it is currently believed, among a certain group of preachers, that many of the doctrines of the Word of God, although true, are not fit to be taught to the people, since they would misapply them to their own ruin. Away with such ideas, for this is one of the errors of the Roman Catholic Church.

Whatever my God has revealed must be preached. Whatever He has revealed, if I am not capable of understanding it, I will still believe it, and preach it. I am convinced that there is no doctrine of the Word of God which a child, if he is capable of salvation, is not capable of receiving. I would have children taught all the great doctrines of truth without a single exception, that they may in later life hold firmly to them. I can bear witness that children can understand the Scriptures, for I am sure that when I was a child I could have discussed many a complicated point of controversial theology, having heard both sides of the question freely stated among my father's circle of friends. In fact, children are capable of understanding some things in early life, which we can hardly understand in our later years.

Children have a simplicity of faith. Simplicity is analogous to the highest knowledge; indeed, many of us are not aware that there is little difference between the simplicity of a child and the genius of the profoundest mind. He who receives things simply, as a child, will often have ideas which the man who is prone to use deductive reasoning could never discover.

If you wish to know whether children can be taught, I point you to many in our churches, and in godly families—not geniuses, but the more common children—the Timothy's and Samuel's, and little girls too, who have come to know a Savior's love. As soon as a child is capable of being damned it is capable of being saved. As soon as a child can sin, that child can, if God's grace helps it, believe and receive the Word of God. As soon as children can learn evil, be assured that they are capable, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to learn good.

Never go to your Sunday School class with the thought that the children cannot understand you; for if you do not make them understand, it is because you do not understand it yourselves; if you do not teach children what you wish, it is because you are not fit for the task: you should use simpler words more fitted for their capacity, and then you would discover that it was not the fault of the child, but the fault of the teacher, if he did not learn. I believe that children are capable of salvation. He who in divine sovereignty redeems the gray haired sinner from the error of his ways, can turn a little child from his youthful lusts. He who in the eleventh hour finds some standing idle in the marketplace, and sends them into the vineyard, can call men at the dawning of the day to work for Him.

He who can change the course of the river when it has rolled onward and become a mighty flood, can control a newborn river leaping from its cradle fountain, and make it run in the channel He desires. He can do all things; He can work on children's hearts as He pleases, for all of them are under His control.

I will not delay to establish the doctrine, because I do not consider any of you are so foolish as to doubt it. But although you believe it, I fear many of you don't expect to hear of children being saved. Throughout the churches I have noticed a kind of abhorrence of any thing like early childhood godliness. We are afraid of the idea of a little boy loving Christ; and if we hear of a little girl following the Savior, we say it is a youthful fancy, an early impression that will die away. My dear friends, I ask you, never to treat the godliness of a young child with suspicion. It is a tender plant--don't brush it too hard.

I heard of a story some time ago, which I believe to be completely true. A dear little girl, some five or six years old, a true lover of Jesus, requested of her mother that she might join the church. The mother told her she was too young. The poor little thing was severely grieved; and after a awhile the mother, who saw that godliness was in the little girl's heart, spoke to the minister on the subject. The minister talked to the child, and said to the mother, "I am thoroughly convinced of her salvation and godliness, but I cannot take her into the church, because she is too young." When the child heard that, a strange gloom passed over her face;

and the next morning when her mother went to her little bed, she saw the little girl laying there with a pearly tear or two on each eye, dead because of her grief; her heart was broken, because she could not follow her Savior, and do as He had commanded her.

I would not have murdered that child for all the world! Take care how you treat young devotion to Christ. Treat it very tenderly. Believe that children can be saved as much as yourselves. When you see the young heart brought to the Savior, don't stand by and speak harshly, mistrusting everything. It is better sometimes to be deceived than to be the one who causes a young child to be ruined. May God send to his people a more firm belief that little buds of grace are worthy of all of our care.

II. TWO ENCOURAGEMENTS

Now, secondly, I will give you two encouragements, both of which you will find in the text.

The first is that of godly example. David said, "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD." You are not ashamed to walk in the footsteps of David, are you? You won't object to follow the example of one who was first notably holy, and then notably great. Shall the shepherd boy, the giant killer, the psalmist of Israel, and the king, walk in footsteps which you are too proud to follow? Ah! no; you will be happy, I am sure, to be as David was. If you want, however, a greater example, even than that of David, listen to the Son of David while from his lips the sweet words flow, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." I am sure it would encourage you if you always thought of these examples.

You teach children—you are not dishonored by it. Some say you are nothing but a Sunday School teacher, but you are a noble person, holding an honorable office, and having illustrious predecessors. We love to see persons of some standing in society take an interest in Sunday Schools. One great fault in many of our churches is that the children are left to the young people to take care of—the older members, who have more wisdom, take very little notice of them; and very often the wealthier members of the church stand aside as if the teaching of the poor were not

(as indeed it is) the special business of the rich.

I hope for the day when the mighty men of Israel shall be found helping in this great warfare against the enemy. In the United States we have heard of presidents, of judges, Congressmen, and persons in the highest positions—not condescending, for I hate to use such a term, but honoring themselves by teaching little children in Sunday School. He who teaches a class in Sunday School has earned a good degree. I would have rather received the title of S.S.T., than M.A., B.A., or any other honor that was ever conferred. Let me beg of you then to take heart, because your duties are so honorable. Let the royal example of David, let the noble, the godly example of Jesus Christ inspire you with fresh diligence and increasing love, with confident and enduring perseverance, still to go on in your mighty work, saying, as David did, "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

The second encouragement I will give is the encouragement of great success. David said, "Come, my children, listen to me;" he did not add, "Perhaps I will teach you the fear of the Lord" but "I will teach you." He had success; or if he had not, others have. The success of Sunday Schools! If I begin to speak of that I will have an endless theme; therefore I will not begin. Many books might be written on it, and then when all were written, we might say, "I suppose that even the world itself could not contain all that might be written."

Up above where the starry hosts perpetually sing His high praise—up where the redeemed saints, dressed in white robes, continually throw their crowns before His feet--we may behold the success of Sunday Schools. There, too, where voices of those taken home to heaven early in their young lives, gather Sunday after Sunday, to sing, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," we see with joy the success of Sunday Schools. And in almost every pulpit of our land, and there in the pews where the deacons sit, and godly members join in worship--there is the success of Sunday Schools.

And far across the broad ocean in the islands of the south, in lands where those live who bow down before blocks of wood and stone--there are missionaries saved by Sunday Schools, whose thousands, redeemed by

their labors, contribute to swell the mighty stream of the tremendous, incalculable, I had almost said infinite success of Sunday School instruction. Go on! go on! So much has been done; more will be done. Let all your past victories inflame you with love; let the remembrance of campaigns of triumph, and of battlefields, won for your Savior in the realms of salvation and peace, be your encouragement for fresh duty.

III. THREE WARNINGS

Now, thirdly, I give you three warnings.

The first is, remember who you are teaching. "Come, my children."

I think we ought always to have respect for our audience. Not that kind of respect that we need to worry that we are preaching to Mr. So-an-so, or to Sir William This, or the Honorable Mr. That—because in God's sight title and position is a small matter; but we are to remember that we are preaching to men and women who have souls, so that we should not waste their time with things that are not worth their hearing. But when you teach in Sunday Schools, you are, if it is possible, in a more responsible situation even than a minister.

Ministers preach to grownup people--men of judgment, who, if they do not like what he preaches, have the option of going somewhere else; you teach children who have no option to go elsewhere. If you wrongly teach the child, he believes you; if you teach him heresies he will receive them; what you teach him now, he will never forget. You are not sowing, as some say, on virgin soil, for it has long been occupied by the devil; but you are sowing on a soil more fertile than it ever will be—that will produce far better fruit now than it will do in the later years of its life; you are sowing on a young heart, and what you sow will be pretty sure to remain there, especially if you teach evil, for that will never be forgotten.

You are beginning with the child; take care what you do with him. Don't spoil him. Many a child has been treated like the Indian children, who had copper plates attached to their foreheads, so that they may never grow. There are many who know themselves to be illiterate now, just because those who had the care of them when young gave them no

opportunities of getting knowledge, so that when they became old they cared nothing about it. Take special care what you are doing; you are teaching children; be very mindful of what you are accomplishing. Put poison in the spring, and it will impregnate the whole stream.

Take special care what you are trying to achieve, sir! You are twisting the sapling, and the old oak will therefore be bent. Be careful! It is a child's soul you are tampering with, if you are tampering at all; it is a child's soul you are preparing for eternity, if God is with you. I give you a solemn warning on every child's behalf. Surely, if it is treachery to administer poison to the dying, it must be far more criminal to give poison to the young life. If it is evil to mislead those who are gray headed, it must be far more so to turn aside the young heart to a road of error in which he may forever walk. Yes! it is a solemn warning—you are teaching children.

The second warning is, remember that you are teaching for God. "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

If you, as teachers, were only assembled to teach geography, I am sure I would not interfere if you were telling the children that the north pole was close to the equator; if you were to say that the extremity of South America lay right next to the coast of Europe; I would smile at your error. And perhaps, I would even maintain it was a joke, if I heard you assure them that England was in the middle of Africa. But you are not teaching geography or astronomy, nor are you teaching for business or for the world; but you are teaching them, to the best of your ability, for God.

You say to them, "Children, you come here to be taught the Word of God; you come here, if it is possible, that we may be the means of saving your souls." Care about what you are doing when you pretend to be teaching them for God. Wound the child's hand if you like, but, for the sake of God, don't touch his heart. Say what you like about earthly matters, but I beg you, in spiritual matters, be careful how you lead him. Oh! be careful that it is the truth which you convey, and only that. And now how solemn your work becomes! He who is doing a work for himself, let him do it as he likes; but he who is laboring for another, let him be careful how he does his work; he who is now employed by a governor, let him beware how he performs his duty; but he who labors for God, let him tremble at the

thought of doing careless work! Remember you are working for God. I say this, because you profess to be His servants. I fear that many among you, are far from having this view of the matter.

The third warning is—remember that your children need teaching. The text implies that, when it says, "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

That makes your work all the more solemn. If children did not need teaching, I would not be so extremely anxious that you should teach them right; for works that are not necessary, men may do as they please. But here the work is necessary. Your child needs teaching! He was born in sin; in sin did his mother conceive him. He has an evil heart; he does not know God, and he never will unless he is taught. He is not like some ground of which we have heard, that has good seed lying hidden in its very heart; but, instead he has evil seed within his heart. God can place good seed there. You profess to be God's instrument to scatter seed upon that child's heart; remember, if that seed is not sown, he will be lost forever, his life will be a life of alienation from God, and, at his death, he will be thrown into the everlasting fire.

Be careful, then, how you teach, remembering the urgent necessity of the situation. This is not a house on fire needing your assistance with a fire hose, nor is it an accident at sea, demanding your oar in the lifeboat, but it is a eternal spirit calling out loud to you, "Come over and help us." I beg you, teach "the fear of the Lord," and only that; be very anxious to say, and say truly, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

IV. That brings me, in the fourth place, to FOUR INSTRUCTIONS, and they are all in the text.

The first is—"Get the children to come to your Sunday School." "Come, my children."

The great complaint with some is that they cannot get children. Go and get them to come. In London we are canvassing the city; that is a good idea, and you ought to canvass every village, and every town, and get every child you can; for David says, "Come, my children." My advice then,

is, get the children to come, and do any thing to make it happen. Don't bribe them—that is the only plan we object to; it is only adopted in Sunday Schools of the lowest order; Sunday Schools so bad that, even the fathers and mothers of the children have too much sense then to send them there. But, except for that, don't be very particular how you get the children to school.

Why, if I could only get people to come to my place by preaching in a black coat, I would have on a tuxedo tomorrow. I would have a congregation somehow. Better to do strange things than have an empty chapel, or an empty school room. When I was in Scotland, we sent one of our workers around a village to secure an audience, and his efforts were eminently successful. Spare no means. Go and get the children in. I have known ministers who have gone out in the streets on Sunday afternoon, and talked to the children who were playing in the street, so as to induce them to come to the school. This is what an earnest teacher will do. He will say, "Come to our school; you cannot believe what a nice school it is" Then he gets the children in, and, in his kind, winning manner, he tells them some stories and anecdotes about girls and boys, and so on. And in this way the school is filled. Go and catch them any way possible. There is no law against it. You may do what you like in battle. All is fair against the devil. My first instruction then is, get children, and get them any way possible.

The next instruction is, "Get the children to love you," if you can. That also is in the text. "Come, my children, listen to me."

You know how we used to be taught in our private schools, how we stood up with our hands behind us to repeat our lessons. That was not David's plan. "Come, my children—come here, and sit on my knee." "Oh!" thinks the child, "how nice to have such a teacher! A teacher that will let me come near him, a teacher that does not say "go" but "come." The fault of many teachers is, that they do not let their children near them, but endeavor to foster a kind of awful respect. Before you can teach children you must get the silver key of kindness to unlock their hearts, and get their attention. Say, "Come, my children."

We have known some good men who are objects of hatred to the children.

You remember the story of two little boys who were one day asked if they would like to go to heaven, and who, much to their teacher's astonishment, said they really would not. When they were asked "why not," one of them said, "I would not like to go to heaven because grandpa would be there, and would be sure to say, 'get out of here boys, get out of here boys.' I would not like to be there with grandpa."

If a boy has a teacher who always wears a sour look, but who talks to him about Jesus, what does the boy think? "I wonder whether Jesus was like you; if He was, I wouldn't like Him very much." Then there is another teacher who, if he is provoked even a little, spansks the child; and, at the same time, teaches him that he should forgive others, and how kind he ought to be. "Well," thinks the child, "that is no doubt the way to be, but my teacher does not show me how to do it." If you drive a boy from you, your power is gone, for you won't be able to teach him anything. It is a waste of time to attempt teaching those who do not love you. Try and make them love you, and then they will learn anything from you.

The next instruction is, "Get the children's attention." That is in the text, "Come, my children, listen to me."

If they do not listen, you may talk, but you will waste your words. If they do not listen, you go through your labors as an meaningless drudgery to yourselves and your students too. You can do nothing without securing their attention. "That is just what I cannot do," says one. Well, that depends on you. If you give them something worth listening to, they will be sure to listen. Give them something worth hearing, and they will certainly listen. This rule may not be universal, but it is very nearly so. Don't forget to give them a few real life stories. Stories and Illustrations are very much objected to by critics of sermons, who say they ought not to be used in the pulpit. But some of us know better than that; we know what will wake a congregation up; we can speak from experience, that a few good illustrations here and there are first rate things to get the attention of persons who won't listen to dry doctrine.

Try to learn as many short interesting stories as possible, in the week just before the class. Wherever you go, if you are really a good teacher, you can always find something to make into a story to tell your children.

Then, when your class gets dull, and you cannot get their attention, say to them, "Do you know "such-and-such" place downtown?" and then they all open their eyes at once, if there is such a place in the town; or, just tell them something you may have read or heard just to secure their attention.

A dear child once said: "Father, I like to hear Mr. So-and-so preach, because he puts some 'likes' into his sermon—'like this, and like that.' Yes, children always love those "likes." Make parables, pictures, figures, for them, and you will always get their attention. I am sure if I were a boy listening to some of you, unless you told me a story now and then, you would as often see the back of my head as my face; and I don't know, if I sat in a hot classroom, but that my head would nod, and I should go to sleep, or be playing with Tom on my left, and do as many strange things as the rest, if you did not strive to interest me. Remember to make them listen.

The fourth instruction is, "Care about what you teach the children." "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

Not to wear you out, however, I only hint at that, and press on.

V. In the fifth place, I give to you FIVE SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS-- five subjects to teach your children—and these you will find in the verses following the text:

1. "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." The first thing to teach is "morality." "Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

2. The second is "godliness, and a constant belief in God's oversight." "The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry."

3. The third thing is "the evil of sin:" "The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. The

righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles."

4. The fourth thing is, "the necessity of a broken heart:" "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

5. The fifth thing is "the inestimable blessedness of being a child of God:" "A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in Him."

I have given you these divisions, and now let me refer to them one by one. Here, then, is a model lesson for you: "Come, my children, listen to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." David begins with a question, "Who of you loves life and desires to see many good days?" The children like that thought; they would like to live to be old. With this introduction he begins and teaches them morality: "Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

Now, we never teach morality as the way of salvation. God forbid that we should ever mix up man's works in any way with the road to heaven; "For it is by grace we have been saved, through faith—and this not from ourselves, it is the gift of God." But yet we teach morality, while we teach spirituality; and I have always found that the gospel produces the best morality in all the world. I would have the Sunday School teacher take special care of the morals of the boys and girls, speaking to them very particularly of those sins which are most common to youth. He may honestly and conveniently say many things to his children which no one else can say, especially when reminding them of the sin of lying, so common with children; the sin of little petty thefts, of disobedience to parents, and of failing to keep the Lord's Day holy. I would have the teacher be very particular in mentioning these things, one by one; for it is of little help talking to them about sins in the mass: you must take them one by one, just as David did.

First look after the tongue: "Keep your tongue from evil and your lips

from speaking lies." Then look after the whole conduct: "Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." If the child's soul is not saved by other parts of the teaching, this part may have a beneficial effect on his life; and so far so good. Morality, however, is comparatively a small thing.

The best part of what you teach is "godliness," a constant belief in God—I said, not religion, but godliness. Many people are religious without being godly. Many have all the externals of godliness, all the outside of devotion—such men we call religious—but they have no thought about God. They think about their place of worship, their Sunday, their books, but nothing about God; and he who does not respect God, pray to God, love God, is an ungodly man with all his external religion, however good that may be. Labor to teach the child always to have an eye to God; write on his brow, "You, God, see me;" stamp on his books, "You, God, see me;" beg him to remember that,

"Within the embracing arms of God
He forever will dwell;"

that the arms of Jehovah encompass him around while his every act and thought is under the eye of God. No Sunday School teacher discharges his duty unless he constantly lays stress on the fact that there is a God who notices everything. Oh! that we were more godly ourselves, that we longed for more godliness, and that we loved it better!

The third lesson is—"the evil of sin." If the child does not learn that, he will never learn the way to heaven. None of us ever knew what a Savior Christ was till we knew what an evil thing sin was. If the Holy Spirit does not teach us "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," we shall never know the blessedness of salvation. Let us ask for His grace, then, we may forever be able to fight against the abominable nature of sin. "The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth." Don't spare your child; let him know what sin leads to; don't, like some people, be afraid of speaking the consequences of sin clearly and unbiased.

I have heard of a father, one of whose sons, a very ungodly young man, died suddenly. He did not, as some would do, say to his family: "We hope

your brother has gone to heaven." No; but, overcoming his natural feelings, he was enabled, by divine grace, to gather the older children, and say: "My sons and daughters, your brother is dead; I fear he is in hell; you knew his life and conduct, you saw how he behaved: God snatched him away." Then he solemnly warned them of the place to which he believed, and almost knew he had gone, begging them to avoid it; and then he was the means of bringing them to serious thought. But had he acted, as some would have done, with tenderness of heart, but not with honesty of purpose, and said he hoped his son had gone to heaven, what would the others have said? "If he is gone to heaven, there is no need for us to fear, we may live any way we like."

No, no; I believe that it is not unchristian to say of some men that they have gone to hell, when we have seen that their lives have been hellish lives. But it is often said: "Can you judge your fellow creatures?" No, but I can "know" them by their fruits; I do not judge them or condemn them; they judge themselves. I have seen their sins go before them to judgment, and I do not doubt that they shall follow after. "But couldn't they have been saved at the eleventh hour?" I do not know that they can. I have heard of one who was, but I do not know that there ever was another, and I cannot tell that there ever will be. Be honest then, with your children, and teach them, by the help of God, that evil will kill the wicked.

But you will not have done half enough unless you teach carefully the fourth point—"the absolute necessity of a change of heart." Oh, may God enable us to keep this constantly before the minds of the children—that there must be a broken heart and a repentant spirit, that good works will be of no use unless there be a new nature, that the most laborious duties, and the most earnest prayers will all be nothing, unless there is a true and thorough repentance of sin, and an entire forsaking of it through the mercy of God. Yes! you be very sure, whatever you leave out, that you tell them of the three R's, Ruin, Regeneration, and Redemption. Tell them that they are ruined by the fall, and that if they are redeemed by Christ they never can know it until they are regenerated by the Spirit. Keep these things before them; and then you will have the pleasing task of telling them.

In the fifth place, the "joy and blessedness of being, a Christian." Well, I

need not tell you how to talk about that, for if you know what it is to be a Christian you will never be short of words. Yes! beloved, when we get on this subject, our mind loves to speak, for it goes crazy with joy, and frolics in its bliss. Oh! truly was it said: "Blessed is the man whose sin is forgiven, and whose sin is pardoned." Truly was it said: "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in Him." Always stress this point, that the righteous are a blessed people—that God's chosen family, redeemed by blood and saved by power, are a blessed people here below, and will be a blessed people above. Let your children see that you are blessed. If they know you are in trouble, come with a smiling face, if it be possible, so that they may say: "Our teacher is a blessed man, although he is weighed down with his troubles." Always seek to keep a joyous face that they may know religion to be a blessed thing; and let this be one main point of your teaching, "A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. The LORD redeems His servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in Him."

Thus I have given you these five lessons; and now, in conclusion, let me solemnly say, with all the instruction you may give to your children, you must be deeply conscious that you are not capable of doing any thing to effect the child's salvation, but that it is God Himself who from the first to the last must effect it all. You are a pen; God may write with you, but you can not write yourself. You are a sword; God may with you slay the child's sin, but you cannot slay it yourself. Therefore be always mindful of this, that you, yourself must first be taught by God, and then you must ask God to teach, for unless a higher teacher than you instruct the child, that child must perish. It is not all your instruction that saves his soul: it is the blessing of God resting on it.

May God bless your labors! He will do it if you are instant in prayer, constant in supplication; for never yet did the earnest preacher or teacher, labor in vain, and never yet has it been found that the bread cast upon the water has been lost.

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Children Brought to Christ, and Not to the Font

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them - Mark 10:13-16

My attention has been specially directed to this passage by the fact that it has been quoted against me by most of the authors of those sermons and letters which are, by a stretch of imagination, called "replies" to my sermon upon "Baptismal Regeneration." Replies they certainly are not, except to one another. I marvel that a Church so learned as the Anglican, cannot produce something a little more worthy of the point in hand. The various authors may possibly have read my discourse, but by reason of mental absorption in other meditations, or perhaps through the natural disturbance of mind caused by guilty consciences, they have talked with confusion of words, and have only been successful in refuting themselves, and answering one another. They must have been aiming at something far removed from my sermon, or else I must give them credit for being the worst shots that ever practiced with polemical artillery. They do not so much as touch the target in its extreme corners, much less in its centre. The whole question is, Do you believe that baptism regenerates? If so—prove that your belief is Scriptural! Do you believe that baptism does not regenerate? Then justify your swearing that it does? Who will reply to this? He shall merit and bear the palm.

The Scripture before us is by several of the champions on the other side exhibited to the people as a rebuke to me. Their reasoning is rather ingenious than forcible: forsooth, because the disciples incurred the displeasure of Jesus Christ by keeping back the little children from coming to Him, therefore Jesus Christ is greatly displeased with me, and

with all others like me, for keeping children from the font, and the performance there enacted; and specially displeased with me for exposing the Anglican doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration! Observe the reasoning —because Jesus was much displeased with disciples for hindering parents from seeking a blessing upon their children, therefore he is much displeased with us who do not believe in godfathers and godmothers, or the signing of the cross on the infant brow. I must say at the outset that this is rather a leap of argument, and would not ordinarily be thought conclusive, but this we may readily overlook, since we have long ceased to hope for reasonable arguments from those who support a cause based upon absurdity. My brethren, I concluded that there must be something forcible in such a text as this, or my opponents would not be so eager to secure it; I have therefore carefully looked at it, and as I have viewed it, it has opened up to me with a sacred splendour of grace. In this incident the very heart of Christ is published to poor sinners, and we may clearly perceive the freeness and the fulness of the mighty grace of the Redeemer of men, who is willing to receive the youngest child as well as the oldest man; and is greatly displeased with any who would keep back seeking souls from coming to him, or loving hearts from bringing others to receive his blessing.

I. In handling this text in what I believe to be its true light, I shall commence, first of all, by observing that THIS TEXT HAS NOT THE SHADOW OF THE SHADE OF THE GHOST OF A CONNECTION WITH BAPTISM. There is no line of connection so substantial as a spider's web between this incident and baptism, or at least my imagination is not vivid enough to conceive one. This I will prove to you, if you will follow me for a moment.

It is very clear, Dear Friends, that these young children were not brought to Jesus Christ by their friends to be baptized. "They brought young children to him, that he should touch them," says Mark. Matthew describes the children as being brought "that he would put his hands on them and pray," but there is not a hint about their being baptized; no godfathers or godmothers had been provided, and no sign of the cross was requested. Surely the parents themselves knew tolerably well what it was they desired, and they would not have expressed themselves so

dubiously as to ask him to touch them, when they meant that he should baptize them. The parents evidently had no thought of regeneration by baptism, and brought the children for quite another end.

In the next place, if they brought the children to Jesus Christ to be baptized, they brought them to the wrong person; for the Evangelist, John, in the fourth chapter, and the second verse, expressly assures us that Jesus Christ baptized not, but his disciples: this settles the question once for all, and proves beyond all dispute that there is no connection between this incident and baptism.

But you will say, "Perhaps they brought the children to be baptized by the disciples?" Brethren, the disciples were not in the habit of baptizing infants, and this is clear from the case in hand. If they had been in the habit of baptizing infants, would they have rebuked the parents for bringing them? If it had been a customary thing for parents to bring children with such an object, would the disciples who had been in the constant habit of performing the ceremony, have rebuked them for attending to it? Would any Church clergyman rebuke parents for bringing their children to be baptized? If he did so, he would act absurdly contrary to his own views and practice; and we cannot therefore imagine that if infant baptism had been the accepted practice, the disciples could have acted so absurdly as to rebuke the parents for bringing their little ones. It is obvious that such could not have been the practice of the disciples who were rebuked.

Moreover, and here is an argument which seems to me to have great force in it, when Jesus Christ rebuked his disciples, then was the time if ever in his life, to have openly spoken concerning infant baptism, godfathers and godmothers, and the whole affair. If he wished to rebuke his disciples most effectually, how could he have done it better than by saying, "Wherefore keep ye these children back? I have ordained that they shall be baptized; I have expressly commanded that they shall be regenerated and made members of my body in baptism; how dare you then, in opposition to my will, keep them back?" But no, dear friends, our Saviour never said a word about "the laver of regeneration," or, "the quickening dew," when he rebuked them—not a single sentence. Had he done so, the

season would have been most appropriate if it had been his intention to teach the practice; in the whole of his life, there is no period in which a discourse upon infant regeneration in baptism could have been more appropriate than on this occasion, and yet not a single sentence about it comes from the Saviour's lips.

To close all, Jesus Christ did not baptize the children. Our Evangelist does not inform us that he exclaimed, "Where are the godfathers and godmothers?" Is it not recorded that he called for a font, or a Prayer Book? No; but "He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them," and dismissed them without a drop of the purifying element. Now, if this event had any connection with baptism whatever, it was the most appropriate occasion for infant baptism to have been practiced. Why, it would have ended for ever the controversy. There may be some men in the world who would have raised the question of engrafting infants into the body of Christ's Church by baptism after all this, but I am certain no honest man would have done so who reverently accepted Christ as his spiritual leader. I, my brethren, would sooner be dumb than speak a single word against an ordinance which Christ himself instituted and practiced; and if on this occasion he had but sprinkled one of these infants, given him a Christian name, signed him with a cross, accepted the vows of his godparents, and thanked God for his regeneration, then the question would have been settled for ever, and some of us would have been saved a world of abuse, besides escaping no end of mistakes, for which we are condemned, in the judgment of many good people, for whom we have some affection, though for their judgment we have no respect.

So you see the parents did not ask baptismal regeneration; Christ did not personally baptize; the disciples were not in the habit of baptizing infants, or else they would not have rebuked the parents; Christ did not speak about baptism on the occasion, and he did not baptize the little ones.

I will put a case to you which may exhibit the weakness of my opponents' position. Suppose a denomination should rise up which should teach that babes should be allowed to partake at the Lord's Table. Such teaching could plead precedents of great antiquity, for you are aware that at one

period, infant communion was allowed, and logically too; for if an infant has a right to baptism, it has a right to come to the Lord's Table. For years children were brought to the Lord's Table, but rather inconvenient accidents occurred, and therefore the thing was dropped as being unseemly. But if someone should revive the error, and try to prove that infants are to come to the Lord's Supper, he might prove it from this passage quite as clearly as our friends can prove infant baptism from it. Moreover do not forget that even if infant baptism could be proved from this text, the ceremony prescribed in the Prayer Book is quite as far from being established. Whether the baptism of infants may or may not be proved from other Scriptures I cannot now stay to enquire, but even if it can be, what are we to say for godfathers or godmothers, or the assertion that in baptism children are made "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven?" Truly I might as well prove vaccination from the text before me, as the performance which the Prayer Book calls "infant baptism." I do not hesitate to say that I could prove any earthly thing, if I might but have such reasoning granted to me as that which proved infant baptism from this passage. There is no possible connection between the two. The teaching of the passage is very plain and very clear, and baptism has been imported into it, and not found in it. As a quaint writer has well said, "These doctrines are raised from the text as our collectors raise a tax upon indigent, nonsolvent people, by coming armed with the law and a constable to distrain for that which is not to be had. Certainly never was text so strained and distrained to pay what it never owed; never man so racked to confess what he never thought; never was a pumice stone so squeezed for water which it never held." Still hundreds will catch at this straw, and cry, "Did not Jesus say, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me?'" To these we give this one word, see that ye read the Word as it is written, and you will find no water in it but Jesus only. Are the water and Christ the same thing? Is bringing a child to a font bringing the child to Christ? Nay, here is a wide difference, as wide as between Rome and Jerusalem, as wide as between Anti-christ and Christ, between false doctrine and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Now, for our second and much more pleasing task, WHY THEN WAS JESUS CHRIST DISPLEASED?

Read the passage and at once the answer comes to you. He was displeased with his disciples for two reasons: first, because they discouraged those who would bring others to him; and secondly, because they discouraged those who themselves were anxious to come to him. They did not discourage those who were coming to a font, they discouraged those who were coming to Jesus. There is a mighty distinction ever to be held between the font and Christ, between the sprinkling of the priest and living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, his disciples discouraged those who would bring others to him. This is a great sin, and wherever it is committed Jesus Christ is greatly displeased, for a true desire to see others saved is wrought in the believer by God the Holy Spirit, who thus renders the called ones the means of bringing wandering sheep into the fold. In this case they discouraged those who would bring children to him to be blessed. How can we bring children to Jesus Christ to be blessed? We cannot do it in a corporeal sense, for Jesus is not here, "he is risen;" but we can bring our children in a true, real, and spiritual sense. We take them up in the arms of our prayer. I hope many of us, so soon as our children saw the light, if not before, presented them to God with this anxious prayer, that they might sooner die than live to disgrace their father's God. We only desired children that we might in them live over again another life of service to God; and when we looked into their young faces, we never asked wealth for them, nor fame, nor anything else, but that they might be dear unto God, and that their names might be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We did then bring our children to Christ as far as we could do it, by presenting them before God, by earnest prayer on their behalf. And have we ceased to bring them to Christ? Nay, I hope we seldom bow the knee without praying for our children. Our daily cry is, "O, that they might live before thee!" God knows that nothing would give us more joy than to see evidence of their conversion; our souls would almost leap out of our bodies with joy, if we should but know that they were the children of the living God. Nor has this privilege been denied to us, for there are some here who can rejoice in a converted household. Truly we can say with the apostle Paul, "I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the truth." We continue, therefore, to bring them to Christ by daily, constant, earnest prayer on their behalf. So soon as they become of years capable of

understanding the things of God, we endeavour to bring them to Christ by teaching them the truth. Hence our Sabbath-schools, hence the use of the Bible and family prayer, and catechizing at home. Any person who shall forbid us to pray for our children, will incur Christ's high displeasure; and any who shall say, "Do not teach your children; they will be converted in God's own time if it be his purpose, therefore leave them to run wild in the streets," will certainly both "sin against the child" and the Lord Jesus. We might as well say, "If that piece of ground is to grow a harvest, it will do so if it be God's good pleasure; therefore leave it, and let the weeds spring up and cover it; do not endeavour for a moment to kill the weeds, or to sow the good seed." Why, such reasoning as this would be not only cruel to our children, but grievously displeasing to Christ. Parents! I do hope you are all endeavouring to bring your children to Christ by teaching them the things of God. Let them not be strangers to the plan of salvation. Never let it be said that a child of yours reached years in which his conscience could act, and he could judge between good and evil, without knowing the doctrine of the atonement, without understanding the great substitutionary work of Christ. Set before your child life and death, hell and heaven, judgment and mercy, his own sin, and Christ's most precious blood; and as you set these before him, labour with him, persuade him, as the apostle did his congregation, with tears and weeping, to turn unto the Lord; and your prayers and supplications shall be heard so that the Spirit of God shall bring them to Jesus. How much more like the Scripture will such labours be than if you were to sing the following very pretty verse which disfigures Roundell Palmer's "Book of Praise!"—

"Though thy conception was in sin,
A sacred bathing thou hast had;
And though thy birth unclean has been,
A blameless babe thou now art made.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my dear, sweet baby, sleep."

I cannot tell you how much I owe to the solemn words of my good mother. It was the custom on Sunday evenings, while we were yet little children, for her to stay at home with us, and then we sat round the table

and read verse by verse, and she explained the Scripture to us. After that was done, then came the time of pleading; there was a little piece of "Alleyn's Alarm," or of Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," and this was read with pointed observations made to each of us as we sat round the table; and the question was asked how long it would be before we would think about our state, how long before we would seek the Lord. Then came a mother's prayer, and some of the words of a mother's prayer we shall never forget, even when our hair is grey. I remember on one occasion her praying thus: "Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ." That thought of a mother's bearing swift witness against me, pierced my conscience and stirred my heart. This pleading with them for God and with God for them is the true way to bring children to Christ. Sunday-school teachers! you have a high and noble work, press forward in it. In our schools you do not try to bring children to the baptistry for regeneration, you point them away from ceremonies; if I know the teachers of this school aright, I know you are trying to bring your classes to Christ. Let Christ be the sum and substance of your teaching in the school. Young men and young women, in your classes lift up Christ, lift him up on high; and if anybody shall say to you, "Why do you thus talk to the children?" you can say, "Because my soul yearns towards them, and I pant for their conversion;" and if any should afterwards object, you can remember that Jesus is greatly displeased with them, and not with you, for you only obey the injunction, "Feed my lambs."

The case in our text is that of children, but objectors rise up who disapprove of endeavours to bring any sort of people to Christ by faith and prayer. There are some who spend their nights in the streets seeking after the poor harlot, and I have heard many harsh observations made about their work; some will say it is ridiculous to expect that any of those who have spent their days in debauchery should be converted. We are told that the most of those who are taken into the refuges go back and become as depraved as ever; I believe that to be a very sad and solemn truth; but I believe, if I or anyone else shall urge that or anything else as a reason why my brethren should not seek the harlot, that Jesus would be greatly displeased; for any man who stands between a soul-seeker and the

divine object of getting a blessing for the sinner's soul, excites the wrath of Christ. Some have hopes of our convicts and criminals; but every now and then there is an outcry against those who even believe it possible for a transport or a ticket-of-leave man to be converted. But Jesus is greatly displeased with any who shall say about the work, "It is too hard; it is impossible." My brethren in Christ, labour for souls of all sorts: for your children and for those who are past the threescore years and ten. Seek out the drunkard; go after the thief; despise not the poor down-trodden slave; let every race, let every colour, let every age, let every profession, let every nation, be the object of your soul's prayers. You live in this world, I hope, to bring souls to Jesus; you are Christ's magnets with which through his Holy Spirit he will attract hearts of steel; you are his heralds, you are to invite wanderers to come to the banquet; you are his messengers, you are to compel them to come in that his house may be filled; and if the devil tells you you will not succeed, and if the world tells you that you are too feeble and have not talent enough, never mind, Jesus would be greatly displeased with you if you should take any heed to them; and meanwhile he is greatly displeased with your adversaries for endeavouring to stop you. Beloved, this is why Jesus Christ was greatly displeased.

A second ground of displeasure must be noticed. These children, it strikes me, and I think there is good reason for the belief, themselves desired to come to Christ to obtain a blessing. They are called "little children," which term does not necessarily involve their being infants of six months or a year; indeed, it is clear, as I will show in a moment, that they were not such little children as to be unconscious babes. They were "infants," according to our version of Luke, but then you know the English word "infant" includes a considerable range of age, for every person in his minority is legally considered to be an infant, though he may be able to talk to any amount. We do not, however, desire to translate the text with so great a license. There is no necessity in the language used that these should have been anything but what they are said to be—"little children." It is evident they could walk, because in Luke it is said, "Jesus called them;" the gender of the Greek pronoun used there refers it to the children, not to the persons, nor to the disciples. Jesus called them, he called the children, which he would hardly have done if they could not comprehend his call: and he said, "Suffer the little children to come,"

which implies that they could come, and doubtless they did come, with cheerful faces, expecting to get the blessing. These perhaps may have been some of those very children, who, a short time after, pulled down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way, and cried, "Hosanna," when the Saviour said, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength." Now Christ was greatly displeased with his disciples for pushing back these boys and girls. They did, as some old folks do now-a-days, who cry out—"Stand back, you boys and girls! we do not want you here; we do not want children to fill up the place; we only want grown-up people." They pushed them back; they thought that Christ would have too much to do, if he attended to the juveniles. Here comes out this principle, that we must expect Christ's displeasure, if we attempt to keep anybody back from coming to Christ, even though it be the youngest child. You ask how persons can come to Christ now? They cannot come corporeally, but they can come by simple prayer and humble faith. Faith is the way to Jesus, baptism is not. When Jesus says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden," he did not mean, "be baptized," did he? No; and so when he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," he did not mean, "Baptize them," did he? Coming to Jesus Christ is quite a different thing from coming to a font. Coming to Christ means laying hold upon Christ with the hand of faith; looking to him for my life, my pardon, my salvation, my everything. If there be a poor little child here who is saying in her little heart, or his little heart, "I would like to come to Christ, O that I might be pardoned while I am yet a little one"—come, little lamb; come, and welcome. Did I hear your cry? Was it this?

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to thee."

Dear little one, Jesus will not despise your lisplings, nor will his servant keep you back. Jesus calls you, come and receive his blessing. If any of you say a word to keep the young heart back, Jesus will be displeased with you. Now I am afraid some do that; those, for instance, who think that the gospel is not for little children. Many of my brethren, I am sorry

to say, preach in such a way that there is no hope of children ever getting any good by their preaching. I cannot glory in learning or eloquence, but in this one thing I may rejoice, that there is always a number of happy children here, who are quite as attentive as any of my audience. I do love to think that the gospel is suitable to little children. There are boys and girls in many of our Sabbath-school classes down below stairs who are as truly converted to God as any of us. Nay, and if you were to speak with them about the things of God, though you should get to the knotty points of election and predestination, you would find those boys and girls well taught in the things of the kingdom: they know free will from free grace, and you cannot puzzle them when you come to talk about the work of Jesus and the work of the Spirit, for they can discern between things which differ. But a minister who preaches as though he never wanted to bring children to Christ, and shoots right over the little one's heads, I do think Jesus is displeased with him.

Then there are others who doubt whether children ever will be converted. They do not look upon it as a thing likely to happen, and whenever they hear of a believing child, they hold up their hands at the prodigy, and say, "What a wonder of grace!" It ought to be, and in those Churches where the gospel is simply preached, it is as common a thing for children to be converted as for grown-up people to be brought to Christ. Others begin to doubt the truth of juvenile conversions. They say, "They are very young, can they understand the gospel? Is it not merely an infantile emotion, a mere profession?" My brethren, you have no more right to suspect the sincerity of the young, than to mistrust the grey-headed; you ought to receive them with the same open-breasted confidence with which you receive others when they profess to have found the Saviour. Do, I pray you, whenever you see the faintest desire in your children, go down on your knees, as your servant does, when the fire is almost out, and blow the spark with your own breath—seek by prayer to fan that spark to a flame. Do not despise any godly remark the child may make. Do not puff the child up on account of the goodness of the remark, lest you make him vain and so injure him, but do encourage him; let his first little prayers be noticed by you; though you may not like to teach him a form of prayer—I shall not care if you do not—yet teach him what prayer is; tell him to express his desires in his own words, and when he does so, join ye in it

and plead with God on his behalf, that your little one may speedily find true peace in a Saviour's blood. You must not, unless you would displease my Master, keep back the smallest child that longs to come to Christ.

Here let us observe that the principle is of general application; you must not hinder any awakened soul from seeking the Saviour. O my brethren and sisters, I hope we have such a love for souls, such an instinct within us to desire to see the travail of Christ's soul, that instead of putting stumbling-blocks in the way, we would do the best we could to gather out the stones. On Sabbath days I have laboured to clear up the doubts and fears which afflict coming sinners; I have entreated God the Holy Spirit to enable me so to speak, that those things which hindered you from coming to the Saviour might be removed; but how sad must be the case of those who delight themselves in putting stumbling-blocks in men's way. The doctrine of election for instance, a great and glorious truth, full of comfort to God's people; how often is that made to frighten sinners from Jesus! There is a way of preaching that with a drawn sword, and say, "You must not come unless you know you are one of God's elect." That is not the way to preach the doctrine. The true way of preaching it is, "God has a chosen people, and I hope you are one of them; come, lay hold on Jesus, put your trust in him." Then there be others who preach up frames and feelings as a preparation for Christ. They do in effect say, "Unless you have felt so much depression of spirit, or experienced a certain quantity of brokenness of heart, you must not come to Christ," instead of declaring, that whosoever will is permitted to come, and that the true way of coming to Christ is not with a qualification of frames and feeling and mental depressions, but just as you are. Oh! it is my soul's delight to preach a gospel which has an open door to it, to preach a mercy-seat which has no veil before it; the veil is rent in twain, and now the biggest sinner out of hell who desires to come, is welcome. You who are eighty years of age, and have hated Christ all the time, if now the Spirit of God makes you willing to come, Christ seems to say, "Suffer the grey-headed to come unto me, and forbid them not:" while to you little children, he stretches out his arms in the same manner, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." O my beloved, see to it that your heart longs to come to Christ, and not to ceremonies! I stand here this day to cry, "Come ye to the cross, not to the font." When I forget to lift up the Lord Jesus, and to

cast down the forms of man's devising, "let my right hand forget her cunning," and "let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth"—

None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good;"

The font is a mockery and an imposition if it be put before Christ. If you have baptism after you have come to Christ, well and good, but to point you to it either as being Christ, or as being inevitably connected with Christ, or as being the place to find Christ, is nothing better than to go back to the beggarly elements of the old Romish harlot, instead of standing in the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," and bidding the sinner to come as a sinner to Christ Jesus, and to Christ Jesus alone.

III. In the third and last place, let us also gather from our text, that **WHEN WE DISCOURAGE ANY, WE ALWAYS GO UPON WRONG GROUNDS.** Here was the case of children. I suppose that the grounds upon which the apostles kept back the children would be one of these—either that the children could not receive a blessing, or else that they could not receive it worthily.

Did they imagine that these little children could not receive the blessing? Perhaps so, for they thought them too young. Now, brethren, that was a wrong ground to go upon, for these children could receive the blessing and they did receive it, for Jesus took them in his arms and blessed them. If I keep back a child from coming to Christ on the ground that he is too young, I do it in the face of facts; because there have been children brought to Christ at an extremely early period. You who are acquainted with Janeway's "Tokens for Children," have noticed very many beautiful instances of early conversion. Our dear friend, Mrs. Rogers, in that book of hers, "The Folded Lamb," gave a very sweet picture of a little son of hers, soon folded in the Saviour's bosom above, who, as early as two or three years of age, rejoiced and knew the Saviour. I do not doubt at all, I cannot doubt it, because one has seen such cases, that children of two or three years of age may have precocity of knowledge, and of grace; a forwardness which in almost every case has betokened early death, but which has been perfectly marvellous to those who have talked with them.

The fact is that we do not all at the same age arrive at that degree of mental stature which is necessary for understanding the things of God. Children have been reported as reading Latin, Greek, and other languages, at five or six years of age. I do not know that such early scholarship is any great blessing, it is better not to reach that point so soon; but some children are all that their minds ever will be at three or four, and then they go home to heaven; and so long as the mind has been brought up to such a condition that it is capable of understanding, it is also capable of faith, if the Holy Spirit shall implant it. To suppose that he ever did give faith to an unconscious babe is ridiculous; that there can be any faith in a child that knows nothing whatever I must always take ground to doubt, for "How shall they believe without a preacher?" And yet they are brought up to make a profession in their long-clothes, when they have never heard a sermon in their lives. But those dear children to whom I have before referred, have understood the preacher, have understood the truth, have rejoiced in the truth, and their first young lispings have been as full of grace as those glorious expressions of aged saints in their triumphant departures. Children are capable, then, of receiving the grace of God. Do mark by the way, that all those champions who have come out against me so valiantly, have made a mistake; they have said that we deny that little infants may be regenerated; we do not deny that God can regenerate them if he pleases; we do not know anything about what may or may not happen to unconscious babes; but we did say that little children were not regenerated by their godparents telling lies at a font—we did say that, and we say it again, that little children are not regenerated, nor made members of Christ, nor children of God, nor inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, by solemn mockery, in which godfathers and godmothers promise to do for them what they cannot do for themselves, much less for their children. That is the point; and if they will please to meet it, we will answer them again, but till such time as that, we shall probably let them talk on till God gives them grace to know better.

The other ground upon which the apostles put back the children would be, that although the children might receive the blessing, they might not be able to receive it worthily. The Lord Jesus in effect assures them that so far from the way in which a little child enters into the kingdom of

heaven being exceptional, it is the rule; and the very way in which a child enters the kingdom, is the way in which everybody must enter it. How does a child enter the kingdom of heaven? Why, its faith is very simple; it does not understand mysteries and controversies, but it believes what it is told upon the authority of God's Word, and it comes to God's Word without previous prejudice. It has its natural sinfulness, but grace overcomes it, and the child receives the Word as it finds it. You will notice in boyish and girlish conversions, a peculiar simplicity of belief: they believe just what Christ says, exactly what he says. If they pray, they believe Christ will hear them: if they talk about Jesus, it is as of a person near at hand. They do not, as we do, get into the making of these things into mysteries and shadows, but little children have a realizing power. Then they have great rejoicing. The most cheerful Christians we have are young believers; and the most cheerful old Christians are those who were converted when they were young. Why, see the joy of a child that finds a Saviour! "Mother," he says, "I have sought Jesus Christ, and I have trusted him, and I am saved." He does not say, "I hope," and "I trust," but "I am;" and then he is ready to leap for joy because he is saved. Of the many boys and girls whom we have received into Church-fellowship, I can say of them all, they have all gladdened my heart, and I have never received any with greater confidence than I have these: this I have noticed about them, they have greater joy and rejoicing than any others; and I take it, it is because they do not ask so many questions as others do, but take Jesus Christ's word as they find it, and believe in it. Well now, just the very way in which a child receives Christ, is the way in which you must receive Christ if you would be saved. You who know so much that you know too much; you who have big brains; you who are always thinking, and have tendency to criticism, and perhaps to scepticism, you must come and receive the gospel as a little child. You will never get a hold of my Lord and Master while you are wearing that quizzing cap; no, you must take it off, and by the power of the Holy Spirit you must come trusting Jesus, simply trusting him, for this is the right way to receive the kingdom.

But here, let me say, the principle which holds good in little children holds good in all other cases as well. Take for instance the case of very great sinners, men who have been gross offenders against the laws of

their country. Some would say they cannot be saved; they can be for some of them have been. Others would say they never receive the truth as it is in Jesus in the right manner; ay, but they do. How do great sinners receive Christ? There are some here who have been reclaimed from drunkenness, and I know not what. My brethren, how did you receive Christ? Why in this way. You said, "All unholy, all unclean, I am nothing else but sin; but if I am saved, it will be grace, grace, grace." Why, when you and I stood up, black, and foul, and filthy, and yet dared to believe in Christ, we said, "If we are saved, we shall be prodigies of divine mercy, and we will sing of his love for ever." Well but, my dear friends, you must all receive Jesus Christ in that very way. That which would raise an objection to the salvation of the big sinner is thrown back upon you, for Christ might well say, "Except ye receive these things as the chief of sinners, ye cannot enter the kingdom." I will prove my point by the instance of the apostle Paul. He has been held by some to be an exception to the rule, but Paul did not think so, for he says that God in him showed forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them that believe, and made him as it were a type of all conversions; so that instead of being an exception his was to be the rule. You see what I am driving at. The case of the children looks exceptional, but it is not; it has, on the contrary, all the features about it which must be found in every true conversion. It is of such that the kingdom of heaven is composed, and if we are not such we cannot enter it. Let this induce all of us who love the Lord, to pray for the conversion both of children and of all sorts of men. Let our compassion expand, let us shut out none from the plea of our heart; in prayer and in faith let us bring all who come under our range, hoping and believing that some of them will be found in the election of grace, that some of them will be washed in the Saviour's blood, and that some of them will shine as stars in the firmament of God for ever. Let us, on no consideration, believe that the salvation of any man or child is beyond the range of possibility, for the Lord saveth whom he wills. Let no difficulties which seem to surround the case hinder our efforts; let us, on the contrary, push with greater eagerness forward, believing that where there seems to be some special difficulty, there will be manifested, as in the children's case, some special privilege. O labour for souls, my dear friends! I beseech you live to win souls. This is the best rampart against error, a rampart built of living stones—converted men and women. This is the way to push back

the advances of Popery, by imploring the Lord to work conversions. I do not think that mere controversial preaching will do much, though it must be used; it is grace-work we want; it is bringing you to Christ, it is getting you to lay hold of him—it is this which shall put the devil to a nonplus and expand the kingdom of Christ. O that my God would bring some of you to Jesus! If he is displeased with those who would keep you back, then see how willing he is to receive you. Is there in your soul any desire towards him? Come and welcome, sinner, come. Do you feel now that you must have Christ or die? Come and have him, he is to be had for the asking. Has the Lord taught you your need of Jesus? Ye thirsty ones, come and drink; ye hungry ones, come and eat. Yea, this is the proclamation of the gospel to-day, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." I do trust there may be encouragement in this to some of you. I pray my Master make you feel it. If he be angry with those who keep you back, then he must be willing to receive you, glad to receive you; and if you come to him he will in no wise cast you out. May the Lord add his blessing on these words for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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An Appeal to Children of Godly Parents

“My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”—Proverbs 6:20-23.

You have here before you the advice of King Solomon, rightly reckoned to be one of the wisest of men; and verily he must be wise indeed who could excel in wisdom the son of David, the King of Israel. It is worth while to listen to what Solomon has to say; it must be good for the most intelligent young person to listen and to listen carefully to what so experienced a man as Solomon has to say to young men. But I must remind you that a greater than Solomon is here, for the Spirit of God inspired the Proverbs. They are not merely jewels from earthly mines, but they are also precious treasures from the heavenly hills; so that the advice we have here is not only the counsel of a wise man, but the advice of that Incarnate Wisdom who speaks to us out of the Word of God. Would you become the sons of wisdom? Come and sit at the feet of Solomon. Would you become spiritually wise? Come and hear what the Spirit of God has to say by the mouth of the wise man.

In considering this subject I am going first of all to show you that true godliness, of which the wise man here speaks, comes to many of us recommended by parental example: “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.” But in addition to that true religion comes to us commended by practical uses, by its beneficial effect upon our lives: “When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”

I. Now in the first place I want to show you that true religion comes to

many of us recommended by parental example.

Unhappily it is not so with all of you. There are some who had an evil example in their childhood, and who never learnt anything that was good from their parents. I adore the sovereignty of divine grace that there are among us tonight many who are the first in their families that ever made a profession of faith in Christ. They were born and brought up in the midst of everything that was opposed to godliness; yet here they are, they can themselves hardly tell you how, brought out from the world as Abraham was brought from Ur of the Chaldees. The Lord in his grace has taken one of a city, and two of a family, and brought them to Zion. You, dear friends, have special cause for thankfulness; but it should be a note to be entered in your diary that your children shall not be subjected to the same disadvantages as you yourselves suffered. Since the Lord has looked in love upon you, let your households be holiness to the Lord, and so bring up your children that they shall have every advantage that religious training can give, and every opportunity to serve the living God.

But there are many among us, I believe the larger proportion of those gathered here, who have had the immense privilege of godly training. Now, to my mind it seems that a father's experience is the best evidence that a young man can have of the truth of anything. My father would not say that which was false anywhere to anyone; but I am sure that he would not say it to his son; and if after serving God for fifty years he has found religion to be a failure, even if he had not the courage to communicate it to the whole world, I feel persuaded that he would have whispered in my ear, "My son, I have misled you. I was mistaken, and I have found it out." But when I saw the old man the other day he had no such information to convey to me. Our conversation was concerning the faithfulness of God; and he delights to tell of the faithfulness of God to him and to his father, my dear grandfather, who has now gone up above. How often have they told me that in a long lifetime of testing and proving the promises, they have found them all true, and they could say in the language of the hymn

—

“‘Tis religion that can give

Sweetest pleasures while we live;

‘Tis religion must supply

Solid comfort when we die.”

As for myself, if I had found out that I was mistaken, I should not have been so foolish as to rejoice that my sons should follow the same way of life, and should addict themselves with all their might to preaching the same truth that I delight to proclaim. Dear son, if thou hast a godly father believe that the religion upon which he has fixed his faith is true. He tells thee that it is so; he is, at any rate, a sincere and honest witness to thee; I beseech thee therefore, forsake not thy father’s God.

Then I think that one of the most tender bonds that can ever bind man or woman is the affection of a mother. Many would perhaps break away from the law of the father; but the love of the mother, who among us can break away from that? So next, a mother’s affection is the best of arguments. You remember how she prayed for you. Among your earliest recollections is that of her taking you between her knees and teaching you to say,—

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,

Look upon a little child.”

Perhaps you have tried to disbelieve, but your mother’s firm faith prevents it. I have heard of one who said that he could easily have been an infidel if it had not been for his mother’s life and his mother’s death. Yes, these are hard arguments to get over, and I trust that you will not get over them. You remember well her quiet patience in the house when there was much that might have ruffled her. You remember her gentleness with you when you were going a little wild. You hardly know perhaps, how you cut her to the heart, how her nights were sleepless because her boy did not love his mother’s God. I do charge you by the love you bear her, if you have received any impressions that are good,

cherish them, and cast them not aside. Or if you have received no such impressions, yet at least let the sincerity of your mother, for whom it was impossible to have been untrue,— let the deep affection of your mother who could not and would not betray you into a lie,—persuade you that there is truth in this religion which now, perhaps, some of your companions are trying to teach you to deride. “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”

I think that to any young man, or any young woman either, who has had a godly father and mother, the best way of life that they can mark out for themselves is to follow the road in which their father’s and mother’s principle would conduct them. Of course we make great advances on the old folks, do we not? The young men are wonderfully bright and intelligent, and the old people are a good deal behind them. Yes, yes; that is the way we talk before our beards have grown. Possibly when we have more sense we shall not be quite so conceited of it. At any rate, I, who am not very old, and who dare not any longer call myself young, venture to say that for myself I desire nothing so much as to continue the traditions of my household. I wish to find no course but that which shall run parallel with that of those who have gone before me. And I think dear friends, that you who have seen the holy and happy lives of Christian ancestors will be wise to pause a good deal before you begin to make a deviation, either to the right or to the left, from the course of those godly ones. I do not believe that he begins life in a way which God is likely to bless, and which he himself in the long run will judge to be wise, who begins with the notion that he shall upset everything; that all that belonged to his godly family shall be cast to the winds. I do not seek to have heirlooms of gold or silver; but though I die a thousand deaths I can never give up my father’s God, my grandsire’s God, and his father’s God, and his father’s God. I must hold this to be the chief possession that I have; and I pray young men and women to think the same. Do not stain the glorious traditions of noble lives that have been handed down to you; do not disgrace your father’s shield, bespatter not the escutcheons of your honored predecessors by any sins and transgressions on your part. God help you to feel that the best way of leading a noble life will be to do as they did who trained you in God’s fear!

Solomon tells us to do two things with the teachings which we have learned of our parents. First he says, "Bind them continually upon thine heart," for they are worthy of loving adherence. Show that you love these things by binding them upon your heart. The heart is the vital point; let godliness lie there, love the things of God. If we could take young men and women and make them professedly religious without their truly loving godliness, that would be simply to make them hypocrites, which is not what we desire. We do not want you to say that you believe what you do not believe, or that you rejoice in what you do not rejoice in. But our prayer—and oh that it might be your prayer too!—is that you may be helped to bind these things about your heart. They are worth living for, they are worth dying for, they are worth more than all the world besides; the immortal principles of the divine life which comes from the death of Christ. "Bind them continually upon thine heart."

And then Solomon, because he would not have us keep these things secret as if we were ashamed of them, adds, "and tie them about thy neck," for they are worthy of boldest display. Did you ever see my Lord Mayor wearing his chain of office? He is not at all ashamed to wear it. And the sheriffs with their brooches; I have a lively recollection of the enormous size to which those ornaments attain; and they take care to wear them too. Now then, you who have any love to God, tie your religion about your neck. Do not be ashamed of it, put it on as an ornament, wear it as the mayor does his chain. When you go into company never be ashamed to say that you are a Christian; and if there is any company where you cannot go as a Christian, well, do not go there at all. Say to yourself, "I will not be where I could not introduce my Master; I will not go where he could not go with me." You will find that resolve to be a great help to you in the choice of where you will go and where you will not go; therefore bind it upon your heart, tie it about your neck. God help you to do this and so to follow those godly ones who have gone before you!

I hope that I am not weak in wishing that some here may be touched by affection to their parents. I have had very sorrowful sights sometimes in the course of my ministry. A dear father, an honest, upright, godly man, is perhaps present; but he will not mind my saying what lines of grief I saw upon his face when he came to say to me, "Oh, sir, my boy is in prison!" I

am sure that if his boy could have seen his father's face as I saw it, it would have been worse than prison to him. I have known young men who have come to this Tabernacle with their parents—nice boys too, they were — and they have gone into situations in the city where they have been tempted to steal, and they have yielded to the tempter and they have lost their character. Sometimes the deficiency has been met, and they have been rescued from a criminal's career; but alas, sometimes they have fallen into the hands of a wicked woman, and then woe betide them! Occasionally it has seemed to be sheer wantonness and wickedness that has made them act unrighteously. I wish I could fetch those young men— I do not suppose that they are here to-night—and let them see not merely the misery they will bring upon themselves, but show them their mother at home when news came that John had lost his position because he had been acting dishonestly, or give them a glimpse of the father's face when the evil tidings reached him. The poor man stood aghast; he said "There was never a stain upon the character of any of my family before." If the earth had opened under the godly man's feet, or if the good mother could have gone down straight into the grave, they would have preferred it to the lifelong tribulation which has come upon them. Therefore I charge you, young man, or young woman, do not kill the parents who gave you life, do not disgrace those who brought you up; but I pray you, instead thereof, seek the God of your father and the God of your mother, and give yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and live wholly to him.

II. Now I must turn to my second point, which is that true religion comes to us commended by practical uses. This is a less sentimental argument than the one I have been pleading; but to many, vital godliness appeals because of its immense utility in the actual everyday life of men.

Solomon tells us first that true godliness serves us for instruction: "For the commandment is a lamp." If thou wouldst know all that thou oughtest to know, read this Book. If thou wouldst know in thy heart that which shall be for thy present and eternal good, love this Book, believe the truth it teaches and obey it, "for the commandment is a lamp."

Next, true religion serves us for direction: "and the law is light." If we want to know what we should do, we cannot do better than yield ourselves up to the guidance of the Divine Spirit and take this Word as

our map, for—

“Tis like the sun, a heavenly light,

That guides us all the day;

And through the dangers of the night,

A lamp to lead our way.”

Solomon also tells us that true religion guides us under all circumstances. He says in the 22nd verse that when we are active, there is nothing like true godliness to help us: “When thou goest, it shall lead thee.” He tells us that when we are resting there is nothing better than this for our preservation: “When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee.” And when we are just waking, there is nothing better than this with which to delight the mind: “When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.” I do not intend to expand those three thoughts except just to say this, when thou art busiest, thy religion shall be thy best help. When thy hands are full of toil, and thy head is full of thought, nothing can do thee more service than to have a God to go to, a Savior to trust in, a heaven to look forward to. And when thou goest to thy bed to sleep or to be sick, thou canst have nothing better to smooth thy pillow and to give thee rest than to know that thou art forgiven through the precious blood of Christ, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Often ere I fall asleep, I say to myself those words of Watts,—

“Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,

I lay me down to rest,

As in the embraces of my God,

Or on my Savior’s breast;”

and there is no more delicious sleep in the world than that sleep which even in dreams keeps near to Christ. Some of us know what it is, even in those wanderings of our mind in sleep, not to quit the holy ground of communion with our Lord. It is not always so, but it is sometimes so; and even then when the mind has lost power to control its thoughts, even the thoughts seem to dance like Miriam to the praise of God. Oh, happy men, whose religion is their protection even in their sleep! And then Solomon says, "when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." This Bible is a wonderful talking book; there is a great mass of blessed talk in this precious volume. It has told me a great many of my faults; it would tell you yours if you would let it. It has told me much to comfort me; and it has much to tell you if you will but incline your ear to it. It is a book that is wonderfully communicative; it knows all about you, all the ins and outs of where you are and where you ought to be, it can tell you everything. The best communion that a man can have is when he commences with God in prayer and the reading of the Word: "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee."

I have hurried over that point because I want to say something else to you. Dear friends, those of you who are unconverted, our great anxiety is that you should know the Lord at once; and our reason is this, that it will prepare you for the world to come. Whatever that world may be, full of vast mysteries, yet no man is so prepared to launch upon the unknown sea as the one who is reconciled to God, who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, who trusts him, and rejoices in the pardon of his sin through the great atoning sacrifice, and experiences in his own heart the marvelous change which has made him a new creature in Christ Jesus. The great reason, I say again, why we wish to have our dear friends converted, is that they may be ready for the world to come. You will soon die, all of you: I think it was last Sunday evening that there sat in that pew just over there, a friend who was generally here in the morning and evening; but on Wednesday he died quite suddenly. He appeared to be in good health, but he died at the railway station, away from home. That seat where he used to sit ought to have a warning voice to all of us, crying aloud, "Prepare to meet thy God." It might have been myself; it might have been any of these friends around me on the platform; it might have been any of you in the congregation. Who can tell who will go this week? Probably

some one or other of us (our number is so large) will be taken away ere another Sabbath bell shall be heard.

I think that is a very good reason for seeking the Lord, that you may be prepared for eternity. One day this week I saw an aged friend who cannot live much longer; she is eighty-six, and her faculties are failing her; but she said to me, "I have no fear, I have no fear of death; I am on the Rock, I am on the Rock Christ Jesus. I know whom I have believed, and I know where I am going." It was delightful to hear the aged saint speak like that; and we are always hearing such talk from our dear friends when they are going home, they never seem to have any doubts. I have known some who, while they were well, had many doubts; but when they came to die they seemed to have none at all, but were joyously confident in Christ.

But there is another reason why we want our friends converted, and that is that they may be prepared for this life. I do not know what kind of life you have set before yourself. Perhaps I may be addressing some young men who are going to the University, and they hope to have lives consecrated to learning and crowned with honor. Possibly some here have no prospect but that of working hard to earn their bread with the sweat of their brow; some have begun to lay bricks, or to drive the plane, or to wield the pen. There are all sorts of ways of mortal life; but there is no better provision and preparation for any kind of life on earth than to know the Lord, and to have a new heart and a right spirit. He that rules millions of men will do it better with the grace of God in his heart; and he that had to be a slave would be the happier in his lot for having the grace of God in his heart. You that are old and you that are young, you that are masters and you that are servants, true religion cannot disqualify you for playing your part here in the great drama of life; but the best preparation for that part, if it is a part that ought to be played, is to know the Lord and feel the power of divine grace upon your soul.

Let me just show you how this is the case. The man who lives before God, who calls God his Father, and feels the Spirit of God working within him a hatred of sin and a love of righteousness, he is the man who will be conscientious in the discharge of his duties; and you know, that is the kind of man, and the kind of woman, too, that we want nowadays. We have so many people who want looking after; if you give them anything to

do they will do it quickly enough if you stand and look on; but the moment you turn your back they will do it as slovenly, or as slowly, and as badly as can be. They are eye-servants only. If you were to advertise for an eye servant I do not suppose anybody would come to you; yet they might come in shoals for there are plenty of them about. Well now, a truly Christian man, a man who is really converted, sees that he serves God in doing his duty to his fellow men. "Thou God seest me," is the power that ever influences him; and he desires to be conscientious in the discharge of his duties whatever those duties may be. I once told you the story of the servant girl who said that she hoped she was converted. Her minister asked her this question, "What evidence can you give of your conversion?" She gave this among a great many other proofs, but it was not a bad one; she said, "Now, sir, I always sweep under the mats." It was a small matter, but if you carry out in daily life that principle of sweeping under the mats, that is the kind of thing we want. Many people have a little corner where they stow away all the fluff and the dust, and the room looks as if it was nicely swept, but it is not. There is a way of doing everything so that nothing is really done, but that is not the case where there is grace in the heart. Grace in the heart makes a man feel that he would wish to live wholly to God, and serve God in serving man. If you get that grace you will have a grand preparation for life as well as for death.

The next thing is that a man who has a new heart has imparted to him a purity which preserves him in the midst of temptation. Oh, this dreadful city of London! I wonder that God endures the filth of it. I frequently converse with good young men who come up from the country to their first situation in London, and the first week they live in London is a revelation to them which makes their hair almost stand on end. They see what they never dreamt of. Well now, you young fellows who have just come to London, perhaps this is your first Sunday, give yourselves to the Lord at once I pray you. Yield yourselves to Jesus Christ tonight, for another week in London may be your damnation. Only a week in London may have led you into acts of impurity that shall ruin you forever. Before you have gone into those things devote yourselves to God and to his Christ, that with pure hearts and with right spirits you may be preserved from "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that

wasteth at noonday,” in this terribly wicked city. There is no hope for you young men and young women in this great world of wickedness, unless your hearts are right towards God. If you go in thoroughly to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, he will keep and preserve you even to the end; but if you do not give yourselves to the Lord, whatever good resolutions you may have formed, you are doomed—I am sure you are—to be carried away with the torrents of iniquity that run down our streets today. Purity of heart then, which comes from faith in Christ, is a splendid preparation for life.

So also is truthfulness of speech. Oh, what a wretched thing it is when people will tell lies! Now the heart that is purified by the grace of God hates the thought of a lie. The man speaks the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and he is the man who shall pass through life unscathed, and shall be honored, and in the long run successful. He may have to suffer for a time through his truthfulness, but in the end nothing shall clear a way for him so well as being true in thought and word and deed.

If you love the Lord with all your heart you will also learn honesty in dealing; and that is a grand help in life. I know that the trickster does sometimes seem to succeed for a time; but what is his success? It is a success which is only another name for ruin. Oh, dear sirs, if all men could be made honest, how much more of happiness there would be in the world! And the way to be upright among men is to be sincere towards God, and to have the Spirit of God dwelling within you.

Again, true religion is of this value, that it comforts a man under great troubles. You do not expect many troubles my young friend, but you will have them. You expect that you will be married and then your troubles will be over; some say that then they begin. I do not endorse that statement; but I am sure that they are not over, for there is another set of trials that begin then. But you are going to get out of your apprenticeship and then it will be all right; will it? Journeymen do not always find it so. But you do not mean always to be a journeyman; you are going to be a little master. Ask the masters whether everything is pleasant with them in these times. If you want to escape trouble altogether you had better go up in a balloon; and then I am sure that you would be in trouble for fear of

going up too high or coming down too fast. But troubles will come; and what is there that can preserve a man in the midst of trouble like feeling that things are safe in his Father's hands? If you can say, "I am his child, and all things are working together for my good. I have committed myself entirely into the hands of him who cannot err, and will never do me an unkindness," why, sir, you have on a breastplate which the darts of care cannot pierce, you are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and you may tread on the briars of the wilderness with an unwounded foot.

True religion will also build up in you firmness of character, and that is another quality that I want to see in our young people nowadays. We have some splendid men in this place, and some splendid women too. I should not be afraid if the devil himself were to preach here that he would pervert them from the faith; and if all the new heresies that can rise were to be proclaimed in their presence, they know too well what the truth is ever to be led astray. But on the other hand, we have a number of people who are led by their ears. If I pull their ear one way, they come after me; if they happen to go somewhere else and somebody pulls their ear the other way, they go after him. There are lots of people who never do their own thinking, but put it out as they put out their washing; they do not think of doing it at home. Well now, these people are just like the chaff on the threshing-floor, and when the wind begins to blow, away they go. Do not be like that. Dear young sons and daughters of the church-members here, know the Lord. May he reveal himself to you at once; and when you do know him, and get a grip of the gospel, bind it to your heart and tie it about your neck, and say "Yes, I am going to follow in the footsteps of those I love, and especially in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,

I'll follow where he goes."

God help you to do it! But first believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; trust yourselves wholly to him and he will give you grace to stand fast even to the end.

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The Sons of God

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. - Romans 8:16-17

My brethren, what a contrast there is between the present and future estate of the child of God! The believer is here the brother to the worm; in heaven he shall be next of kin to the angels. Here he is covered with the sweat and dust which he acquired by Adam's fall; there his brow shall be bright with the immortality which is conferred upon him by the resurrection of Christ. Here the heir of heaven is unknown; he is in disguise, full often clad in the habiliments of poverty, but there his princely character shall be discerned and acknowledged, he shall be waited upon by angels, and shall share in the admiration which the universe shall pour upon the glorified Redeemer. Well said our poet just now,

"It doth not yet appear, how great we must be made."

I think I need not remind you of your condition here below; you are too conversant with it, being hourly fretted with troubles, vexed with your own infirmities, with the temptations of Satan, and with all the allurements of this world. You are quite conscious that this is not your rest. There are too many thorns in your nest, to permit you to hope for an abiding city below the skies. I say, it is utterly needless for me to refresh your memories about your present condition; but I feel it will be a good and profitable work if I remind you that there are high privileges of which you are possessors even now; there are divine joys which even this day

you may taste. The wilderness has its manna; the desert is gladdened with water from the rock. God hath not forsaken us; the tokens of his goodness are with us, and we may rejoice in full many a gracious boon which is ours this very day. I shall direct your joyous attention to one precious jewel in your treasury, namely, your adoption into the family of God.

There are four things of which I shall speak this morning. First, *a special privilege*; second, *a special proof of it*, the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit; then thirdly, *a special privilege*, that of heirship; and fourthly, the practical part of the sermon and the conclusion shall be *a special manner of life demanded of such persons*.

I. First, then, my brethren, a SPECIAL PRIVILEGE mentioned in the text. "*We are the children of God.*" And here I am met upon the very threshold by the opposition of certain modern theologians, who hold that sonship is not the special and peculiar privilege of believers. The newly discovered negative theology, which, I fear, has done some damage to the Baptist denomination, and a very large amount of injury to the Independent body - the new heresy is to a large degree, founded upon the fiction of the Universal Fatherhood of God. The old divines, the Puritans, the Reformers, are now in these last days, to be superseded by men whose teaching flatly contradicts all that we have received of our forefathers. Our old ministers have all represented God as being *to his people* a father, to the rest of the world a judge. This is styled by our new philosophers as old cumbersome scheme of theology, and it is proposed that it be swept away - a proposition which will never be carried out, while the earth remaineth, or while God endureth. But, at any rate, certain knight-errants have set themselves to do battle with windmills, and really believe that they shall actually destroy from the face of the earth that which is a fundamental and abiding distinction, without which the Scriptures are not to be understood. We are told by modern false prophets, that God in everything acts to all men as a father, even when he cast them into the lake of fire, and send upon them all the plagues that are written in his book. All these terrible things in righteousness, the awful proofs of holy vengeance in the judge of all the earth, and successfully neutralized in their arousing effect, by being quietly written

among the loving acts and words of the Universal Father. It is dreamed that this is an age when men do not need to be thundered at; when everybody is become so tender-hearted that there is no need for the sword to be held "in terrorum" over mortals; but that everything is to be conducted now in a new and refined manner; God the Universal Father, and all men universal sons. Now I must confess there is something very pretty about this theory, something so fascinating that I do not wonder that some of the ablest minds have been wooed and won by it. I, for my part, take only one objection to it, which is that it is perfectly untrue and utterly unfounded, having not the lightest shadow of a pretence of being proved by the Word of God. Scripture everywhere represents the chosen people of the Lord, under their visible character of believers, penitents, and spiritual men, as being "the children of God," and to none but such is that holy title given. It speaks of the regenerate, of a special class me as having a claim to be God's children. Now, as there is nothing like Scripture, let me read you a few texts, Romans viii. 14. - "As many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Surely no one is so daring as to say, that all men are led by the Spirit of God; yet may it readily enough be inferred from our text, that those who are not led by the Spirit of God are not the sons of God, but that they and they alone who are led, guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, are the sons of God. A passage from Galatians iii. 26. - "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," declaring as it seems to me, and rightly enough, that all believers, all who have faith in Christ are the children of God, and that they become actually and manifestly so by faith in Christ Jesus, and implying that those who have no faith in Christ Jesus, are not God's sons, and that any pretence which they could make to that relationship would be but arrogance and presumption. And hear ye this, John i. 12. - "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." How could they have been the sons of God before, for "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born *not of blood*," - then they were not make the sons of God by mere creation - "nor of the will of the flesh," that is to say, not by any efforts of their own "but of God." If any text can be more conclusive than this against universal sonship, I must confess I know of none, and unless these words mean nothing at all, they do mean just this, that believers are the sons of God and none besides. But listen to another

word of the Lord in the first epistle of John, iii. 1-. - "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth no righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Here are two sorts of children, therefore all are not the children of God. Can it be supposed that those who are the children of the devil are nevertheless the children of God? I must confess my reason revolts against such a supposition, and though I think I might exercise a little imagination, yet I could not make my imagination sufficiently an acrobat to conceive of a man being at the same time a child of the devil, and yet a real child of God. Hear another, 2 Corinthians, vi. 17. - "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Is not that "coming out" necessary to sonship, and were they his sons, were they his daughters, had they any claim or right to call him Father, until they came out from the midst of a wicked world, and were separate? If so, why doth God promise them what they have already. But again, Matthew v. 9. - "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." A fine title indeed if it belongs to every man! Where is the blessedness of the title, for they might be lovers of strife, and yet according to modern theologians they might still be the sons of God. Let us mark a yet more positive passage, Romans ix. 8. - "The children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." What then is to be said to this, "These are not the children of God." If any man will contradict that flatly - well, be it so. I have no argument with which to convince the man who denies so strong and clear a witness. Listen to the divine apostle John, where in one of his epistles he is carried away in rhapsody of devout admiration, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." And then he goes on giving a description of those who are the sons of God, who could not mean any but those who by a living faith in Christ Jesus, have cast their souls once for all on him. As far as I can guess, the main text on which these people build the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood, is that quotation which the apostle Paul took from a heathen poet - "As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." The apostle endorses that sentiment by quoting it, and against that endorsement we can of course have no contention; but the word there used for "offspring," expresses no idea of Fatherhood

in the majestic sense of the term, it is a word which might be used as appropriately for the young of animals, the young of any other creature, it has not about it the human sympathies which belong to a father and a son. I know, besides this, nothing which could support this new theory. Possibly they fancy that creation is a paternal act, that all created things are sons. This is too absurd to need an answer, for if so, horses and cows, rats and mice, snakes and flies are children of God, for they are surely creatures as well as we. Taking away this corner-stone, this fancy theory tumbles to the ground, and that theory which seemed to be as tall as Babel, and threatened to make as much confusion, may right soon be demolished, if you will batter it with the Word of God. The fact is, brethren, that the relationship of a son of God belongs only to those who are "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of the Father's will:" Ephesians i. 5. The more you search the Bible, the more sure will you be that sonship is the special privilege of the chosen people of God and of none beside.

Having thus, as far as I can, established my point, that the privilege of our text is a special one, let me dwell upon it for a moment and remark that, as a special one, it is an act of pure unmitigable grace. No man has any *right* to be a son of God. If we are born into his family it is a miracle of mercy. It is one of the ever-blessed exhibitions of the infinite love of God which without any cause in us, has set itself upon us. If thou art this day an heir of heaven, remember, man, thou wast once the slave of hell. Once thou didst wallow in the mire, and if thou shouldst adopt a swine to be thy child, thou couldst not then have performed an act of greater compassion than when God adopted thee. And if an angel could exalt a gnat to equal dignity with himself, yet would not the boon be such-an-one as that which God hath conferred on thee. He hath taken thee from the dunghill, and he hath set thee among princes. Thou hast lain among the pots, but he hath made thee as a dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Remember that this is grace, and parentage, - look back to the hole of the pit whence thou art digged, and the miry clay whence thou wast drawn. Boast not, if thou art in the true olive. Thou art not there, because of thine original, thou art a scion from an evil tree, and the Divine Spirit hath changed thy nature, for thou wast once nothing but a branch of the vine of Gomorrah. Ever let humility bow

thee to the very earth while thine adoption lifts thee up to the third heaven.

Consider again, I pray you, what a dignity God hath conferred upon you - even upon *you* in making you his son. The tall archangel before the throne is not called God's Son, he is one of the most favoured of his servants, but not his child. I tell thee, thou poor brother in Christ, there is a dignity about thee that even angels may well envy. Thou in thy poverty art as a sparkling jewel in the darkness of the mine. Thou in the midst of thy sickness and infirmity art girt about with robes of glory, which make the spirits in heaven look down upon the earth with awe. Thou movest about this world as a prince among the crowd. The blood of heaven runs in thy veins; thou art one of the blood royal of eternity - a son of God, descendant of the King of kings. Speak of pedigrees, the glories of heraldry - thou hast more than heraldry could ever give thee, or all the pomp of ancestry could ever bestow.

II. And now I press forward to notice that in order that we may know whether we are partakers of this high - this royal relationship of children of God, the text furnishes us with a SPECIAL PROOF - "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. You will notice here, my beloved, that there are two witnesses in court - two who are ready to prove our filiation to the eternal God. The first witness is *our spirit*; the second witness is *The Spirit*, the eternal Spirit of God, who beareth witness with our spirit. It is as if a poor man were called into court to prove his right to some piece of land which was disputed. He standeth up and beareth his own faithful testimony; but some great one of the land - some nobleman who lives near - rises, stands in the witness box, and confirms his witness. So is it with our text. The plain, simple spirit of the humble-minded Christian cries, "I am God's child." The glorious Spirit, one with God, attests the truth of the testimony, and beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Let us notice in the first place, how it is that *our spirit* is able to bear witness; and as this is a matter of experience, I can only appeal to those who are the true children of God; for no others are competent to give testimony. Our spirit bears witness that we are the children of God, when

it feels a filial love to God. When bowing before his throne we can boldly say "Abba Father." - "Thou art my father," then our spirit concludes that we are sons, for thus it argues, "I feel to thee as a child feeleth to its parent, and it could not be that I should have the feeling of a son if I had not the rights of a son - if I were not a child thou wouldst never have given to me that filial affection which no dares to call thee "Father."

Sometimes, too, the spirit feels that God is its Father not only by love but by trust. The rod has been upon our back and we have smarted very sore, but in the darkest hour we have been able to say, "The time is in my Father's hands; I cannot murmur; I would not repine; I feel it is but right that I should suffer, otherwise my Father would never have made me suffer." He surely doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of man for nought; and when in these dark gloomy times we have looked up to a Father's face, and have said, "Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee; thy blows shall not drive thee from me; they shall but make me say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me, and purge me from my sin."" Then our spirit beareth witness that we are the children of God.

And are there not times with you, my dear friends, when your hearts feel that they would be emptied and void, unless God were in them. You have perhaps received an increase to your wealth, and after the first flush of pleasure which was but natural, you have said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; this is not my joy." You have had many mercies in your family, but you have felt that in them all there was a lack of something which could satisfy your heart, and you have felt that that something was God. My God, thou art my all in all - the circle where my passions move, the centre of my soul. Now these longings - these pantings for something more than this world can give you - were but the evidences of a child-like spirit, which was panting after its Father's presence. You feel you must have your Father, or else the gifts of his providence are nothing to you. That is, *your* spirit beareth witness that you are the child of God. But there are times when the heir of heaven is as sure that he is God's child as he is sure that he is his own father's son. No doubt can make him question. The evil one may whisper, "*If* thou be the son of God." But he says, "Get thee hence, Satan, I know I am the son of God." A man might as well try to dispute him out of the fact of his existence as out of that equally sure

fact that he has been born again, and that by gracious adoption he has been taken into the family of God. This is our witnessing that we are born of God.

But the text, you see, furnishes us with a higher witness than this. God that cannot lie, in the person of the Holy Ghost, graciously condescendeth to say "Amen" to the testimony of our conscience. And whereas our experience sometimes leads our spirit to conclude that we are born of God, there are happy times when the eternal Spirit from off the throne, descends and fills our heart, and then we have the two witnesses bearing witness with each other, that we are children of God. Perhaps you ask me, how is this. I was reading a passage by Dr. Chalmers the other day, in which he says, that his own experience did not lead him to believe that the Holy Spirit ever gave any witness of our being the children of God, apart from the written Word of God, and his ordinary workings in our hearts. Now, I am not sure that the doctor is perfectly right. As far as his own experience went I dare say he was right, but there may be some far inferior to the doctor in genius, who nevertheless were superior in nearness of fellowship with God, and who could therefore go a little farther than the eloquent divine. Now, I do believe with him this morning, that the chief witness of God the Holy Spirit lies in this - the Holy Spirit has written this book which contains an account of what a Christian should be, and of the feelings which believers in Christ must have. I have certain experiences and feelings; turning to the Word, I find similar experiences and feelings recorded; and so I prove that I am right, and the Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am born of God. Suppose you have been enabled to believe in Jesus Christ for your salvation; that faith has produced love to Christ; that love to Christ has led you to work for Christ; you come to the Bible, and you find that this was just the very thing which was felt by early believers; and then you say, "Good Lord, I am thy son, because what I feel is what thou has said by the lips of thy servant must be felt by those who are thy children." So the Spirit confirms the witness of my spirit that I am born of God.

But again, everything that is good in a Christian you know to be the work of God the Holy Ghost. When at any time then the Holy Spirit comforts you - sheds a sweet calm over your disturbed spirit; when at any period

he instructs you, opens to you a mystery you did not understand before; when at some special period he inspires you with an unwonted affection, an unusual faith in Christ; when you experience a hatred of sin, a faith in Jesus, a death to the world, and a life to God, these are the works of the Spirit. Now the Spirit never did work effectually in any but the children of God; and inasmuch as the Spirit works in you, he doth by that very working give his own infallible testimony to the fact that you are a child of God. If you had not been a child he would have left you where you were in your natural state; but inasmuch as he hath wrought in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure, he that put his stamp on you as being one of the family of the Most High. But I think must go a little further than this. I do believe that there is a supernatural way in which apart from means, the Spirit of God communicates with the spirit of man. My own little experience leads me to believe that apart from the Word of God, there are immediate dealings with the conscience and soul of man by the Holy Spirit, without any instrumentality, without even the agency of the truth. I believe that the Spirit of God sometimes comes into a mysterious and marvellous contact with the spirit of man, and that at times the Spirit speaketh in the heart of man by a voice not audible to the ear, but perfectly audible to the spirit which is the subject of it. he assures and consoles directly, by coming into immediate contact with the heart. It becomes our business then to take the Spirit's witness through his Word, and through his works, but I would seek to have immediate, actual, undivided fellowship with the Holy Ghost, who by his divine Spirit, should work in my spirit and convince me that I am a child of God.

Now let me ask my congregation, do any of you know that you are God's children? Say not, "In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, and a child of God." There are not many in England, I think, who believe those words. There may be a few who do, but it has never been my misfortune to meet with them. Every one knows that it is a disgrace to a matchless prayer-book, that such words should be permitted to stand there-words so infamously untrue that by their gross untruthfulness they cease to have the destructive effect which more cunning language might have produced, because the conscience of man revolts against the idea that the sprinkling of drops of water upon the infants's brow can ever make it a member of Christ, and a child of God. But I ask you, does your

spirit say to-day "I am God's child." Do you feel the longings, the loves, the confidences of a child? If not, tremble, for there are but two vast families in this world. They are the family of God, and the family of Satan - their character how different - their end, how strangely divided! But let me say again to thee, hast thou ever felt that the Holy Ghost has borne witness with thy spirit in his word, and in his work, in thee; and in that secret whisper has he ever said to thee, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." I conjure thee, give no sleep to thine eyes, no slumber to thine eyelids, till by this divine mysterious agency, thou art new made, new born, and new begotten, and so admitted not only nominally but really into the living family of the living God.

III. I shall now pass on to my third point. If it be settled in our mind by the true witness - the spirit within us, and the Spirit of God, - that we are God's children, what a NOBLE PRIVILEGE now appears to our view. "HEIRS OF GOD, and joint heirs with Christ." It does not always follow in human reasoning "if children, then heirs," because in our families but one is the heir. There is but one that can claim the heir's rights, and the heir's title. It is not so in the family of God. Man as a necessary piece of political policy, may give to the heir that which surely he can have not more real right to in the sight of God, than the rest of the family - may give him all the inheritance, while his brethren, equally true born, may go without; but it is not so in the family of God. All God's children are heirs, however numerous the family, and he that shall be born of God last, shall be as much his heir as he who was born first. Abel, the protomartyr, entering alone into heaven, shall not have a more secure title to the inheritance than he who, last of woman born, shall trust in Christ, and then ascend into his glory. In heaven's logic it is true, "if children, then heirs."

And see what it is that we are heirs of. The apostle opens with the grandest part of the inheritance first - *heirs of God* - heirs not of God's gifts, and God's works, but heirs of God himself. It was said of king Cyrus, that he was a prince of so amiable a disposition, that when at any time he sat down at meat, if there were aught that pleased his appetite, he would order it to be taken away and given to his friends with this message, "King Cyrus found that this food pleased his palate, and he thought his friend

should feed upon that which he enjoyed himself." This was thought to be a singular instance of his affability, and his kindness to his courtiers. But our God doeth more than this, he doth not send merely bread from his table, as in the day when man did eat angel's food; he doth not give us merely to drink the wines on the lees well refined - the rich wines of heaven - but he gives himself *himself* to us. And the believer is to be the heir, I say, not merely of God's works, not simply of God's gifts, but of God himself. Talk we of his omnipotence? - his Allmightiness is ours. Speak we of his omniscience? - all his wisdom is engaged in our behalf. Do we say that he is love? - that love belongs to us. Can we glory that he is full of immutability, and changes not? - that eternal unchangeableness is engaged for the defence of the people of God. All the attributes of divinity are the property of God's children - their inheritance entailed upon them. Nay, he himself is ours. Oh what riches! If we could say this morning, that all the stars belong to us; if we could turn the telescope to the most remote of the fixed stars, and then could say with the pride of possession, so natural to man, "That star, a thousand times bigger than the sun, is mine. I am the king of that inheritance, and without me doth not a dog move his tongue." If we could then sweep the telescope along the milky way, and see the millions upon millions of stars that lie clustered together there, and could cry, "All these are mine," yet these possessions were but a speck compared with that which is in the text. Heir of God! He to whom all these things are but as nothing, gives himself up to the inheritance of his people.

Note yet a little further concerning the special privilege of heirship, - we are *joint heirs with Christ*. That is, whatever Christ possesses, as heir of all things, belongs to us. Splendid must be the inheritance of Jesus Christ. Is he not very God of very God, Jehovah's only begotten Son, Most High and glorious, though he bowed himself to the grave and became the Servant of servants, yet God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

Oh! what angelic tongue shall hymn his glory? What fiery lips shall ever speak of his possessions, of his riches, - the unsearchable riches of God in Christ Jesus. But, beloved, all that belongs to Christ belongs to Christ's people. It is as when a man doth marry. His possessions shall be shared by his spouse; and when Christ took his Church unto himself he endowed

her with all his goods, both temporal and eternal. He gives to us his raiments, and thus we stand arrayed. His righteousness becomes our beauty. He gave to us his person, it has become our meat and our drink; we eat his flesh and drink his blood. He gave to us his inmost heart; he loved us even to the death. He gave to us his crown; he gave to us his throne; for "to him that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne, even as I have overcome, and have sat down with my Father upon his throne." He gave to us his heaven, for "where I am, there shall my people be." He gave to us the fulness of his joy, for "my joy shall be in you, that your joy may be full." I repeat it, there is nothing in the highest heaven which Christ has reserved unto himself, "for all things are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

I cannot stay longer on that point, except just to notice, that we must never quarrel with this divine arrangement. "Oh," say you, "we never shall." Stay, stay, brother; I have known you do so already, for when all that is Christ's belongs to you, do ye forget that Christ once had a cross, and that belongs to you? Christ once wore a thorny crown, and if you are to have all that he has, you must bear the thorny crown too? Have you forgotten that he had shame and spitting, the reproach, the rebuke of men, and that he conceived all those to be greater riches than all the treasures of this world? Come, I know as you look down the inventory, you are apt to look a little askance on that cross, and you think, "Well, the crown is glorious, but I love not the spittle, I care not to be despised and rejected of men." Oh! you are quarreling with this divine arrangement, you are beginning to differ with this blessed policy of God. Why, one would have thought you would rejoice to take your Master for better or for worse, and to be partaker with him, not only in his glories but in his sufferings. So it must be, "If so be that we suffer with him that we also may be glorified together." Is there a place into which your Master went that you would be ashamed to enter? If so, methinks your heart is not in a right state. Would you refuse to go with him to the garden of his agony? Believer, would you be ashamed to stand and be accused as he was, and have false witness born against you? And would you blush to sit side-by-side with him, and be made nothing of as he was? Oh, when you start aside at a little jest, let your conscience prick you, and say, "Am I not a joint heir with Christ, and am I about to quarrel with the legacy? Did he

not say, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world?" And oh, would you be ashamed to die for Christ; methinks, if you are what you should be, you will glory in tribulations also, and count it sweet to suffer for Christ. I know the world turns this into ridicule and says, "That the hypocrite loves persecution;" no, not the hypocrite, but the true believer; he feels that though the suffering must ever be painful, yet for Christ's sake, it becomes so glorious that the pain is all forgotten.

Come, believer, will you be partaker with Christ to-day in the battle, and then divide this spoil with him? Come, will you wade with him through the deep waters, and then at last climb up the topless hills with him? Are you prepared now to be despised and rejected of men that you may at last ascend up on high, leading captivity captive? The inheritance cannot be divided; if you will have the glory, you must have the shame. He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Come, men, put your face against all weathers; be ready to come up hill, with the snow blowing in your face, be ready to march on when the tempest howls, and the lightnings flash over head, and the snow becomes knee-deep; nay, be ready to go into the crevasse with him, and perish, if need be. Who quarrels with this sacred regulation? Certainly no true child of God; he would not have it altered, even if he might.

IV. And now I come to my last point, upon which briefly but I hope interestingly. The SPECIAL CONDUCT naturally expected from those who are partakers of the peculiar privileges of being the children of God. In the golden age of Rome, if a man were tempted to dishonesty, he would stand upright, look the tempter in the face, and say to him, "I am a Roman." He thought that a sufficient reason why he should neither lie nor cheat. It ought to be ten times more than sufficient answer to every temptation, for a man to be able to say, "I am a son of God; shall such a man as I yield to sin?" I have been astonished in looking through old Roman history at the wonderful prodigies of integrity and valour which were produced by idolatry, or rather, which were produced by patriotism, and that principle which ruled the Romans, namely, love of fame. And I say it this morning, it is a shameful thing that ever idolatry should be able to breed better men than some who profess Christianity. And I think I

may stand firmly while I argue here, that if a Roman, a worshipper of Jupiter or Saturn, became great or glorious, a Son of God ought to be nobler far. Look ye, sirs, at Brutus; he has established a republic, he has put down tyranny, he sits upon the judgment seat; his two sons are brought before him, they have been traitors to the commonwealth. What will the father do? He is a man of a loving heart and loves his sons, but there they stand. Will he execute justice as a judge, or will he prefer his family to his country? He covers his face for a moment with his hands, and then looking down at his sons, and finding that the testimony is complete against them, he says, "Lictors, do your work." They bare their backs, the rod scourgeth them. "Complete the sentence, lictors;" and their heads are smitten off in the father's presence. Stern justice swayed his spirit, and no other feeling could for a single moment make him turn aside. Christian men, do you feel this with regard to your sins. When you have been sitting on the judgment bench; there has been some favourite sin brought up, and you have, oh, let me blush to say it, you have wished to spare it, it was so near your heart, you have wished to let it live, whereas should you not as the son of God have said, "If my eye offend me, I will pluck it out and cast it from me, if my right hand offend me, I will cut it off, rather than I should in anything offend my God." Brutus slays his sons; but some Christians would spare their sins. Look again at that noble youth, Mutius Scaevola. He goes into the tent of King Pyrrhus with the intention to put him to death, because he is the enemy of his country; he slays the wrong man; Pyrrhus orders him to be taken captive. A pan of hot coals is blazing in the tent; Scaevola puts out his right hand and holds it; it crackles in the flame; the young man flinches not, though his fingers drop away. "There are 400 youths," says he, "in Rome as brave as I am, and that will bear fire as well; and tyrant," he says "you will surely die."" Yet here are Christian men, who, if they are a little sneered at, or snubbed, or get the cold shoulder for Christ's sake, are half ashamed of their profession, and would go and hide it. And if they are not like Peter - tempted to curse and swear to escape the blessed imputation - they would turn the conversation, that they might not suffer for Christ. Oh for 400 Scaevolias, 400 men who for Christ's sake would burn, not their right hands, but their bodies, if indeed Christ's name might be glorified, and sin might be stabbed to the heart. Or, read you that old legend of Curtius, the Roman knight. A great gulf had opened in the Forum, perhaps caused by

an earthquake, and the auspices had said that the chasm could never be filled up, except the most precious thing in Rome could be cast into it. Curtius puts on his helmet, and his armour, mounts his horse and leaps into the cleft, which is said to have filled at once, because courage, valour, and patriotism, were the best things in Rome. I wonder how many Christians there are who would leap like that into the cleft. Why, I see you, sirs, if there is a new and perilous work to be done for Christ, you like to be in the rear rank this time; if there were something honourable, so that you might ride on with your well caparisoned steeds in the midst of the dainty ranks ye would do it; but to leap into certain annihilation for Christ's sake - Oh! heroism, where is it fled - whither has it gone. Thou Church of God, surely it must survive in thee; for to whom should it more belong to die and sacrifice all, than to those who are the sons of God. Look ye again at Camillus. Camillus had been banished from Rome by false accusations. He was ill-treated, abused, and slandered, and went away to retirement. Suddenly the Goths, the old enemies of Rome, fell upon the city. They surrounded it; they were about to sack it, and Camillus was the only man who could deliver it. Some would have said within themselves "Let the caitiff nation be cut off. The city has turned me out; let it rue the day that it ever drove me away." But no, Camillus gathers together his body of followers, falls upon the Goths, routs them and enters in triumph into Rome though he was an exile. Oh Christian, this should ever be your spirit, only in a higher degree. When the Church rejects you, casts you out, annoys, despises you, still be ready to defend her, and when you have an ill name even in the lips of God's people, still stand up for the common cause of Zion, the city of our solemnities. Or look you at Cincinnatus. He is chosen Dictator, but as soon as ever his dictatorship is over he retires to his little farm of three acres, and goes to his plough, and when he is wanted to be absolute monarch of Rome he is found at his plough upon his three acres of land and his little cottage. He served his country, not for himself, but for his country's sake; and can it be that you will not be poor yet honest for Christ's sake! Will you descend to the tricks of trade to win money. Ah, then, the Roman eclipses the Christian. Will you not be satisfied to serve God though you lose by it; to stand up and be thought an arrant fool, because you will not learn the wisdom of this world; to be esteemed a mad fanatic, because you cannot swim with the current. Can you not do it? Can you not do it? Then again I

say to you, "Tell it not in Gath and publish it not in Askelon, then has a heathen eclipsed a Christian." May the sons of God be greater than the sons of Romulus. One other instance let me give you. You have heard of Regulus the Roman general; he was taken prisoner by Carthaginians, who anxiously wished for peace. They told him to go home to Rome, and see if he could not make peace. But his reply was, "No, I trust they will always be at war with you, for Carthage must be destroyed if Rome is to prosper." They compelled him, however, to go, exacting from him this promise, that if the Romans did not make peace he would come back, and if he came back they would put him to death in the most horrid manner that ever cruelty could invent. Regulus returns to Rome; he stands up in the senate and conjures them never to make peace in Carthage, but of his wife and children, and tells them that he is going back to Carthage, and of course they tell him that he need not keep faith with an enemy. I imagine that he said, "I promised to go back, and though it is to pangs indescribable, I will return." His wife clings to his shoulder, his children seek to persuade him; they attend him to the waters' edge; he sails for Carthage; his death was too horrible to be described. Never martyr suffered more for Christ than that man suffered for his word's sake. And shall a Christian man break his promise? shall a son of God be less true than a Roman or a heathen? Shall it be, I say, that integrity shall be found in heathen lands and not be found here? No. May you be holy, harmless, sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. I used this argument; I thought it might be a new one; I am sure it is a forcible one. You cannot imagine, surely, that God is to allow heathens to eclipse his children. Oh! never let it be so. So live, so act, ye sons of God, that the world may say of you, "Yes, these men bring forth the fruits of God; they are like their Father; they honour his name; they are indeed filled with his grace, for their every word is as true as his oath; their every act is sincere and upright; their heart is kind, their spirit is gentle; they are firm but yet they are generous; they are strict in their integrity, but they are loving in their souls; they are men who, like God, are full of love; but like him are severely just. They are sternly holy; they are, like him, ready to forgive, but they can by no means tolerate iniquity, nor hear that sin should live in their presence." God bless you, ye sons of God, and may those of you who are strangers to him, be convinced and converted by this sermon, and seek that grace by which alone you can

have your prayer fulfilled: -

"With them numbered may we be,
Now and through eternity."

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A Willing People and an Immutable Leader

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."—Psalm 110:3.

No verse in the Scripture has puzzled me more than this to find out its meaning and its connection. In reading it over hastily, at first sight, it may appear very easy; but if you search into it very carefully you will find you can with difficulty string the words together, or give them any intelligible meaning. I have taken down all the commentators I have in my possession; I find they all give a meaning to the words, but not a soul of them—not even Dr. Gill—gives a connected meaning to the whole sentence. After looking at the old translations, and employing every means in my power to discover the meaning, I found myself as far off as when I began. Matthew Henry, one of the wisest commentators, certainly the best for family reading, makes the passage read as if it were like this: "Thy people shall come willingly in the day of thy power in the beauties of holiness. In the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth." That is how he explains it, though he does not say that is the proper translation. He explains the last sentence, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth," as meaning that in early life, from the womb of the morning, young people would give themselves to Jesus Christ. But it is no such thing. There is a colon at the word "morning," dividing the sentence. Besides, it does not say, the "people shall be willing; thou hast the dew of their youth," as it would read if it were as the expositors understand it;

but it says to Christ, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." It was not until we had thoroughly looked at the connection of the verse, and tried to catch the scope of the Psalm, that we thought we had hit upon its meaning; and even now we shall leave it with your judgment to decide whether or not we have gained the mind of the Spirit, as we hope we have.

The Psalm is a kind of coronation Psalm. Christ is bidden to take his throne: "Sit thou at my right hand." The sceptre is put into his hand. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion." And then the question is asked, "Where are his people?" For a king would be no king without subjects. The highest title of kingship is but an empty one that hath no subjects to make up its fulness. Where, then, shall Christ find that which shall be the fulness of him that filleth all in all? The great anxiety we have is not whether Christ is king or not:—we know he is; he is the Lord of creation and of providence; our anxiety is about his subjects. Ofttimes do we ask, "O Lord, where shall we find thy subjects?" When we have preached to hard hearts, and prophesied to dry bones, our unbelief at times says, "Where shall we find children for Christ? Where shall we find people who will constitute the subjects of his empire?" Our fears are all put to rest by this passage: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning;" and by the second promise, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." These thoughts are placed here to allay the anxieties of God's believing people, and to let them see how Christ shall indeed be king, and never lack a multitude of subjects.

First, here is a promise concerning his people; and secondly, here is a promise concerning Christ himself, that he shall always be as strong, as fresh, as new, and as mighty a Christ as ever.

I. First, we shall look at THE PROMISE MADE TO CHRIST'S PEOPLE. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning." Here is a promise of time; "in the day of thy power." Here is a promise of people: "thy people." Here is a promise of disposition: "thy people shall be willing." Here is a promise of character: "thy people shall be willing in the beauties of holiness." And

here is a majestic figure to show the manner in which they shall be brought forth. By a very bold metaphor, they are said to come out as mysteriously as the dew drops from the womb of the morning. We know not how, but they are produced by God. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness." In the womb of the morning they shall come.

1. First, here is a promise concerning time. Christ is not to gather in his people every day, but on one special day, the day of his power. It is not the day when man feels himself to be the most mighty, that souls are gathered; for alas! God's servants sometimes preach until their self-complacency tells them they have been exceedingly eloquent and mighty, and that, therefore, men must be saved: but there is no promise that in the day of our power we shall ever see men gathered to Christ. There are times too when the people seem to have a great power of seeking after God, and when they have the power of hearing, but there is no promise that just when an excitement reigns, and when there appears to be power in the creature, that such a day shall be the day of God's ingathering. It is "the day of thy power"—not of the minister's power, nor of the hearers'.

The day of God's power—when is it? We take it, it is the day when God pours out his own power upon the minister, so that God's children are gathered in by his preaching.

There are times, beloved, when the ordained servant of the living God will have nothing to do in preaching, but just to open his mouth and allow the words to flow. He will scarcely need stay to think, but the thoughts will be injected into his mind, and while he preaches he will feel there is a power accompanying his word. His hearers too will discern it. Some of them will feel as if they were sitting under a sledge hammer, beating on their hearts. Others will feel as if truth were stealing into their hearts and slaying all their unbelief, in such a way that they could not resist the blessed power. It will often happen that God's children will find an influence and a might irresistible going with the word. They have heard that minister before, they were delighted with him, they trusted that they had been edified on good soil, every blow hit the mark, there was no arrow shot which did not go into the centre of the soul—there was not a syllable uttered which was not like the word of Jehovah himself, speaking

either from Sinai, or Calvary. Have you never known such times? Have you not felt them when you have been standing or sitting in the house of God? Ah! those are times when God, by the manifestation of himself, is pleased to enlighten his children, to gather in his people, and to make poor sinners willing. There is also a day of power in every sinner's heart; for, alas! the general day of power which occurs to our congregation omits many—many over whom we have to weep—while hundreds shed tears of penitence, other hundreds sit stolid and unmoved. While some hearts leap for very joy, others are bound in the fetters of ignorance, and are sleeping the sleep of death. While God is pouring out his Spirit till some hearts are full to the very brim, ready to burst, there are some dry, without a drop of the heavenly moisture. But the day of God's power is a day of personal power in our souls, like that day of Zaccheus when the Lord said, "Make haste, and come down." It is a day not of argument of man, but a day of omnipotent power—God working in the heart. It is not a day of intellectual enlightenment, a day of instruction merely, but a day when God shall enter into the heart, and with a mighty hand shall wrench the will and turn it as he would—shall make the judgment judge righteously, the imagination think as it ought, and shall guide the whole soul to himself. Did you never think what power that was which God exerts in every individual heart? There is no power like it. Should a man command the mighty waterfalls to congeal and stand, in heaps? If they should obey him, he would not have worked a miracle half so mighty as that which God works in the heart when he bids the floods of sin to cease flowing. Could I command Etna with its flames and smoke to cease its ebullitions, and should it at once be still, I had not worked a deed so mighty as when God speaks to a boiling spirit sending forth fire and smoke, and bids it stay. The everlasting God exhibits more power in turning a sinner from the error of his ways, than in the creation of a world or the sustentation of an universe. In the day of God's power, God's people shall be willing. Beloved, we also look for a day of power in the coming period of the reign of Jesus Christ. I take it there is a time coming when the feeblest among us shall be as David, and when David shall be as the angel of the Lord. The time is approaching when every poor ignorant minister shall preach with power, and when every child of God shall be filled with the knowledge of God. We hope for a happy day when Christ shall come and shall cause the knowledge of the Lord to be spread so

rapidly that it shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. We often cheer ourselves with this subject—well, if we do labour in vain and spend our strength for nought now, it will not be so always; the day will come when the fresh wind of the Spirit will fill the sails of the church, and she shall go swiftly along; when the feeble hand of the minister shall be as mighty as the hand of the boldest Christian warrior who ever wielded the sword of the Spirit; when every word of Christ shall be as ointment poured forth, spreading perfume over a sinful world; when we shall never preach a sermon without effect; when, as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, it not only shall not return void, but shall water the earth, so that having already brought forth and budded, it shall bring forth fruit to the glory of God—that fruit, the destruction of idols, and the casting down of all false religions. Happy day, that day of power! Christians! why do you not pray for it? Why do ye not ask that God would give his people might, and that Christ may speedily come and find his people willing?

There is, however, another translation to these words. Calvin translates them, "at the time of the assembling of their army," "au jour des montres" "in the day of the review." You sometimes say, "Oh! if a great struggle were to occur, where would be found the men to fight for Christ?" We have heard timid believers say, "Oh, I am afraid if persecution should set in, we should find very few valiant for truth—few ministers would come forward boldly to uphold the gospel of Christ." No such thing, believer! Christ's people will be willing in the day of God's armies. God never had a battle to fight yet when he could say, "I have no soldiers in reserve." God never had an arduous campaign in which his armies were insufficient. Once the prophet said, Zechariah I. 18-21, "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the Lord showed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spoke, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it." God had enough men to cut off the horns, and to build his house, there were four; and he had the right sort of men ready to do his

work; for "carpenters" were ready. Whenever a struggle is approaching God will find his men. Whenever a battle is to commence, God will find the men valiant for truth. Never be afraid that God will not take care of his church. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of God's battle." Are you undertaking some noble enterprise? Are you saying, "Here is a grand endeavour to evangelize the world; where shall we find people? The answer is, "God's people shall be willing in the day of his armies." Some Sunday-school teachers are complaining, that in their church they cannot find enough to canvass the district. Why not? Because they have not enough of God's people, for God's people are willing in the day of his armies. We have complained that we cannot get ministers to evangelize. Why not? Because they are not thoroughly imbued with the Master's Spirit, for his people would be willing in the day of God's armies when they are wanted. They always have willing hearts to be ready for the battle. They do not say, "I must consult flesh and blood." No, there is the standard; up go God's soldiers! There is the battle; out go their swords! They are ready for the fight at once. They are always ready in the day of God's armies. Beloved, fear no struggle; dread no enterprise; neither think that the silver and the gold will be withholden from us—"The silver and the gold are mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills." Think not, however grand your ideas, that you shall fail therein. God's people will come forward willingly when he requires their aid. We believe that truth firmly; but we must wait for God's day; we must pray for God's day; we must hope for it; we must labour for it, and when it comes, God shall find his people willing, as they ought to be.

2. Next, we have here the promise of a people, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"—nobody else. Here is a promise that Christ shall always have a people. In the darkest ages Christ has always had a church; and if darker times shall come, he will have his church still. Oh! Elijah, thy unbelief is foolish. Thou sayest, "I, only I, am left alone, and they seek my life." Nay, Elijah, in those caves of the earth God has his prophets, hidden by seventies. Thou, too, poor unbelieving Christian, at times thou sayest, "I, even I, am left." Oh! if thou hadst eyes to see, if thou couldst travel a little, thy heart would be glad to find that God does not lack a people. It cheers my heart to find that God has a family everywhere. We do not go anywhere but we find really earnest hearts—

men full of prayer. I bless God that I can say, concerning the church wherever I have been, though they are not many, there are a few, who sigh and groan over the sorrows of Israel. There are chosen bands in every church, thoroughly earnest men who are looking out for, and are ready to receive their Master, who cry to God that he would send them times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Do not be too sad; God has a people, and they are willing now; and when the day of God's power shall come, there is no fear about the people. Religion may be at a low ebb, but it never was at such a low ebb that God's ship was stranded. It may be ever so low, but the devil shall never be able to cross the river of Christ's church dry shod. He shall always find abundance of water running in the channel thereof. God grant us grace to look out for his people, believing that there are some everywhere, for the promise is, "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

3. We next come to disposition. God's people are a willing people. Adam Clarke says,—"This verse has been woefully perverted. It has been supposed to point out that irresistible operation of the grace of God on the souls of the elect, thereby making them willing to receive Christ as their Saviour." A doctrine which he utterly discards. Well, my dear Adam Clarke, we are extremely obliged to you for your remark, but at the same time we think that the text has not been "woefully perverted." We believe that the text has been very properly used to show that God makes men willing. For if we read our Bibles rightly, we understand that men, by nature, are not willing; for there is a text you are extremely fond of which we do not think belongs to you, and which says, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." "No man can come unto me, except the Father which has sent me, draw him." If you would remember that, we think, even though the text does not teach it, you might at least have some respect for the doctrine; but it says, God's people shall be willing in the day of God's power; and if we read it as plain English people, we look from this text that there must be a work of his grace making men willing in the day of God's power. We do not know whether you think that fair logic. We think it is. We have been accused of having no logic, and we are not particularly sorry about that, for we would rather have what men call dogmatism than logic. It is Christ's to prove; it is ours to preach. We leave argument to Christ; for us, we have only to affirm what we see in God's

Word. God's people are to be a willing people. We can tell who are the children by the fact that they are willing. I preach to many of you times without number. I tell you of hell; I bid you flee from it; I tell you of Christ; I bid you look to him, but you are unwilling to do so. What do I conclude from that? Either that the day of God's power has not yet come, or that you are not God's people. When I preach with power, and the word is dispensed with unction, if I see you unmoved and unsettled, unwilling to cast yourselves on Jesus Christ, what say I? Why, I fear those are not God's people, for God's people are willing in the day of his power, willing to submit to sovereign grace, to give themselves up into the hands of the Mediator, to hang simply on his cross for salvation. I ask again what has made them willing? Must it not have been something in grace which has turned their will? If the will of man be purely free to do right or wrong, I conjure you, my friends, to answer this: if it be so, why do you not turn to God this very moment without divine assistance? It is because you are not willing, and it needed a promise that God's people should be willing in the day of his power.

I think this word applies not only to their being willing to be saved, but willing to work after they are saved. Did you ever know a minister who preached on the Sunday, but who at the prayer-meeting on the Monday night seemed as if he would much rather be at home? And if there was a lecture on Thursday, did not he, poor man, come up as if he were about to perform some enormously hard duty? What do you think of him? Why, you think he is not one of the people of God, else he would be willing. Some persons come to the house of God, but they come just as the negro would to his whipping place, they do not like it, and they are glad to get away again. But what do we say of God's people,—

"Up to her courts with joys unknown,
The sacred tribes repair."

They are a willing people. There is a collection. The Church of God requires some assistance. One man doles out as small a trifle as ever he can to keep up his respectability. You do not think he exhibits the spirit of a Christian because he is not willing; but Christ's people are willing; all that they do, they do willingly, for they are constrained by no compulsion, but by grace alone. I am sure we all can do a thing far better when we are

willing than when we are forced. God loves his people's services, because they do them voluntarily. Voluntaryism is the essence of the gospel. Willing people are those whom God delights to have as his servants. He would not have slaves to grace his throne, but free men, who, with gladness and joy, should be willing in the day of his power.

4. We shall scarcely have time for a discussion of the whole text, but we must briefly notice the character of these people as well as their dispositions. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." "They shall be willing in the beauties of holiness." This is how they shall be clothed—not merely in holiness, but in the beauties of holiness, for holiness hath its beauties, its gems, its pearls; and what are these? They shall be clothed in the beauties of holiness of imputed righteousness and of imparted grace. God's people are, in themselves a deformed people, hence their comeliness must be given them. The standard of beauty is saintship. If an angel should descend from heaven, and carry up to God the most beautiful creature he could find, he would not cull earth's roses, he would not gather her lilies, but he would take up to heaven the fair character of a child of God. Where he found a self-denying hero, where he discovered a disinterested Christian—an ardent disciple, the angel would take him up, exclaiming, "Great God, here is beauty; take it, this is thy beauty." We walk along and admire statues and such-like things, and we say, "Here is beauty," but the Christian has on him the true beauty—the beauties of holiness. Oh! ye young, ye gay, ye proud, ye ask for beauty, but do you know that all the beauties of this earth can do you no good, for you must die and wear a shroud?

"Time will rob you of your bloom,
Death will drag you to the tomb."

But if you have the beauties of holiness, they shall increase and become fairer and fairer, and amongst the fair angels, you, as fair as they, shall stand decked in your Saviour's righteousness. "Thy people shall be willing" to come forward, and they shall be the right sort of people; they will be a holy people, arrayed in all "the beauties of holiness."

5. Now there is a bold metaphor here which we must explain in the last place. The text says, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power

in the beauties of holiness." Now you understand that, but what do the next words mean, "From the womb of the morning?" "Why, from the earliest periods of their lives," say the commentators, "God's people shall be willing." No, it does not mean that; there is a bold and brilliant figure here. It is asked, where are they to come from? how are God's people to be brought? what means are to be employed? how is it to be done? The simple answer is this. Did you never see the dew-drops glistening on the earth? and did you never ask, "Whence came these? how came they here so infinite in number, so lavishly scattered everywhere, so pure and brilliant." Nature whispered the answer, "They came from the womb of the morning." So God's people will come forth as noiselessly, as mysteriously, as divinely, as if they came "from the womb of the morning," like the dew drops. Philosophy has laboured to discover the origin of dew, and perhaps has guessed it; but to the Eastern, one of the greatest riddles was, out of whose womb came the dew? Who is the mother of those pearly drops? Now, so will God's people come mysteriously. It will be said by the bystander, "There was nothing in that man's preaching; I thought I should hear an orator; this man has been made the means of salvation to thousands, and I thought I should hear an eloquent man, but I have heard a great many preachers far more intelligent and intellectual than he; how were these souls converted? "Why, they have come from the womb of the morning," mysteriously. Again, the dew drops—who made them? Do kings and princes rise up and hold their sceptres, and bid the clouds shed tears, or affright them to weeping by the beating of the drum? Do armies march to the battle to force the sky to give up its treasure, and scatter its diamonds lavishly? No; God speaks; he whispers in the ears of nature, and it weeps for joy at the glad news that the morning is come. God does it; there is no apparent agency employed, no thunder, no lightning; God has done it. That is how God's people shall be saved; they come forth from the "womb of the morning" divinely called, divinely brought, divinely blessed, divinely numbered, divinely scattered over the entire surface of the globe, divinely refreshing to the world, they proceed from the "womb of the morning." You may have noticed in the morning what a multitude of dew drops there are, and you may have inquired, "Whence comes so great a multitude?" We answer, the womb of nature is capable of ten thousand births at once. So, "from the womb of the morning" God's children shall

come. No struggle, no pang, no shriek, no agony is heard, all is secret; but they shall come fresh "from the womb of the morning." The figure is so beautiful that words cannot explain it. You have only to stand early one morning when the sun is beginning to shoot his rays of light up to the sky, and look at the fields all glistening with dew, and say, "Whence came all these?" The answer is, they came "From the womb of the morning." So when you find that multitudes are saved, and you see them coming so mysteriously, so gently, so divinely, and yet so numerous, you can only compare them to the dew of the morning. You say, "Whence came these?" And the answer is, they have come "from the womb of the morning."

II. Now the second part of the text is the sweetest, and we must have a little time upon that. There was a promise made to Christ concerning his people, and that sets our fears at rest concerning the Church. Now here is ANOTHER PROMISE MADE TO CHRIST: "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Ah! believer, this is the great source of gospel success, that Christ has the dew of his youth. Jesus Christ, personally, has the dew of his youth. Certain leaders in their young days have led their troops to battle, and by the loudness of their voice, and the strength of their bodies, they have inspired their men with courage; but the old warrior hath his hair sown with grey; he begins to be decrepid, and no longer can lead men to battle. It is not so with Jesus Christ. He has still the dew of his youth. The same Christ who led his troops to battle in his early youth leads them now. The arm which smote the sinner with his word smites now; it is as unpalsied as it was before. The eye which looked upon his friends with gladness, and upon his foemen with a glance most stern and high—that same eye is regarding us now, undimmed, like that of Moses. He has the dew of his youth. Oh! it does delight us to think that Christ was "God over all, blessed for ever," in his youth, filled with Almighty power, and he is just the same now. He is not an old Christ—a worn out Christ, but our leader still. He is as young as ever. The same dew, the same freshness, is about him. You hear it said of a minister, "In his younger days there was a deal of freshness about him, but he is getting old and begins to repeat himself." It is never so with Christ; he always has the dew of his youth. He who "spake as never man spake," once, when he shall come to speak again, will speak just as he did before. He has the dew of his youth personally.

So also doctrinally. Christ hath the dew of his youth. Usually, when a religion starts it is very rampant, but it afterwards decays. Look at the religion of Mahommed. For one hundred years or more it threatened to subvert kingdoms, and overturn the whole world, but where are the blades that flashed then? Where are now the willing hands that smote down the foes of Mahommed? Why, his religion has become an old worn-out thing; no one cares about it; and the Turk, sitting on his divan, with his legs crossed, smoking his pipe, is the best image of the Mahomedan religion—old, infirm, effete. But the Christian religion,—ah! it is as fresh as when it started from its cradle at Jerusalem; it is as hale, and hearty, and mighty, as when Paul preached it at Athens, or Peter at Jerusalem. It is not an old religion. Not one particle of it hath waxed old, though hundreds of years have passed away. How many religions have died since Christ's began! How many have risen up, like mushrooms in a night! But is not Christ's as new as it ever was? I ask you, ye old grey heads, you have known your Master in your youth, and you thought his religion sweet and precious; do you find it useless now? Do you find now that Christ has not the dew of youth upon him? No; you can say, "Sweet Jesus, the day I first touched thine hand, the day of mine espousals, I thought thee altogether lovely; and thou art not like an earthly friend: thou hast not waxed old; thou art as young as ever. Thy brow hath no furrows on it; thine eyes are not dime. Thine hair is still black as the raven, not white with age; thou art still unmoved, unaltered, notwithstanding all the years that I have known thee. Well, beloved, do you see what encouragement this is to us in the propagation of our Master's kingdom, that we are not preaching an old thing that is out of date, but a religion which has the dew of its youth upon it. The same religion which could save three thousand at Pentecost, can save three thousand now. I preach old doctrine, but it is as new as when it first came from heaven's mint. The image and the superscription is as clear, and the metal is as bright and undimmed as ever. I have an old sword, but it is not a rusty one; though it hath hacked and cut many a Rahab, yet it has not a single mark of weakness upon itself—it is as new as when it was first forged upon the anvil of wisdom. The gospel has the same spirit attending it now, that it had when it was a young gospel. As Peter stood up to preach then so may Peters now, and God shall give them the same unction. As Paul preached then, so shall Pauls now. As Timothy upheld the Lord's word, so may Timothys now, and the same

Holy Spirit shall attend it. I am afraid Christ's people do not believe this sentence—that Christ has the dew of his youth. They have a notion that the times of great revivals are gone by. And the fathers, they ask, where are they? We are apt to cry, "The horses of Israel, and the chariots thereof." No one will ever wear Elijah's mantle again; we shall never see great and wondrous deeds again. O foolish unbelief! Christ has still the dew of his youth. He has as much of the Holy Spirit now as he had at first, for he has it without measure. And though he has dispensed it unto thousands, he will dispense it still. But the question is asked, "How is it that people in these times begin to get tired of the gospel, if it has the dew of its youth?" Why, beloved, it is because the gospel does not come to them in the form of dew at all. Do we not frequently hear a gospel all dry and marrowless, like a lot of bones out of which the marrow has been boiled? Very nice these bones are for your philosophical divines, who like to study antiquities, and discover to what unclean animal this or that bone belongs, but of no service at all to God's children, for there is no food on the bones. We want a gospel covered with unction, full of savour; and when God's people have that, they are never tired of it, they find a dew and a freshness about it which are lasting.

Now, if Christ has the dew of his youth about him, how earnestly ought those of us who are his ministers to proclaim his word. There is nothing like strong faith to make a man preach mightily. If I think I preach a tottering old gospel, I cannot proclaim it with zeal; but if I think I am preaching a strong stalwart gospel, whose frame has not been shaken, and whose might is just as great as ever, how strongly ought I to preach it? Ah! blessed be God, there are a few hearts as hot as ever, a few souls as firm in their Master's cause as ever were the hearts of the Apostles. They are yet a few good men and true, who rally round the cross. Like David's men in the cave Adullam, there are some mighties who rally round the standard. He is not left without his witnesses, he has the dew of his youth yet, and the day may come when those now hidden in darkness, shall, as dew before the sunshine, come out, glistening on every bush, adorning every tree, enlightening every village, cheering every pasture, making the little hills sing for joy. Go, Christian, and put this into the form of prayer. Pray to Christ that his people may be willing in the day of his power, and that he would always retain the dew of his youth.

"Ride forth, sweet Prince, triumphantly,
And bid the world obey."

Go on, and prove thyself to be the same as ever, the blessed God, "God over all, blessed for evermore." Up, Christian, up! fight for your young Monarch! Up with ye, warriors! Let your swords flash from their scabbards! Fight for your King! Up! up! for the old banner is a new banner too. Christ is still fresh and still young. Let the enthusiasm of your youth gird you! Once again, start up, ye aged Christians, and let your young days come again, for if Christ has the dew of his youth about him, it behooves you to serve him with youthful vigour. Up! starting now from your sleep, give to him a new youth, and strive to be as earnest and as zealous for his cause as if it were the first day you ever knew him. Oh! may God make many sinners willing! May he bring many to his feet, for he has promised that they shall be willing in the day of his power.

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Against The World

We know there have been great battles where nations have met in strife, and one has overcome the other; but who has read of a victory that overcame the world? Some will say that Alexander was its conqueror; but I answer, nay. He was himself the vanquished man, even when all things were in his possession. He fought for the world, and won it; and then mark how it mastered its master, conquered its conqueror, and lashed the monarch who had been its scourge. See the royal youth weeping, and stretching out his hands with idiotic cries, for another world which he might ravage. He seemed, in outward show, to have overcome Old Earth; but, in reality, within his inmost soul, the earth had conquered him, had overwhelmed him, had wrapped him in the dream of ambition, girdled him with the chains of covetousness, so that when he had all, he was still

dissatisfied; and, like a poor slave, was dragged on at the chariot wheels of the world, crying, moaning, lamenting, because he could not win another. Who is the man that ever overcame the world? Let him stand forward: he is a Triton among the minnows; he shall outshine Caesar; he shall outmatch even our Wellington, if he can say he has overcome the world. It is so rare a thing, a victory so prodigious, a conquest so tremendous, that he who can claim to have won it may walk among his fellows, like Saul, with head and shoulders far above them. He shall command our respect; his very presence shall awe us into reverence; his speech shall persuade us to obedience; and, yielding honour to whom honour is due, we'll say when we listen to his voice, "Tis even as if an angel shook his wings."The Christian overcomes the world. A tough battle: not one which carpet knights might win: no easy skirmish that he might win, who dashed to battle on some sunny day, looked at the host, then turned his courser's rein, and daintily dismounted at the door of his silken tent—not one which he shall gain, who, but a raw recruit today, puts on his regimentals, and foolishly imagines that one week of service will ensure a crown of glory. Nay, it is a life-long war—a fight needing the power of all these muscles, and this strong heart; a contest which shall want all our strength, if we are to be triumphant; and if we do come off more than conquerors, it shall be said of us, as Hart said of Jesus Christ; "He had strength enough and none to spare;" a battle at which the stoutest heart might quail; a fight at which the bravest might shake, if he did not remember that the Lord is on his side, and therefore, whom shall he fear? He is the strength of his life; of whom shall he be afraid? This fight with the world is not one of main force, or physical might; if it were, we might soon win it; but it is all the more dangerous from the fact that it is a strife of mind, a contest of heart, a struggle of the spirit, a strife of the soul. When we overcome the world in one fashion, we have not half done our work; for the world is a Proteus, changing its shape continually; like the chameleon, it hath all the colours of the rainbow; and when you have worsted the world in one shape, it will attack you in another. Until you die, you will always have fresh appearances of the world to wrestle with.

We rebel against the world's customs. And if we do so, what is the conduct of our enemy? She changes her aspect. "That man is a heretic; that man is a fanatic; he is a cant, he is a hypocrite," says the world

directly. She grasps her sword, she putteth frowns upon her brow, she scowleth like a demon, she girdeth tempests round about her, and she saith, "The man dares defy my government; he will not do as others do. Now I will persecute him. Slander! come from the depths of hell and hiss at him. Envy! sharpen up thy tooth and bite him." She fetches up all false things, and she persecutes the man. If she can, she does it with the hand; if not, by the tongue. She afflicts him wherever he is. She tries to ruin him in business; or if he standeth forth as the champion of the truth, why then she laugheth, and mocketh, and scorneth. She lets no stone be unturned whereby she may injure him. What is then the behaviour of the Lord's warrior, when he sees the world take up arms against him, and when he sees all earth, like an army, coming to chase him, and utterly destroy him? Does he yield? Does he yield? Does he bend? Does he cringe? Oh, no! Like Luther, he writes "*Cedo nulli*" on his banner—"I yield to none;" and he goes to war against the world, if the world goes to war against him.

The true-born child of God cares little for man's opinion. "Ah," says he, "let my bread fail me, let me be doomed to wander penniless the wide world o'er; yea, let me die: each drop of blood within these veins belongs to Christ, and I am ready to shed it for His name's sake." He counts all things but loss, that he may win Christ—That he may be found in Him, and when the world's thunders roar, he smiles at the uproar, while he hums his pleasant tune. When her sword comes out, he looketh at it. "Ah," saith he, "just as the lightning leapeth from its thunder lair, splitteth the clouds, and affrighteth the stars, but is powerless against the rock-covered mountaineer, who smiles at its grandeur, so now the world cannot hurt me, for in the time of trouble my Father hides me "in His pavillion, in the secret of His tabernacle doth He hide me, and set me upon a rock." Thus, again, we conquer the world, by not caring for its frowns.

"Well," saith the world, "I will try another style," and this, believe me, is the most dangerous of all. A smiling world is worse than a frowning one. She saith, "I cannot smite the man low with my repeated blows, I will take off my mailed glove, and showing him a fair, white hand, I'll bid him kiss it. I will tell him I love him: I will flatter him, I will speak good words to

him." John Bunyan well describes this Madam Bubble: she has a winning way with her; she drops a smile at the end of each of her sentences; she talks much of fair things, and tries to win and woo. Oh, believe me, Christians are not so much in danger when they are persecuted as when they are admired. When we stand upon the pinnacle of popularity, we may well tremble and fear. It is not when we are hissed at, and hooted, that we have any cause to be alarmed; it is when we are dandled on the lap of fortune, and nursed upon the knees of the people; it is when all men speak well of us, that woe is unto us. It is not in the cold, wintry wind that I take off my coat of righteousness, and throw it away; it is when the sun comes, when the weather is warm, and the air balmy, that I unguardedly strip off my robes, and become naked. Good God! how many a man has been made naked by the love of this world! The world has flattered and applauded him; he has drunk the flattery; it was an intoxicating draught; he has staggered, he has reeled, he has sinned, he has lost his reputation; and as a comet that erst flashed across the sky, doth wander far into space, and is lost in darkness, so doth he; great as he was, he falls; mighty as he was, he wanders, and is lost. But the true child of God is never so; he is as safe when the world smiles, as when it frowns; he cares as little for her praise as for her dispraise. If he is praised, and it is true, he says, "My deeds deserve praise, but I refer all honour to my God." Great souls know what they merit from their critic; to them it is nothing more than the giving of their daily income. Some men cannot live without a large amount of praise; and if they have no more than they deserve, let them have it. If they are children of God, they will be kept steady; they will not be ruined or spoiled; but they will stand with feet like hinds' feet upon high places,— "This is the victory that overcometh the world."

Sometimes, again, the world turns jailer to a Christian. God sends affliction and sorrow, until life is a prison-house, the world its jailer—and a wretched jailer too. Have you ever been in trials and troubles, my friends? and has the world never come to you, and said, "Poor prisoner, I have a key that will let you out. You are in pecuniary difficulties; I will tell you how you may get free. Put that Mr. Conscience away. He asks you whether it is a dishonest act. Never mind about him; let him sleep; think about the honesty after you have got the money, and repent at your

leisure." So saith the world; but you say, "I cannot do the thing." "Well" says the world, "then groan and grumble: a good man like you locked up in this prison!" "No," says the Christian, "my Father sent me into want, and in His own time He will fetch me out; but if I die here I will not use wrong means to escape. My Father put me here for my good, I will not grumble; if my bones must lie here if my coffin is to be under these stones if my tombstone shall be in the wall of my dungeon—here will I die, rather than so much as lift a finger to get out by unfair means." "Ah," says the world, "then thou art a fool." The scorner laughs and passes on, saying, "The man has no brain, he will not do a bold thing; he has no courage; he will not launch upon the sea; he wants to go in the old beaten track of morality." Ay, so he does; for thus he overcomes the world.

I might tell of battles that have been fought. There has been many a poor maiden, who has worked, worked, worked, until her fingers were worn to the bone, to earn a scanty living out of the things which we wear upon us, knowing not that oftentimes we wear the blood, and bones, and sinews of poor girls. That poor girl has been tempted a thousand times, the evil one has tried to seduce her, but she has fought a valiant battle; stern in her integrity, in the midst of poverty she still stands upright, "Clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners," a heroine unconquered by the temptations and enticements of vice. In other cases: many a man has had the chance of being rich in an hour, affluent in a moment, if he would but clutch something which he dare not look at, because God within him said, "No! The world said, "Be rich, be rich;" but the Holy Spirit said, "No! be honest; serve thy God." Oh, the stern contest, and the manly combat carried on within the heart! But he said, "No; could I have the stars transmuted into worlds of gold, I would not for those globes of wealth belie my principles, and damage my soul: " thus he walks a conqueror. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

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Canaan on Earth

For the land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but the land whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year. - Deuteronomy 11:10-12

It has generally been considered, that the passage of the Jordan by the Israelites is typical of death, and that Canaan is a fitting representation of heaven. We believe that in some sense it is true, and we do fondly cherish the household words of those hymns which describe our passing through Jordan's billows, and landing safe on Canaan's side; but we do think that the allegory does not hold, and that Jordan is not a fair exhibition of death, nor the land of Canaan a fair picture of the sweet land beyond the swelling flood which the Christian gains after death. For mark you, after the children of Israel had entered into Canaan, they had to fight with their enemies. It was a land filled with foes. Every city they entered they had to take by storm, unless a miracle dismantled it. They were warriors, even in the land of Canaan, fighting for their own inheritance; and though each tribe had its lot marked out, yet they had to conquer the giant Anakim, and encounter terrible hosts of Canaanites. But when we cross the river of death we shall have no foes to fight, no enemies to encounter. Heaven is a place already prepared for us; out of it the evil ones have long ago been driven; there brethren shall await us with pleasing faces, kind hands shall clasp ours, and loving words shall alone be heard. The shout of war shall ne'er be raised by us in heaven; we shall throw our swords away, and the scabbards with them. No battles with warriors there, no plains besoaked with blood, no hills where robbers dwell, no inhabitants with chariots of iron. It is "a land flowing with milk and honey;" and it dreams not of the foeman of Canaan of old. We think the church has lost the beauty of Scripture, in taking Jordan to mean death, and that a far fuller meaning is the true allegory to be connected with it. Egypt, as we have lately observed to you, was typical of the condition of the children of

God while they are in bondage to the law of sin. There they are made to work unceasingly, without wages or profit, but continually subject to pains. We said, again, that the coming up out of Egypt was the type of the deliverance which every one of God's people enjoys, when by faith he strikes the blood of Jesus on his lintel and his doorpost, and spiritually eats the paschal lamb; and we can also tell you now, that the passage through the wilderness is typical of that state of hoping, and fearing, and doubting, and wavering, and inconstancy, and distrust, which we usually experience between the period when we come out of Egypt, and attain unto the full assurance of faith.

Many of you, my dear hearers, are really come out of Egypt; but you are still wandering about in the wilderness. "We that have believed do enter into rest;" but you, though you have eaten of Jesus, have not so believed on him as to have entered into the Canaan of rest. You are the Lord's people, but you have not come into the Canaan of assured faith, confidence, and hope, where we wrestle no longer with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers *in the heavenly places* in Christ Jesus - when it is no longer a matter of doubt with us whether we shall be saved, but we feel that we are saved. I have known believers who have existed for years almost without a doubt as to their acceptance. They have enjoyed a sweet and blessed reliance on Christ; they have come into Canaan; they have fed on the good old corn of the land; they now "lie passive in his hand, and know no will but his." They have such a sweet oneness with their blessed Lord Jesus, that they lay their head on his breast all day long, and they have scarcely any nights; they almost always live in days; for though they have not attained unto his perfect image, they feel themselves so manifestly in union with himself that they cannot and dare not doubt. They have entered into rest; they are come into Canaan. Such is the condition of the child of God, when he has come to an advanced stage in his experience, when God has so given him grace upon grace that he can say, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

We will read this passage again; and bear in mind what I understand it to mean. It sets before the Christian's state, after he has attained to this faith

and confidence in God; when he is no longer careful about the things of this life, when he does not water the ground with his foot, but has come to a land that drinketh in the rain of heaven. "The land whither thou goest in to possess it," - the land of high and holy Christian privilege - "is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." We shall have this morning to note, first of all, *the difference between the Christian's temporal condition and that of the Egyptian worldling*; and secondly, *the special privilege vouchsafed to those who have entered into Canaan* - that the eyes of the Lord their God are always upon their land, "from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year."

I. True religion makes a difference not only in a man, but in a man's condition; it affects not only his heart, but his state - not only his nature, but his very standing in society. The Lord thy God cares not only for Israel, but for Canaan, where Israel dwells. God has not only a regard to the elect, but to their habitation, and not only so, but to all their affairs and circumstances. The moment I become a child of God, not only is my heart changed and my nature renewed, but my very position becomes different; the very beasts of the field are in league with me, and the stones thereof are at peace. My habitation is now guarded by Jehovah; my position in this world is no longer that of a needy mendicant - I have become a gentleman-pensioner on the providence of God; my position, which was that of a bondsman in Egypt, is now become that of an inheritor in Canaan. In this difference of the condition of the Christian and the worldling, we shall mark three things.

First, *the Christian's temporal condition is different to that of the worldling*; for the worldling looks to secondary causes, the Christian looks to heaven; he gets his mercies thence. Read the text, "The land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs." The land of Egypt has never had any rain

from heaven; it has been always watered from earthly sources. At a certain season the river Nile overflowed its banks, and covered the land; a stock of water was then accumulated in artificial reservoirs, and afterwards let out in canals, and allowed to run in little trenches through the fields. They had to water it as a garden of herbs. All their dependence was on the nether springs; they looked to the river Nile as the source of all their plenty, and even worshipped it. But the land to which you are coming is not watered from a river; "it drinketh water of the rain of heaven." Your fertility shall not come from such artificial sources as canals and trenches; you shall be fed from the water that descends from heaven! You see how beautifully this pictures a worldling and a Christian. Look at the worldling; what is his dependence? It is all upon the water below; he looks only to the water that flows from the river of this world. "Who will show us any good?" Some rely upon what they call chance - (a river the source of which, like the source of the Nile, is never known;) and though continually disappointed, they still persevere in trusting to this unknown stream. Others, who are more sensible, trust to their hard work and honesty; they look to the source of that river, and they trace it to a fountain of human erection graced by a statue of labour. Ah! that river may yet fail you; it may not overflow its banks, and you may be starved. But, O Christian, what doest thou rely upon? Thy land "drinketh water of the rain of heaven;" thy mercies come not from the hand of chance; thy daily bread cometh not so much from thy industry as from thy heavenly Father's care; thou seest stamped upon every mercy heaven's own inscription, and every blessing comes down to thee perfumed with the ointment and spikenard, and the myrrh of the ivory palaces, whence God dispenses his bounties. Here is the difference between the assured Christian and the mere worldling: the one trusts to natural causes - the other "looks through nature up to nature's God." and seeth his mercies as coming down fresh from heaven.

Beloved, let us improve this thought, by showing you the great value of it. Do you know a man who sees his mercies coming from heaven, and not from earth? How much sweeter all his mercies are! There is nothing in the world that tastes as sweet to the school-boy as that which comes from home. Those who live at the school may make him ever such good things, but he cares nothing for anything like that which comes from home. So

will the Christian. All his mercies are sweeter because they are home-mercies. I love God's favours on earth; for everything I eat and drink tastes of home. And oh! how sweet to think, "That bread, my Father's hand moulded; that water, my Father droppeth out from his hand in the gentle rain." I can see everything coming from his hand. The land in which I live is not like the land of Egypt, fed by a river; but it "drinketh water of the rain of heaven." All my mercies come from above. Don't you like, beloved, to see the print of your Father's fingers on every mercy? You have heard of the haddock having the mark of the thumb of Peter on it! It is a fiction, of course; but I am sure all the fish that we get out of the sea of providence are marked by Jesus' fingers. Happy the lot of that man who receives everything as coming from God, and thanks his Father for it all! It makes anything sweet, when he knows it comes from heaven.

This thought, again, has a great tendency to keep us from an overweening love of the world. If we think that all our mercies come from heaven, we shall not be so likely to love the world, as we shall be if we think that they are the natural products of the soil. The spies went to Eschol, and fetched thence an immense cluster of the grapes which grew there; but you do not find that the people said, "These are fine fruits, therefore we will stay here." No: they saw that the grapes came from Canaan, and thereupon they said, "Let us go on, and possess them." And so, when we get rich mercies, if we think they come from the natural soil of this earth, we feel,

"Here I will for ever stay."

But if we know that they come from a foreign clime, we are anxious to go

"Where our dear Lord his vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow."

Christian, then, rejoice, rejoice! Thy mercies come from heaven; however small they be, still they are thy Father's gift; not one comes to thee without his knowledge, and his permission. Bless the Lord, therefore, that thou art come to Canaan; where thy "land drinketh water of the rain of heaven!"

My dearly beloved, just stop here, and console yourselves, if you are in trouble. "Oh!" says one, "I know not what I shall do: where to turn myself I cannot tell." You are not like your brother, who is sitting near you; *he* has a competency; *he* has a river of Egypt to depend on; you have not any; nevertheless, there is the sky still. If you were to tell a farmer, "You have no rivers to water your lands." "Well," he would say, "I don't want them either; for I have clouds up there, and the clouds are enough." So, Christian, if thou hast nothing to depend on down below, turn thine eyes up there, and say, "The land, whither I go in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence I came out, where I sowed my seed, and watered it with my foot, as a garden of herbs; but the land, whither I go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven."

2. But now comes the second distinction, and that is, *a difference in the toilsomeness of their lives*. The worldly man, just like the Israelites in Egypt, has to water his land with his foot. Read the passage: - "For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot as a garden of herbs." This alludes, possibly to the practice, amongst all eastern nations where the land is irrigated, of letting out a certain quantity of water into a trench, and then having small gutters dug in the gardens, to compel the water to run along different parts of the ground. Sometimes one of these gutters might be broken; and then the gardener would press the mould against it with his foot, to keep the water in its proper channel. But I have inclined to think that the passage alludes to the method which those eastern countries have of pumping up the water by a tread-wheel, and so watering the land with their foot. However that may be, it means that the land of Egypt was watered with extraordinary labour, in order to preserve it from sterility. "But," says Moses, "the land, to which ye are going, is not a land which you will have to water with your foot. The water will come spontaneously; the land will be watered by the rain of heaven. You can sit in your own houses, or under your own vine, or under your own fig tree, and God himself shall be your irrigator. You shall sit still, and 'in quietness shall ye possess your souls.'" Now, here is a difference between the godly and ungodly: - *the ungodly man toils*. Suppose his object is ambition; he will labor and

labor, and labor, and spend his very life, until he obtains the desire pinnacle. Suppose it is wealth; how will he emaciate his frame, rob his body of its needed sleep, and take away the nourishment his frame requires, in order that he may accumulate riches! And if it is learning, how will he burn his eyes out with the flame of his hot desire, that he may understand all knowledge; how will he allow his frame to become weak, and weary, and wan, by midnight watchings, till the oil wherewith he lighteth himself by night comes from his own flesh, and the marrow of his bones furnisheth the light for his spirit! Men will in this way labour, and toil, and strive. But not so the Christian. No: God "giveth his beloved sleep." His "strength is to sit still." He knows what it is to fulfil the command of Paul: - "I would have you without carefulness." We can take things as God gives them, without all this toil and labour. I have often admired the advice of old Cineas to Pyrrhus. Old story saith, that when Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, was making preparation for his intended expedition into Italy, Cineas, the philosopher, took a favourable opportunity of addressing him thus: "The Romans, sir, are reported to be a warlike and victorious people; but if God permit us to overcome them, what use shall we make of the victory?" "Thou askest," said Pyrrhus, "a thing that is self-evident. The Romans once conquered, no city will resist us; we shall then be masters of all Italy."

Cineas added - "And having subdued Italy, what shall we do next?" Pyrrhus not yet aware of his intentions, replied, "Sicily next stretches out her arms to receive us." "That is very probable," said Cineas, "but will the possession of Sicily put an end to the war?" "God grant us success in that," answered Pyrrhus, "and we shall make these only the forerunners of greater things, for then Libya and Carthage will soon be ours: and these things being completed, none of our enemies can offer any further resistance." "Very true," added Cineas, "for then we may easily regain Macedon, and make absolute conquest of Greece; and when all these are in our possession, what shall we do then?" Pyrrhus, smiling, answered, "Why then, my dear friend, we will live at our ease, take pleasure all day, and amuse ourselves with cheerful conversation." "Well sir," said Cineas, "and why may we not do this now, and without the labour and hazard of an enterprise so laborious and uncertain?" So, beloved, says the Christian. The worldly man says, "Let me go and do this; let me go and

do that; let me accumulate so many thousand pounds; let me get so rich; then I will enjoy myself and take my ease." "Nay," says the Christian, "I see no reason for doing it; why should I not make God my refuge now? Why should I not enjoy comfort and peace, and make myself happy now?" He does not want to water his land with his feet; but he sits down quietly, and his land "drinketh in water of the rain of heaven." Do not say I am preaching laziness. No such thing: I am only saying it is vain for you to rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." But, if "he giveth his beloved sleep," they rest in him; they know not these toils; that is, if they have attained to full assurance, and crossed into the Canaan of full confidence in God. They do not care to go ranging the world to find their happiness; but they say, "God is my ever present help; in him my soul is satisfied." They rest content in him. Their land is watered with the rain of heaven.

I remember a story of a young man who was a lawyer. In order to attain fame in his position he was extremely anxious to understand all the mysteries and tortuous windings of the law, and to acquire some power of oratory, that he might be able to deliver himself eloquently before the bench. For ten years did he live apart from other people, lest domestic habits should wean him from his studies; he wrapped himself every night in a blanket, and took one of his own volumes, and put it under his head; he denied himself food, eating only so many morsels a day, lest indigestion should impair his powers. Although he was an infidel, he believed in God; and he bowed his head so many times a day, and prayed that he might lose anything rather than his intellectual powers. "Make a giant of me!" - that was his expression. And although his poor mother begged him to make himself more comfortable, he would not, but persisted in his course of abstemiousness and self-denial. One day, in reading one of his books, he saw this passage: "When all is gained, how little then is won! And yet to gain that little, how much is lost!" He stamped his foot, and raved like a maniac at the thought, that he had spent all these ten years, toiling and wearying himself for nothing; he saw the vanity of his course; he was driven to desperation, seized his axe, cut down the sign-board of his profession, and said, "Here ends this business." Turning to the same book, he found that it recommended

Christianity as the rest of the weary soul; he found it in Christ, and attained to such an understanding of Christ, that he became a preacher of the gospel, and might well have preached on this text - "The land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh the water of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year."

3. This brings us to the third and last difference that we will note this morning; and that is, that the unbeliever, he who has not crossed the Jordan and come to full confidence, *does not understand the universality of God's providence*, while the assured Christian does. You will see that in my text in a minute. In Egypt the ground is almost entirely flat; and where it is not flat, it is impossible, of course, to grow anything, unless the ground is watered at considerable difficulty by some method of artificial irrigation, which shall force the water on to the high places. "But," says Moses, "the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys." The Egyptians could not get the water up on the hills, but you can; for the mountains drink in the rain, as well as the valleys. Now look at a worldling. Give him comforts, give him prosperity: oh! he can be so happy. Give him everything just as he likes it; make his course all a plain, all a dead valley and a flat; he can fertilize that, and water it; but let him have a mountainous trouble, let him lose a friend, or let his property be taken from him - put a hill in his way, and he cannot water that, with all the pumping of his feet, and all the force he strives to use. But the Christian lives in "a land of hills and valleys;" a land of sorrow as well as joys; but the hills drink the water, as well as the valleys. We need not climb the mountains to water their heads, for our God is as high as the hills. High as our troubles, and mountainous as are our difficulties sometimes, we need not climb up with weary foot to make them fertile, for they are all made to work together for our good. Go, Egyptian; live thou in thy flat country, and enjoy its luxuries; thou hast thy papyrus, and thou writest mercies upon it, but it shall be the food of worms; we have no lotus, but we have a flower that blooms in paradise; and we write our mercies on rocks, and not on rushes. Oh! sweet Canaan, heavenly land,

where I dwell, and where you dwell, my brother Christians - a land which "drinketh water of the rain of heaven!"

II. We must consider a little time, THE SPECIAL MERCY. "The eyes of the Lord are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." WE must now turn away altogether from the allegoric, and come to this special mercy, which is the lot only of God's people.

"The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year:" that is, upon the lot of all Christians *individually*. We have come now, beloved, to the end of another year - to the threshold of another period of time, and have marched another year's journey through the wilderness. Come, now! In reading this verse over, can you say Amen to it? "The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon you, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Some of you say, "I have had deep troubles this year." "I have lost a friend," says one. "Ah!" says another, "I have been impoverished this year." "I have been slandered," cries another. "I have been exceedingly vexed and grieved," says another. "I have been persecuted," says another. Well, but, beloved, take the year altogether - the blacks and the whites, the troubles and the joys, the hills and the valleys altogether, and what have you to say about it? You may say, "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Do not pick out one day in the year, and say it was a bad day, but take all the year round, let it revolve in all its grandeur; let all the signs of the Zodiac come before you. Do not say, "I have been in Cancer so long a time," but run through them all, and then get into Libra, and judge between things that differ; and then what will you say? "Ah! bless the Lord! he hath done all things well; my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" And you know why all things have been well. It is because the eyes of the Lord have been upon you all the year. Oh! if those awful eyes had been shut for a single moment, by night or day, where should we have been? Why, we had not been at all but swept away, like airy dreams, into nihility. God watches over every one of his people, just as if there were only that one in the world; and he has been watching over you, so that when a trouble came, God said, "Trouble, avaunt!" "There shall no temptation happen to you

but such as is common to man." And when your joys would have cloyed upon you, and around you, God has said, "Stand back, joy! I will not have you fondle him too much; he will be deceived by thee." "The eyes of the Lord" have been upon you continually, "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." "Well," says one, "I cannot say so much of my year." Then I cannot say so much of you. I was speaking to the Christian; and if you cannot say of your year, "surely goodness and mercy have followed it all," I am afraid you are not a child of God, for methinks a child of God will say, when he reviews it all, "not one good thing hath failed of all the Lord God hath promised, but all hath come to pass."

Then, my brethren, might I not say a word to you concerning *the eyes of the Lord having been upon us as a church*? Ought we to let this year pass without rehearsing the works of the Lord? Hath he not been with us exceeding abundantly, and prospered us? It is during this year that we met together in the great assembly - during this year that these eyes have seen the mighty gatherings of men who listened to our words on the Sabbath-day. We shall not soon forget our sojourn in Exeter Hall - shall we? During those months the Lord brought in many of his own elect, and multitudes who were unsaved up to that time were called by divine mercy, and brought into the fold. How God protected us there! What peace and prosperity hath he given to us! How hath he enlarged our borders, and multiplied our numbers, so that we are not few, and increased us, so that we are not weak! I do think we were not thankful enough for the goodness of the Lord which carried us there, and gave us so many who have now become useful to use in our church! Remember in how many places ye have worshipped God this year. This place has been enlarged, so that more can be held within its walls; now we can receive more to listen to the voice of the Gospel than we could before; and God seems to say, "Go, forward, go forward still." The goodness of the Lord has increased as we have gone along. I have often feared, lest the people should desert the house, and that when we made it larger we should not have enough to fill it: but the Lord still sends an overwhelming congregation, and still gives us grace to preach his gospel. How thankful should we be! Surely, "the eyes of the Lord" have been upon this church, "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." We have had peace: not a rotten peace, I trust, but the peace of God. Nothing has

arisen that should disturb our equanimity. The church has been kept by the grace of God faithful to the doctrines of grace. Ah! what a blessing it is, that our members have been kept from falling into sin! What a glorious thing that we are carried through another year safely! Some old writer has said, "Every hour that a Christian remains a Christian is an hour of miracle." It is true; and every year that the church is kept an entire church is a year of miracle.

It is a year of miracles. Tell it to the wide, wide world; tell it everywhere. "The eye of the Lord" hath been upon us, "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Two hundred and ten persons have this year united with us in church fellowship; about enough to have formed a church. One half the churches in London cannot number so many in their entire body; and yet the Lord has brought so many into our midst. And still they come; still they come. Whenever I have an opportunity of seeing those who are converted to God, they come in such numbers that many have to be sent away. Still they come, still they come; and well I am assured, that I have as many still in this congregation, who will during the present year come forward to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. How often has the sacred pool of baptism been opened this year! How sweetly have we assembled round the Lord's table! What precious moments we have had at the Monday evening prayer meetings! And how glorious it has been when we have recognized brother after brother, sister after sister publicly, by giving them the right hand of fellowship! In all our ways we hope we have acknowledged him, and he has directed our paths. Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done wonders; bless his name, for he has worked miracles; praise his grace, for he hath highly exalted his people; for he has worked miracles; praise his grace, for he hath highly exalted his people; unto him be honor, for ever and ever. And mark you, brethren, this church has known what it is to come out of Egypt. We have not toiled with our feet here. I hope there has been no desire to draw unfit persons into the church, I have had no toiling with my feet, I am sure, in preaching the gospel - no legal preaching - none of your exciting preaching - none of all that toiling with your feet; but we have had nothing but the rain from heaven. We have not laboured to excite carnal passions, nor to preach sermons with a view of driving you into religious fevers. Sturdy old Calvinism will not let us do that. We cannot preach

such sermons as Arminians can. The land has been watered by the rain of heaven. We have not had any of those fatal pestilential mists that sometimes gather round the church. It is proverbial, that wherever the revivalists go, they always carry desolation; before them is an Eden; behind them is a desert; wherever they go they scorch the land like firebrands; though hundreds seem to be converted to God, they are converted to ten times blacker sins than before, and the last end of them is worse than the first.* We want not the getting up of a little feverish passion by appealing to the natural man; it is the drinking water of the rain of heaven that does the good. I trust it has been so here, and that "the eyes of the Lord" have been upon you "from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year."

So, beloved, I can say that, *as a minister, the eyes of the Lord have been upon me this year.* It has been my privilege, many times this year to preach his word. I think, more than four hundred times have I stood in the pulpit to testify his truth, and the eyes of the Lord have been upon me. Blessed be his name! whether it has been in the north, in the south, in the east, or in the west, I have never lacked a congregation; nor have I ever gone again to any of the places I have preached at, without hearing of souls converted. I cannot remember a single village, or town, that I have visited a second time without meeting with some who blessed God that they heard the word of truth there. When I went to Bradford last time, I stated in the pulpit that I had never heard of a soul being converted through my preaching there; and the good pew-opener came to Brother Dowson, and said, "Why didn't you tell Mr. Spurgeon that such-a-one joined the church through hearing him?" and instantly that dear man of God told me the cheering news. We have met with much opposition this year. Thanks to our brethren in the ministry, we have not had very much assistance from them. We have been enabled to say to them all, "I will not take from you, from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest ye should say, I have made him rich." But how much of that bigotry which formerly existed has subsided! How much of that sneer, which was at one time so common, has now gone away! I am now, rather more afraid of their smiles than their frowns - though I do not think I feel much of either. *Cedo nulli*, was my motto at the beginning, and I take it once more. I yield to none; but by the grace of God I preach his truth, and still,

if he help me, will I hold on my way. And to the Three-one God, be eternal honor. Amen.

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Christ's People-Imitators of Him

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. - Acts 4:13.

Behold! What a change divine grace will work in a man, and in how short a time. That same Peter, who so lately followed his master afar off, and with oaths and curses denied that he knew his name, is now to be found side by side with the loving John, boldly declaring that there is salvation in none other name save that of Jesus Christ, and preaching the resurrection of the dead, through the sacrifice of his dying Lord. The Scribes and Pharisees soon discover the reason of his boldness. Rightly did they guess that it rested not in his learning or his talents, for neither Peter nor John had been educated; they had been trained as fishermen; their education was a knowledge of the sea - of the fisherman's craft; none other had they; their boldness could not therefore spring from the self-sufficiency of knowledge, but from the Spirit of the living God. Nor did they acquire their courage from their station; for rank will confer a sort of dignity upon a man, and make him speak with a feigned authority, even when he has no talent or genius; but these men were, as it says in the original text, idiotai, private men, who stood in no official capacity; men without rank or station. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and private individuals, they marveled, and they came to a right conclusion as to the source of their power - they had been dwelling with Jesus. Their conversation with

the Prince of light and glory, backed up, as they might also have known, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, without which even that eminently holy example would have been in vain, had made them bold for their Master's cause. Oh! my brethren, it were well if this condemnation, so forced from the lips of enemies, could also be compelled by our own example. If we could live like Peter and John; if our lives were "living epistles of God, known and read of all men;" if, whenever we were seen, men would take knowledge of us, that we had been with Jesus, it would be a happy thing for this world, and a blessed thing for us. It is concerning that I am to speak to you this morning; and as God gives me grace, I will endeavor to stir up your minds by way of remembrance, and urge you so to imitate Jesus Christ, our heavenly pattern, that men may perceive that you are disciples of the Holy Son of God.

First, then, this morning, I will tell you what a Christian should be; secondly, I will tell you when he should be so; thirdly, why he should be so; and then fourthly how he can be so.

I. As God may help us then, first of all, we will speak of WHAT A BELIEVER SHOULD BE. A Christian should be a striking likeness of Jesus Christ. You have read lives of Christ, beautifully and eloquently written, and you have admired the talent of the persons who could write so well; but the best life of Christ is his living biography, written out in the words and actions of his people. If we, my brethren, were what we profess to be; if the Spirit of the Lord were in the heart of all his children, as we could desire; and if, instead of having abundance of formal professors, we were all possessors of that vital grace, I will tell you not only what we ought to be, but what we should be: we should be pictures of Christ, yea, such striking likenesses of him that the world would not have to hold us up by the hour together, and say, "Well, it seems somewhat of a likeness;" but they would, when they once beheld us, exclaim, "He has been with Jesus; he has been taught of him; he is like him; he has caught the very idea of the holy Man of Nazareth, and he expands it out into his very life and every day actions."

In enlarging upon this point, it will be necessary to premise, that when we here affirm that men should be such and such a thing, we refer to the

people of God. We do not wish to speak to them in any legal way. We are not under the law, but under grace. Christian men hold themselves bound to keep all God's precepts; but the reason why they do so is not because the law is binding upon them, but because the gospel constrains them; they believe, that having been redeemed by blood divine; having been purchased by Jesus Christ, they are more bound to keep his commands, than they would have been if they were under the law; they hold themselves to be ten thousand fold more debtors to God, than they could have been under the Mosaic dispensation. Not of force; not of compulsion; not through fear of the whip; not through legal bondage; but through pure, disinterested love and gratitude to God, they lay themselves out for his service, seeking to be Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile. This much I have declared lest any man should think that I am preaching works as the way to salvation; I will yield to none in this, that I will ever maintain - that by grace we are saved, and not by ourselves; but equally must I testify, that where the grace of God is, it will produce fitting deeds. To these I am ever bound to exhort you, while ye are ever expected to have good works for necessary purposes. Again, I do not, when I say that a believer should be a striking likeness of Jesus, suppose that any one Christian will perfectly exhibit all the features of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; yet, my brethren, the fact that perfection is beyond our reach, should not diminish the ardore of our desire after it. The artist, when he paints, knows right well that he shall not be able to excel Apelles; but that does not discourage him; he uses his brush with all the greater pains, that he may, at least in some humble measure, resemble the great master. So the sculptor, though persuaded that he will not rival Praxiteles, will hew out the marble still, and seek to be as near the model as possible. Thus so the Christian man; though he feels he never can mount to the heights of complete excellence, and perceives that he never can on earth become the exact image of Christ, still holds it up before him, and measures his own deficiencies by the distance between himself and Jesus. This will he do; forgetting all he has attained, he will press forward, crying, Excelsior! going upwards still, desiring to be conformed more and more to the image of Christ Jesus.

First, then, a Christian should be like Christ in his boldness. This is a virtue now-a-days called impudence, but the grace is equally valuable by

whatever name it may be called. I suppose if the Scribes had given a definition of Peter and John, they would have called them impudent fellows.

Jesus Christ and his disciples were noted for their courage. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Jesus Christ never fawned upon the rich; he stooped not to the great and noble; he stood erect, a man before men - the prophet of the people; speaking out boldly and freely what he thought. Have you never admired that mighty deed of his, when going to the city where he had lived and been brought up? Knowing that a prophet had no honor in his own country, the book was put into his hands (he had but then commenced his ministry), yet without tremor he unrolled the sacred volume, and what did he take for his text? Most men, coming to their own neighborhood, would have chosen a subject adapted to the taste, in order to earn fame. But what doctrine did Jesus preach that morning? One which in our age is scorned and hated - the doctrine of election. He opened the Scriptures, and began to read thus: "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sodom, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus, the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman, the Syrian." Then he began to tell, how God saveth whom he pleases, and rescues whom he chooses. Ah! how they gnashed their teeth upon him, dragged him out, and would have cast him from the brow of the hill. Do you not admire his intrepidity? He saw their teeth gnashing; he knew their hearts were hot with enmity, while their mouths foamed with revenge and malice; still he stood like the angel who shut the lions' mouths; he feared them not; faithfully he proclaimed what he knew to be the truth of God, and still read on, despite them all. So, in his discourses. If he saw a Scribe or a Pharisee in the congregation, he did not keep back part of the price, but pointing his finger, he said, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites;" and when a lawyer came, saying, "Master, in speaking thus, thou condemnest us also;" he turned round and said "Woe unto you, lawyers, for ye bind heavy burdens upon men, while ye yourselves will not touch them with so much as one of your fingers." He

dealt out honest truth; he never knew the fear of man; he trembled at none; he stood out God's chosen, whom he had anointed above his fellows, careless of man's esteem. My friends, be like Christ in this. Have none of the time-serving religion of the present day, which is merely exhibited in evangelical drawing-rooms, - a religion which only flourishes in a hot-bed atmosphere, a religion which is only to be perceived in good company. No; if ye are the servants of God, be like Jesus Christ, bold for your master; never blush to own your religion; your profession will never disgrace you; take care you never disgrace that. Your love to Christ will never dishonor you; it may bring some temporary slight from your friends, or slanders from your enemies; but live on, and you shall live down their calumnies; live on, and ye shall stand amongst the glorified, honored even by those who hissed you, when he shall come to be glorified by his angels, and admired by them that love him. Be like Jesus, very valiant for your God, so that when they shall see your boldness, they may say, "He has been with Jesus."

But no one feature will give a portrait of a man; so the one virtue of boldness will never make you like Christ. There have been some who have been noble men, but have carried their courage to excess; they have thus been caricatures of Christ, and not portraits of him. We must amalgamate with our boldness the loveliness of Jesus' disposition. Let courage be the brass, let love be the gold. Let us mix the two together; so shall we produce a rich Corinthian metal, fit to be manufactured into the beautiful gate of the temple. Let your love and courage be mingled together. The man who is bold may indeed accomplish wonders. John Knox did much, but he might perhaps have done more if he had had a little love. Luther was a conqueror - peace to his ashes, and honor to his name! - still, we who look upon him at a distance, think that if he had sometimes mixed a little mildness with it - if, while he had the fortitier in re, he had been also suaviter in modo, and spoken somewhat more gently, he might have done even more good than he did. So brethren, while we too are bold, let us ever imitate the loving Jesus. The child comes to him; he takes it on his knee, saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." A widow has just lost her only son; he weeps at the bier, and with a word, restores life to the dead man. He sees a paralytic, a leper, or a man long confined to his bed; he speaks, they rise, and are healed. He lived for

others, not for himself. His constant labors were without any motive, except the good of those who lived in the world. And to crown all, ye know the mighty sacrifice he made, when he condescended to lay down his life for man - when on the tree, quivering with agony, and hanging in the utmost extremity of suffering, he submitted to die for our sakes, that we might be saved. Behold in Christ love consolidated! He was one mighty pillar of benevolence. As God is love, so Christ is love. Oh, ye Christians, be ye loving also. Let your love and your beneficence beam out on all men. Say not, "Be ye warmed, and be ye filled," but "give a portion to seven, and also to eight." If ye cannot imitate Howard, and unlock the prison doors - if ye cannot visit the sad house of misery, yet each in your proper sphere, speak kind words, do kind actions; live out Christ again in the kindness of your life. If there is one virtue which most commends Christians, it is that of kindness; it is to love the people of God, to love the church, to love the world, to love all. But how many have we in our churches of Crab-tree Christians, who have mixed such a vast amount of vinegar, and such a tremendous quantity of gall in their constitutions, that they can scarcely speak one good word to you: they imagine it impossible to defend religion except by passionate ebullitions; they cannot speak for their dishonored Master without being angry with their opponent; and if anything is awry, whether it be in the house, the church, or anywhere else, they conceive it to be their duty to set their faces like flint, and to defy everybody. They are like isolated icebergs, no one cares to go near them. They float about on the sea of forgetfulness, until at last they are melted and gone; and though, good souls, we shall be happy enough to meet them in heaven, we are precious glad to get rid of them from the earth. They were always so unamiable in disposition, that we would rather live an eternity with them in heaven than five minutes on earth. Be ye not thus, my brethren. Imitate Christ in your loving spirits; speak kindly, act kindly, and do kindly, that men may say of you, "He has been with Jesus."

Another great feature in the life of Christ was his deep and sincere humility; in which let us imitate him. While we will not cringe or bow (far from it; we are the freemen whom the truth makes free; we walk through this world equal to all, inferior to none) yet we would endeavor to be like Christ, continually humble. Oh, thou proud Christian (for though it be a

paradox, there must be some, I think; I would not be so uncharitable as to say that there are not some such persons), if thou art a Christian, I bid thee look at thy Master, talking to the children, bending from the majesty of his divinity to speak to mankind on earth, tabernacling with the peasants of Galilee, and then - aye, depth of condescension unparalleled - washing his disciples' feet, and wiping them with the towel after supper. This is your Master, whom ye profess to worship; this is your Lord, whom ye adore. And ye, some of you who count yourselves Christians, cannot speak to a person who is not dressed in the same kind of clothing as yourselves, who have not exactly as much money per year as you have. In England, it is true that a sovereign will not speak to a shilling, and a shilling will not notice a sixpence, and a sixpence will sneer at a penny. But it should not be so with Christians. We ought to forget caste, degree, and rank, when we come into Christ's church. Recollect, Christian, who your Master was - a man of the poor. He lived with them; he ate with them. And will ye walk with lofty heads and stiff necks, looking with insufferable contempt upon you meaner fellow-worms? What are ye? The meanest of all, because your trickeries and adornments make you proud. Pitiful, despicable souls ye are! How small ye look in God's sight! Christ was humble; he stooped to do anything which might serve others. He had no pride; he was an humble man, a friend of publicans and sinners, living and walking with them. So, Christian, be thou like thy Master - one who can stoop; yea, be thou one who thinks it no stooping, but rather esteems others better than himself, counts it his honor to sit with the poorest of Christ's people, and says, "If my name may be but written in the obscurest part of the book of life, it is enough for me, so unworthy am I of his notice!" Be like Christ in his humility.

So might I continue, dear brethren, speaking of the various characteristics of Christ Jesus; but as you can think of them as well as I can, I shall not do so. It is easy for you to sit down and paint Jesus Christ, for you have him drawn out here in his word. I find that time would fail me if I were to give you an entire likeness of Jesus; but let me say, imitate him in his holiness. Was zealous for his master? So be you. Ever go about doing good. Let not time be wasted. It is too precious. Was he self-denying, never looking to his own interest? So be you. Was he devout? So be you fervent in your prayers. Had he deference to his Father's will? So

submit yourselves to him. Was he patient? So learn to endure. And best of all, as the highest portraiture of Jesus, try to forgive your enemies as he did; and let those sublime words of you Master, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," always ring in your ears. When you are prompted to revenge; when hot anger starts, bridle the steed at once, and let it not dash forward with you headlong. Remember, anger is temporary insanity. Forgive as you hope to be forgiven. Heap coals of fire on the head of your foe by your kindness to him. Good for evil, recollect, is god-like. Be god-like, then; and in all ways, and by all means, so live that your enemies may say, "He has been with Jesus."

II. Now, WHEN SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE THUS? For there is an idea in the world that persons ought to be very religious on a Sunday, but it does not matter what they are on a Monday. How many pious preachers are there on a Sabbath-day, who are very impious preachers during the rest of the week! How many are there who come up to the house of God with a solemn countenance, who join the song and profess to pray, yet have neither part nor lot in the matter, but are "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity!" This is true of some of you who are present here. When should a Christian, then, be like Jesus Christ? Is there a time when he may strip off his regimentals - when the warrior may unbuckle his armor, and become like other men? Oh! no; at all times and in every place let the Christian be what he professes to be. I remember talking some time ago with a person who said, "I do not like visitors who come to my house and introduce religion; I think we ought to have religion on the Sabbath-day, when we go to the house of God, but not in the drawing-room." I suggested to the individual that there would be a great deal of work for the upholsterers, if there should be no religion except in the house of God. "How is that?" was the question. "Why," I replied, "we should need to have beds fitted up in all our places of worship, for surely we need religion to die with, and consequently, every one would want to die there." Aye, we all need the consolations of God at last; but how can we expect to enjoy them unless we obey the precepts of religion during life? My brethren, let me say, be ye like Christ at all times. Imitate him in public. Most of us live in some sort of publicity; many of us are called to work before our fellow-men every day. We are watched; our words are caught; our lives are examined - taken to pieces. The eagle-eyed, argus-

eyed world observes everything we do, and sharp critics are upon us. Let us live the life of Christ in public. Let us take care that we exhibit our Master, and not ourselves - so that we can say, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." Take heed that you carry this into the church too, you who are church-members. Be like Christ in the church. How many there are of you like Diotrophes, seeking pre-eminence? How many are trying to have some dignity and power over their fellow Christians, instead of remembering that it is the fundamental rule of all our churches, that there all men are equal - alike brethren, alike to be received as such. Carry out the spirit of Christ, then, in your churches, wherever ye are; let your fellow members say of you, "He has been with Jesus."

But, most of all, take care to have religion in your houses. A religious house is the best proof of true piety. It is not my chapel, it is my house - it is not my minister, it is my home-companion - who can best judge me; it is the servant, the child, the wife, the friend, that can discern most of my real character. A good man will improve his household. Rowland Hill once said, he would not believe a man to be a true Christian if his wife, his children, the servants, and even the dog and cat, were not the better for it. That is being religious. If your household is not the better for your Christianity - if men cannot say, "This is a better house than others," then be not deceived - ye have nothing of the grace of God. Let not your servant, on leaving your employ, say, "Well, this is a queer sort of a religious family; there was no prayer in the morning, I began the day with my drudgery; there was no prayer at night, I was kept at home all the Sabbath-day. Once a fortnight, perhaps, I was allowed to go out in the afternoon, when there was nowhere to go where I could hear a gospel sermon. My master and mistress went to a place where of course they heard the blessed gospel of God - that was all for them; as for me, I might have the dregs and leavings of some overworked curate in the afternoon." Surely, Christian men will not act in that way. No! Carry out your godliness in your family. Let everyone say that you have practical religion. Let it be known and read in the house, as well as in the world. Take care of your character there; for what we are there, we really are. Our life abroad is often but a borrowed part, the actor's part of a great scene, but at home the wizard is removed, and men are what they seem.

Take care of you home duties.

Yet again, my brethren, before I leave this point, imitate Jesus in secret. When no eye seeth you except the eye of God, when darkness covers you, when you are shut up from the observation of mortals, even then be ye like Jesus Christ. Remember his ardent piety, his secret devotion - how, after laboriously preaching the whole day, he stole away in the midnight shades to cry for help from his God. Recollect how his entire life was constantly sustained by fresh inspirations of the Holy Spirit, derived by prayer. Take care of your secret life; let it be such that you will not be ashamed to read at the last great day. Your inner life is written in the book of God, and it shall one day be open before you. If the entire life of some of you were known, it would be no life at all; it would be a death. Yea, even of some true Christians we may say it is scarce a life. It is a dragging on of an existence - one hasty prayer a day - one breathing, just enough to save their souls alive, but no more. O, my brethren, strive to be more like Jesus Christ. These are times when we want more secret prayer. I have had much fear all this week. I know not whether it is true; but when I feel such a thing I like to tell it to those of you who belong to my own church and congregation. I have trembled lest, by being away from our own place, you have ceased to pray as earnestly as you once did. I remember your earnest groans and petitions - how you would assemble together in the house of prayer in multitudes, and cry out to God to help his servant. We cannot meet in such style at present; but do you still pray in private? Have you forgotten me? Have you ceased to cry out to God? Oh! my friends, with all the entreaties that a man can use, let me appeal to you. Recollect who I am, and what I am - a child, having little education, little learning, ability or talent; and here am I called upon week after week, to preach to this crowd of people. Will ye not, my beloved, still plead for me? Has not God been pleased to hear your prayers ten thousand times? And will ye now cease, when a mighty revival is taking place in many churches? Will ye now stop your petitions? Oh! no; go to your houses, fall upon your knees, cry aloud to God to enable you still to hold up your hands like Moses on the hill, that Joshua below may fight and overcome the Amalekites. Now is the time for victory; shall we lose it? This is the high tide that will float us over the bar; now let us put out the oars; let us pull by earnest prayer, crying for

God the Spirit to fill the sails! Ye who love God, of every place and every denomination, wrestle for your ministers; pray for them; for why should not God even now put out his Spirit? What is the reason why we are to be denied Pentecostal seasons? Why not this hour, as one mighty band, fall down before him and entreat him, for his Son's sake, to revive his drooping church? Then would all men discern that we are verily the disciples of Christ.

III. But now, thirdly, WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS IMITATE CHRIST? The answer comes very naturally and easily, Christians should be like Christ, first, for their own sakes. For their honesty's sake, and for their credit's sake, let them not be found liars before God and men. For their own healthful state, if they wish to be kept from sin and preserved from going astray, let them imitate Jesus. For their own happiness' sake, if they would drink wine on the lees well refined; if they would enjoy holy and happy communion with Jesus; if they would be lifted up above the cares and troubles of this world, let them imitate Jesus Christ. Oh! my brethren, there is nothing that can so advantage you, nothing can so prosper you, so assist you, so make you walk towards heaven rapidly, so keep you head upwards towards the sky, and your eyes radiant with glory, like the imitation of Jesus Christ. It is when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you are enabled to walk with Jesus in his very footsteps, and tread in his ways, you are most happy and you are most known to be the sons of God. For your own sake, my brethren, I say, be like Christ.

Next, for religion's sake, strive to imitate Jesus. Ah! poor religion, thou hast been sorely shot at by cruel foes, but thou hast not been wounded one-half so much by them as by thy friends. None have hurt thee, O, Christianity, so much as those who profess to be thy followers. Who have made these wounds in this fair hand of godliness? I say, the professor has done this, who has not lived up to his profession; the man who with pretences enters the fold, being naught but a wolf in sheep's clothing. Such men, sirs, injure the gospel more than others; more than the laughing infidel, more than the sneering critic, doth the man hurt our cause who professes to love it, but in his actions doth belie his love. Christian, lovest thou that cause? Is the name of the dear Redeemer precious to thee? Wouldst thou see the kingdoms of the world become the

kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ? Dost thou wish to see the proud man humbled and the mighty abased? Dost thou long for the souls of perishing sinners, and art thou desirous to win them, and save their souls from the everlasting burning? Wouldst thou prevent their fall into the regions of the damned? Is it thy desire that Christ should see the travail of his soul, and be abundantly satisfied? Doth thy heart yearn over thy fellow-immortals? Dost thou long to see them forgiven? Then be consistent with thy religion. Walk before God in the land of the living. Behave as an elect man should do. Recollect what manner of people we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness. This is the best way to convert the world; yea, such conduct would do more than even the efforts of missionary societies, excellent as they are. Let but men see that our conduct is superior to others, then they will believe there is something in our religion; but, if they see us quite the contrary to what we avow, what will they say? "These religious people are no better than others! Why should we go amongst them?" And they say quite rightly. It is but common-sense judgment. Ah! my friends, if ye love religion for her own sake, be consistent, and walk in the love of God. Follow Christ Jesus.

Then, to put it in the strongest form I can, let me say, for Christ's sake, endeavor to be like him. Oh! could I fetch the dying Jesus here, and let him speak to you! My own tongue is tied this morning, but I would make his blood, his scars, and his wounds speak. Poor dumb mouths, I bid each of them plead in his behalf. How would Jesus, standing here, show you his hands this morning! "My friends," he would say, "hehold me! these hands were pierced for you; and look ye here at this my side. It was opened as the fountain of your salvation. See my feet; there entered the cruel nails. Each of these bones were dislocated for your sake. These eyes gushed with torrents of tears. This head was crowned with thorns. These cheeks were smitten; this hair was plucked; my body became the centre and focus of agony. I hung quivering in the burning sun; and all for you, my people. And will ye not love me now? I bid you be like me. Is there any fault in me? Oh! no. Ye believe that I am fairer than ten thousand fairs, and lovelier than ten thousand loves. Have I injured you? Have I not rather done all for your salvation? And do I not sit at my Father's throne, and e'en now intercede on your behalf? If ye love me,"-Christian, hear that word; let the sweet syllables ring forever in your ears, like the

prolonged sounding of silver-toned bells; - "if ye love me, if ye love me, keep my commandments." Oh, Christian, let that "if" be put to thee this morning. "If ye love me." Glorious Redeemer! is it an "if" at all? Thou precious, bleeding Lamb, can there be an "if?" What, when I see thy blood gushing from thee; is it an "if?" Yes, I weep to say it is an "if." Oft my thoughts make it "if," and oft my words make it "if." But yet methinks my soul feels it is not "if," either.

"Not to mine eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet."

"Yes, I love thee, I know that I love thee. Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," can the Christian say. "Well, then," says Jesus, looking down with a glance of affectionate approbation, "since thou lovest me, keep my commandments." O beloved, what mightier reason can I give than this? It is the argument of love and affection. Be like Christ, since gratitude demands obedience; so shall the world know that ye have been with Jesus.

IV. Ah! then ye wept; and I perceive ye felt the force of pity, and some of you are inquiring, "HOW CAN I IMITATE HIM?" It is my business, then, before you depart, to tell you how you can become transformed into the image of Christ.

In the first place, then, my beloved friends, in answer to your inquiry, let me say, you must know Christ as your Redeemer before you can follow him as your Exemplar. Much is said about the example of Jesus, and we scarcely find a man now who does not believe that our Lord was an excellent and holy man, much to be admired. But excellent as was his example, it would be impossible to imitate it, had he not also been our sacrifice. Do ye this morning know that his blood was shed for you? Can ye join with me in this verse, -

"O the sweet wonders of that cross,
Where God the Saviour lov'd and died;
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side."

If so, you are in a fair way to imitate Christ. But do not seek to copy him until you are bathed in the fountain filled with blood drawn from his veins. It is not possible for you to do so; your passions will be too strong and corrupt, and you will be building without a foundation, a structure, which will be about as stable as a dream. You cannot mould your life to his pattern until you have had his spirit, till you have been clothed in his righteousness. "Well," say some, "we have proceeded so far, what next shall we do? We know we have an interest in him, but we are still sensible of manifold deficiencies." Next, then, let me entreat you to study Christ's character. This poor Bible is become an almost obsolete book, even with some Christians. There are so many magazines, periodicals, and such like ephemeral productions, that we are in danger of neglecting to search the Scriptures. Christian, wouldst thou know thy master? Look at him. There is a wondrous power about the character of Christ, for the more you regard it the more you will be conformed to it. I view myself in the glass, I go away, and forget what I was. I behold Christ, and I become like Christ. Look at him, then; study him in the evangelists, studiously examine his character. "But," say you, "we have done that, and we have proceeded but little farther." Then, in the next place, correct your poor copy every day. At night, try and recount all the actions of the twenty-four hours, scrupulously putting them under review. When I have proof-sheets sent to me of any of my writings, I have to make the corrections in the margin. I might read them over fifty times, and the printers would still put in the errors if I did not mark them. So must you do; if you find anything faulty at night, make a mark in the margin, that you may know where the fault is, and to-morrow may amend it. Do this day after day, continually noting your faults one by one, so that you may better avoid them. It was a maxim of the old philosophers, that, three times in the day, we should go over our actions. So let us do; let us not be forgetful; let us rather examine ourselves each night, and see wherein we have done amiss, that we may reform our lives.

Lastly, as the best advice I can give, seek more of the Spirit of God; for this is the way to become Christ-like. Vain are all your attempts to be like him till you have sought his spirit. Take the cold iron, and attempt to weld it if you can into a certain shape. How fruitless the effort! Lay it on

the anvil, seize the blacksmith's hammer with all you might, let blow after blow fall upon it, and you shall have done nothing. Twist it, turn it, use all your implements, but you shall not be able to fashion it as you would. But put it in the fire, let it be softened and made malleable, then lay it on the anvil, and each stroke shall have a mighty effect, so that you may fashion it into any form you may desire. So take your heart, not cold as it is, not stony as it is by nature, but put it into the furnace; there let it be molten, and after that it can be turned like wax to the seal, and fashioned into the image of Jesus Christ.

Oh, my brethren, what can I say now to enforce my text, but that, if ye are like Christ on earth, ye shall be like him in heaven? If by the power of the Spirit ye become followers of Jesus, ye shall enter glory. For at heaven's gate there sits an angel, who admits no one who has not the same features as our adorable Lord. There comes a man with a crown upon his head, "Yes," he says, "thou hast a crown, it is true, but crowns are not the medium of access here." Another approaches, dressed in robes of state and the gown of learning. "Yes," says the angel, "it may be good, but gowns and learning are not the marks that shall admit you here." Another advances, fair, beautiful, and comely. "Yes," saith the angel, "that might please on earth, but beauty is not wanted here." There cometh up another, who is heralded by fame, and prefaced by the blast of the clamor of mankind; but the angel saith, "It is well with man, but thou hast no right to enter here." Then there appears another; poor he may have been; illiterate he may have been; but the angel, as he looks at him, smiles and says, "It is Christ again; a second edition of Jesus Christ is there. Come in, come in. Eternal glory thou shalt win. Thou art like Christ; in heaven thou shalt sit, because thou art like him." Oh! to be like Christ is to enter heaven; but to be unlike Christ is to descend to hell. Likes shall be gathered together at last, tares with tares, wheat with wheat. If ye have sinned with Adam and have died, ye shall lie with the spiritually dead forever, unless ye rise in Christ to newness of life; then shall we live with him throughout eternity. Wheat with wheat, tares with tares. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Go away with this one thought, then my brethren, that you can test yourselves by Christ. If you are like Christ, you are of Christ, and shall be with Christ. If you are unlike him, you have no portion in the great

inheritance. May my poor discourse help to fan the floor and reveal the chaff; yea, may it lead many of you to seek to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, to the praise of his grace. To him be all honor given! Amen.

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Religion—a Reality

"For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."—
Deuteronomy 32:47.

It appears from this closing remark of Moses, that there were men in his time who thought religion to be vain, although, under the system which then existed, there were many plain proofs of its usefulness: for they who served God in those days prospered, and national advantages always followed nation obedience to God. Under the theocratic government of the Israelites in the wilderness, and in their early history when established in Canaan, their offences against God's law brought upon them famine, plague, or the scourge of marauding hosts; while repentance and a return to allegiance always brought them a deliverer, and a restoration of peace and plenty. They had visibly before their eyes proofs that God did reward virtue; and yet, notwithstanding this, there were some so besotted against God, that they said, "It is a vain thing to serve the Lord." Do you wonder, therefore, that there should be many such under the gospel? It would, indeed, be marvellous if there were not many more, for the gospel is a far more spiritual system than the Jewish dispensation, and its blessings are not of a carnal order. No blessing apparent to carnal eyes rests upon the godly, but sometimes the case appears to be reversed: we see the wicked prosper, and the righteous are trodden under foot. The Christian dispensation is one which requires much faith to receive it. We walk not by sight, but by faith alone; and it is little marvel that when ungodly men see the righteous afflicted, and discover that their comfort lies in matters which only faith can apprehend, they should cry out, "It is a vain thing," and should turn aside from the ordinances of God. Besides, to confess the truth, there have been so many counterfeits of true religion, that it is not remarkable that

unconverted men should consider even the genuine article to be but a vain thing. Men have made pretences of wondrous sanctity, whilst inwardly full of rottenness; and sinners have learned to argue with terrible logic: "They are none of them good; they are all deceivers; the best of them are hypocrites, and religion itself is a vain thing." However false may be the conclusion here—and we believe it to be utterly so—yet we do not wonder that men, desiring to believe religion to be a falsehood, have found some support for their unbelief in the hypocrisy of professors.

Now we will grant you this morning that much of the religion which is abroad in the world is a vain thing. The religion of ceremonies is vain. If a man shall trust in the gorgeous pomp of uncommanded mysteries, if he shall consider that there resides some mystic efficacy in a priest, and that by uttering certain words a blessing is infallibly received, we tell him that his religion is a vain thing. You might as well go to the Witch of Endor for grace as to a priest; and if you rely upon words, the "Abracadabra" of a magician will as certainly raise you to heaven, or rather sink you to hell, as the performances of the best ordained minister under heaven. Ceremonies in themselves are vain, futile, empty. There are but two of God's ordaining, they are most simple, and neither of them pretend to have any efficacy in themselves. They only set forth an inward and spiritual grace, not necessarily tied to them, but only given to those who by faith perceive their teachings. All ceremonial religion, no matter how sincere, if it consist in relying upon forms and observances, is a vain thing. So with creed-religion—by which I mean not to speak against creeds, for I love "the form of sound words," but that religion which lies in believing with the intellect a set of dogmas, without partaking of the life of God; all this is a vain thing. Again, that religion which only lies in making a profession of what one does not possess, in wearing the Christian name, and observing the ritual of the Church, but which does not so affect the character as to make a man holy, nor so touch the heart as to make a man God's true servant—such a religion is vain throughout. O my dear hearers, how much worthless religion may you see everywhere! So long as men get the name, they seem content without the substance. Everywhere, it matters not to what Church you turn your eye, you see a vast host of hypocrites, numerous as flies about a dead carcass. On all sides there are deceivers, and deceived; who write "Heaven" upon

their brows, but have hell in their hearts; who hang out the sign of an angel over their doors, but have the devil for a host within. Take heed to yourselves; be not deceived, for he who tries the heart and searches the reins of the children of men is not mocked, and he will surely discern between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not.

But with all these allowances, we still this morning assert most positively that the religion of Christ Jesus, that which has been revealed to us of the Holy Ghost by the apostles and prophets, and specially by the Messiah himself, when truly received into the heart, is no vain thing. We shall handle the text four ways, taking the word "vain" in different shades of meaning. It is no fiction it is no trifle; it is no folly; it is no speculation. In each case we will prove our assertion by the second sentence—"Because it is your life."

I. First, then, the true religion of Christ, which consists in a vital faith in his person, his blood, and his righteousness, and which produces obedience to his commands, and a love to God, IS NOT A FICTION.

I am not going to argue this morning. I was never sent to argue, but to teach and speak dogmatically. I assert in the name of all those who have tried it, that true religion is not a fiction to us. It is to us the grandest of all realities, and we hope that our testimony and witness, if we be honest men, may prevail with others who may be sceptical upon this point. We say, then, that the objects of true religion are, to those who believe in Jesus, no fiction. God the Father to whom we look with the spirit of adoption, is no fiction to us. I know that to some men the Divine Being is a mere abstraction. As to communing with him, as to speaking to him, they think such wonders may have occurred to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, but to them such things are impossible. Now we do solemnly assure you, as men who would not lie in this matter, that God the Father is to us as real a person as the man from whose loins we sprang, and that we have as surely talked unto him, and he has as truly spoken to our hearts as ever we have spoken with our friend, and have been answered by him. We tell you that to us the being of God is a fact which influences our whole life, checks us when we would sin, forbids our weaker passions to rebel, and nerves our nobler powers to do or suffer. Our consciousness, our experience, our emotions, and our whole being, tell us that there is a

God. We have had personal dealings with him; he has been with us in our chamber; we have seen his face in the sanctuary; we have cast our cares upon him; and therefore to us the Eternal and indwelling Father is no fiction. So is it with Christ Jesus. To mere professors Christ Jesus is never anything but a myth. They believe there was such a man, but he is only an historical personage to them. To true believers in Christ, however, he is a real person, now existing, and now dwelling in the hearts of his people. And oh! I bear my witness that if there be anything which has ever been certified to my consciousness it is the existence of Jesus, the man, the Son of God. Oh friends, have we not, when our soul has been in a rapture, thrust our finger into the prints of the nails? Have we not been so drawn away from the outward world, that in spiritual communings we could say, He was to us as our brother that sucked the breasts of our mother, and when we found him without we did embrace him, and we would not let him go? His left hand has been under our head, and his right hand has embraced us. I know this will sound like a legend even to men who profess to be Christ's followers, but I question the reality of your piety if Christ be not one for whom you live, and in whom you dwell; with whom you walk, and in whom you hope soon to sleep that you may wake up in his likeness. A real Christ and a real God—no man has real religion till he knows these. So again the Holy Spirit, who is, with the Father and the Son, the one God of Israel; the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, indivisibly One and yet everlastingly Three—the Holy Spirit is also real, for

"He, in our hearts of sin and woe
Makes living streams of grace arise,
Which into boundless glory flow."

Tell us there is no Spirit? Why, about this we can speak positively. A fool may say that there is no magnetic influence, and that no electric streams can flow along the wires, but they who have once been touched by that mysterious power know it; and the Holy Spirit's influence on men is quite as much within the sphere of our recognition, if we have ever felt it, as is the influence of galvanism or magnetism. Those who have once felt the spiritual life know when it is flowing in; when its strength is withdrawn, and when it returns anew. They know that at times they can do all things;

their heaviest trial is a joy, and their weightiest burden a delight; and that at other times they can do nothing, being bowed down to the very dust with weakness. They know that at times they enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ, and that at other times they are disturbed in spirit. They have discovered, too, that these changes do not depend upon the weather, nor upon circumstances, nor upon any relation of one thought to another, but upon certain secret, mystic, and divine impulses which come forth from the Spirit of God, which make a man more than man, for he is filled with Deity from head to foot, and whose withdrawal makes him feel himself less than man, for he is filled with sin and drenched with iniquity, till he loatheth his own being. Tell us there is no Holy Spirit! We have seen his goings in the sanctuary, but as we shall have to mention these by-and-bye, we pass on, and only now affirm that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are to true Christians no fiction, no dream, no fancy, but as real and as true as persons whom we can see, things which we can handle, or viands which we can taste.

But further, we can also say that the experience which true religion brings is no fiction. Believe me, sirs, it is no fiction to repent; for there is a bitterness in it which makes it all too real. Oh, the agony of sin lying on an awakened conscience! If you have ever felt it, it will seem to you as the ravings of a madman when any shall tell you that religion is not real! When the great hammer of the law broke our hearts in pieces, it was a stern reality. These eyes have sometimes, before I knew the Saviour, been ready to start from my head with horror, and my soul has often been bowed down with a grief far too terrible ever to be told to my fellow-man, when I felt that I was guilty before God, that my Maker was angry with me, that he must punish me, and that I deserved and must suffer his eternal wrath. I do assure you there was no fiction there! And when the Spirit of God comes into the heart and takes all our grief away, and gives us joy and peace in believing in Christ, there is no fiction then. Of course, to other men this is no evidence, except they will believe our honesty; but to us it is the very best of evidence. We were bidden to believe on Christ; it was all we were to do: to look to his cross, to believe him to be the propitiation for sin, and to trust in him to save us; we did so, and oh, the joy of that moment! In one instant we leaped from the depths of hell to the very heights of heaven in experience; dragged up out of the horrible

pit, and out of the miry clay, our feet were set upon a rock, and we could sing for very joy. Oh, the mirth! oh, the bliss! oh, the ecstasy of the soul that can say—

"Happy, happy, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away,
Happy, happy, happy day."

That was no fiction, surely. If it be so, I will continue to cry, "Blessed fiction! blessed dream! may I contrive to believe thee; may I always be so deluded if this is to be deluded and misled!" Since then, look at the believer's experience. He has had as many troubles as other men have, but oh, what comforts he has had! He lost his wife, and as he stood there and thought his heart would break, he could still say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Child after child sickened before his loving gaze, and as they went one after the other to the tomb where he often wished he could have slept instead of them—while he mourned and wept as Jesus did, yet still he could say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." When the house was burned—when the property vanished—when trade ran ill—when character was slandered—when the soul was desponding and all but despairing, yet there came in that one ray of light, "Christ is all, and all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." I can tell you, that Christians have often had their brightest days when other people thought they were in their darkest nights; and they have often had the best of dainties when there was a famine abroad. Is this a fiction? O sirs, we challenge you to find so blessed a fiction as this elsewhere! I saw last Friday a sight, enough to make one weep indeed: there in the back-room of the house, lay a fine youth, a member of this Church, sickening and near to death of consumption, and he talked to me joyously of his prospect of entering into the rest which remaineth for the people of God; there in the front-room, on the same floor, lay his sister, I suppose but some two years younger, withering under the same disease; and there sat the tender mother with her two children, thinking to lose them both within a few days, and though she said, it was natural to weep, yet she could say even under this sharp trial, "The Lord's name be magnified in it all." I say there was no fiction there. If you who think there

is a fiction in such things could live among Christians—if you could see the poor cheerfully suffering —if you could mark the sick and how joyously they bear their pains—if you could see the dying and hear their shouts of triumph, you would say, "There is a reality here; there is something in true religion; let me die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like his!"

But yet further; as we are sure there is a reality in the objects and in the experience of true godliness, so are we quite clear that there is a reality in its privileges. One of the privileges of the Christian is prayer. It is the believer's privilege, to go to God and ask for what he wants, and have it. Now, sirs, I am absolutely certain that prayer is a reality. I shall not tell here my own experience. One reads not his love-letters in the streets, one tells not his own personal dealings with God in public; but if there be a fact that can be proved by ten thousand instances, and which therefore no reasonable man has any right to doubt —if there be anything that is true under heaven, it is true that God hears prayer when it cometh not out of feigned lips, and is offered through Jesus Christ. I know when we tell the story out, men smile and say, "Ah, these were singular coincidences!" Why, I have seen in my life, answers to prayer so remarkable, that if God had rent the curtain of the heavens and thrust out his arm to work a deliverance, it could not have been more decidedly and distinctly a divine interposition than when he listened to my feeble cry for help. I speak not of myself as though I were different from other men in this, for it is so with all who have real godliness. They know that God hears them; they prove it to-day; they intend to prove it at this very hour.

Communion with Christ is another reality. The shadow of his cross is too refreshing to be a dream, and the sunlight of his face is too bright to be a delusion. Precious Jesus! thou art a storehouse of substantial delights and solid joy. Then, the privileges of Christian Love towards one another are real. I know they are not with some men. Why, look you at some of your fashionable Churches; if the poor people were to speak to the richer ones, what would the rich ones think of them? Why, snap their heads half off, and send them about their business! But where there is true Christianity, we feel that the only place in the world where there can ever be liberty, equality, and fraternity, is in the Church of Christ. To attempt

this politically, is but to attempt an impossibility; but to foster it in the Church of God, where we are all allied to God, is but to nourish the very spirit of the gospel. I say there is a reality in Christian love, for I have seen it among my flock; and though some do not show it as they should, yet my heart rejoices that there is so much hearty brotherly love among you, and thus your religion is not a vain thing.

Once more upon this point, for I am spending all my time here while I need it for other points. The religion of Christ is evidently not a vain thing if you look at its effects. We will not take you abroad now to tell you of the effects of the gospel of Christ in the South Sea. We need not remind you of what it has done for the heathen, but let me tell you what it has done for men here. Ah! brethren, you will not mind my telling out some of the secrets, secrets that bring the tears to my eyes as I reflect upon them. When I speak of the thief, the harlot, the drunkard, the sabbath-breaker, the swearer, I may say "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye rejoice in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." How many a man has been going by the door there, and has said "I'll go in and hear Old Spurgeon." He came in to make merriment of the preacher, and very little that troubles him. But the man has stood there until the Word has gone home to him, and he who was wont to beat his wife, and to make his home a hell, has before long been to see me, and given me a grip of the hand and said, "God Almighty bless you, sir; there is something in true religion!" "Well, let us hear your tale," We have heard it, and delightful it has been in hundreds of instances. "Very well, send your wife, and let us hear what she says about you." The woman has come, and we have said "Well, what think you of your husband now, ma'am?" "Oh, sir, such a change I never saw in my life! He is so kind to us; he is like an angel now, and he seemed like a fiend before; Oh! that cursed drink, sir! everything went to the public-house; and then if I went up to the house of God, he did nothing but abuse me. Oh! to think that now he comes with me on Sunday; and the shop is shut up, sir; and the children who used to be running about without a bit of shoe or stocking, he takes them on his knee, and prays with them so sweetly. Oh! there is such a change!" Surly people say "Will it last? Will it last?" Well, I have seen it last the eight years of my pastorate, in many cases, and I know it will last for ever, for I am persuaded that it is God's work. We will put it to all the Social Science

Societies; we will put it to all the different religions under heaven, whether they know the art of turning sinners into saints; whether they can make lions into lambs, and ravens into doves. Why I know a man who was as stingy a soul as could be, once, and now he is as generous a man as walks God's earth. There is another, he was not immoral, but he was passionate, and now he is as quiet as a lamb. It is grace that has altered these characters, and yet you tell me that this is a fiction! I have not patience to answer you. A fiction! If religion does not prove itself to be true by these facts, then do not believe it; if it does not, when it comes into a neighborhood, turn it upside down, sweep the cobwebs out of its sky, clean the houses, take the men out of the public-houses; if it does not make swearers pray, and hard-hearted men tender and compassionate, then it is not worth a button. But our religion does do all this, and therefore we boldly say, it is not a vain thing.

Besides, to the man who really possesses it, it is his life. He is not a man and a Christian, but he is all a Christian. He is not as some are, men and Members of Parliament, who have many things to attend to, and attend Parliament also; but the man who is thoroughly a Christian is a Christian every bit of him. He lives Christianity; he eats it; he drinks it; he sleeps it; he walks it. Wherever you see him, he has his religion. His religion is not like a man's regimentals which he can take off and go in undress; it is inside of him; it is woven right through and through him. When the shuttle of his religion was thrown, it went right through the core of his heart, and you must kill that man to get his religion out of him. Racks may tear his nerves and sinews, but they cannot tear away his hope, for it is essentially and vitally part and parcel of himself. Ah! my ladies and gentlemen, you who think religion is no more real than the life of a butterfly, it is you who are unreal in your fancies, and your follies; religion is the substance, and your life is only the shadow! Oh! you workingmen, who think that to be godly is but to indulge a dream, you know not what you say. All else is fiction but this; all else is but a moon-beam phantom, but this is sun-lit reality. God give you grace to get it, and then you will feel we have not spoken too strongly, but rather have spoken too little of that which is essentially and really true.

II. Secondly, "It is not a vain thing"—that is, IT IS NO TRIFLE.

If religion be false, it is the basest imposition under heaven; but if the religion of Christ be true, it is the most solemn truth that ever was known! It is not a thing that a man dares to trifle with if it be true, for it is at his soul's peril to make a jest of it. If it be not true it is detestable, but if it be true it deserves all a man's faculties to consider it, and all his powers to obey it. It is not a trifle. Briefly consider why it is not. It deals with your soul. If it dealt with your body it were no trifle, for it is well to have the limbs of the body sound, but it has to do with your soul. As much as a man is better than the garments that he wears, so much is the soul better than the body. It is your immortal soul it deals with. Your soul has to live for ever, and the religion of Christ deals with its destiny. Can you laugh at such words as heaven and hell, at glory and at damnation? If you can, if you think these trifles, then is the faith of Christ to be trifled with. Consider also with whom it connects you—with God; before whom angels bow themselves and veil their faces. Is HE to be trifled with? Trifle with your monarch if you will, but not with the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Recollect that those who have ever known anything of it tell you it is no child's play. The saints will tell you it is no trifle to be converted. They will never forget the pangs of conviction, nor the joys of faith. They tell you it is no trifle to have religion, for it carries them through all their conflicts, bears them up under all distresses, cheers them under every gloom, and sustains them in all labour. They find it no mockery. The Christian life to them is something so solemn, that when they think of it they fall down before God, and say, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." And sinners, too, when they are in their senses, find it no trifle. When they come to die they find it no little thing to die without Christ. When conscience gets the grip of them, and shakes them, they find it no small thing to be without a hope of pardon—with guilt upon the conscience, and no means of getting rid of it. And, sirs, true ministers of God feel it to be no trifle. I do myself feel it to be such an awful thing to preach God's gospel, that if it were not "Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel," I would resign my charge this moment. I would not for the proudest consideration under heaven know the agony of mind I felt but this one morning before I ventured upon this platform! Nothing but the hope of winning souls from death and hell, and a stern conviction that we have to deal with the grandest of all realities, would bring me here.

A pastor's office is no sinecure. A man that has the destinies of a kingdom under his control, may well feel his responsibility; but he who has the destiny of souls laid instrumentally at his door, must travail in birth, and know a mother's pangs; he must strive with God, and know an agony and yet a joy which no other man can meddle with. It is no trifle to us, we do assure you; oh! make it no trifle to yourselves. I know I speak to some triflers this morning, and perhaps to some trifling professors. Oh! professors, do not live so as to make worldlings think that your religion is a trifling thing! Be cheerful, but oh! be holy! Be happy, for that is your privilege; but oh! be heavenly-minded, for that is your duty. Let men see that you are not flirting with Christ, but that you are married to him. Let them see that you are not dabbling in this as in a little speculation, but that it is the business of your life, the stern business of all your powers to live to Christ, Christ also living in you.

III. But next, and very briefly, for time will fly; the religion of Christ is no vain thing—that is, IT IS NO FOLLY.

Thinking men! Yes, by the way, we have had thinking men who have been able to think in so circuitous a manner that they have thought it consistent with their consciences to profess to hold the doctrines of the Church of England, and to be Romanists or infidels! God deliver us from ever being able to think in their way! I always dislike the presence of man who carries a gun with him which will discharge shot in a circle. Surely he is a very ill companion, and if he should turn your enemy how are you to escape from him? Give me a straightforward, downright man, who says what he means, and means what he says, and I would sooner have the grossest reprobate who will speak plainly what he means, than I would have the most dandy of gentlemen who would not hurt your feelings, but who will profess to believe as you do, while in his heart he rejects every sentiment, and abhors every thought which you entertain. I trust I do not speak to any persons here who can think so circuitously as this. Still, you say, "Well, but the religion of Christ, why, you see, it is the poor that receive it." Bless God it is! "Well, but not many thinking people receive it." Now that is not true, but at the same time, if they did not we would not particularly mind, because all thinking people do not think aright, and very many of them think very wrongly indeed; but such a man as

Newton could think and yet receive the gospel, and master-minds, whom it is not mine just now to mention, have bowed down before the sublimity of the simple revelation of Christ, and have felt it to be their honour to lay their wealth of intellect at the feet of Christ. But, sirs, where is the folly of true religion! Is it a folly to be providing for the world to come? "Oh, no." Is it altogether a folly to believe that there is such a thing as justice? I trow not. And that if there be such a thing as justice it involves punishment? There is no great folly there. Well, then, is it any folly to perceive that there is no way of escaping from the effects of our offences except justice be satisfied? Is that folly? And if it be the fact that Christ has satisfied justice for all who trust in him, is it folly to trust him? If it be a folly to escape from the flames of hell, then let us be fools. If it be folly to lay hold of him who giveth us eternal life—oh, blessed folly! let us be more foolish still. Let us take deep dives into the depths of this foolishness. God forbid that we should do anything else but glory in being such fools as this for Christ's sake! What, sirs, is your wisdom? your wisdom dwells in denying what your eyes can see—a God; in denying what your consciences tell you—that you are guilty; in denying what should be your best hope, what your spirit really craves after—redemption in Christ Jesus. Your folly lies in following a perverted nature, instead of obeying the dictates of one who points you to the right path. You are wise and you drink poison; we are fools and we take the antidote. You are wise and you hunt the shadow; we are fools and we grasp the substance. You are wise, and you labour and put your money into a bag which is full of holes, and spend it for that which is not bread, and which never gives you satisfaction; and we are fools enough to be satisfied, to be happy, to be perfectly content with heaven and God—

"I would not change my bless'd estate
For all the world calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Blessed folly! Oh, blessed folly! But it is not a foolish thing; for it is your life. Ah, sirs, if you would have philosophy it is in Christ. If you would accomplish the proudest feat of human intellect, it is to attain to the knowledge of Christ crucified. Here the man whose mind makes him

elephantine, may find depths in which he may swim. Here the most recondite learning shall find itself exhausted. Here the most brilliant imagination shall find its highest flights exceeded. Here the critic shall have enough to criticise throughout eternity; here the reviewer may review, and review again, and never cease. Here the man who understands history may crown his knowledge by the history of God in the world; here men who would know the secret, the greatest secret which heaven, and earth, and hell can tell, may find it out, for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. All the learning of man is doubtless folly to the angels, but the foolishness of God in the gospel is wisdom to cherubim and seraphim, and by the Church shall be made known to them in ages to come the manifold wisdom of God.

IV. And now for the last point, hurriedly again: "It is not a vain thing,"—that is, IT IS NO SPECULATION, no hap-hazard.

People sometimes ask us what we think about the heathen, whether they will be saved or not. Well, sirs, there is room for difference of opinion there; but I should like to know what you think about yourselves—will you be saved or not?—for after all that is a question of a deal more importance to you. Now the religion of Christ is not a thing that puts a man into a salvable state, but it saves him. It is not a religion which offers him something which perhaps may save him; no it saves him out and out, on the spot. It is not a thing which says to a man "Now I have set you a-going, you must keep on yourself." No, it goes the whole way through, and saves him from beginning to end. He that says "Alpha" never stops till he can say "Omega" over every soul. I say the religion of Christ: I know there are certain shadows of it which do not carry such a reality as this with them, but I say that the religion of the Bible, the religion of Jesus Christ, is an absolute certainty. "Whosoever believeth on him hath eternal life, and he shall never perish, neither shall he come into condemnation." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Well," says one, "I should like to know what this very sure religion is." Well, it is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Trust Christ

with all that you have and you shall be saved. "Well," says one, "but when?" Why, now, here, this morning, on the spot: you shall be saved now. It is not a vain thing; it is not a speculation, for it is true to you now. The word is nigh thee; on thy lip and in thy heart. If thou wilt with thy heart believe on the Lord Jesus Christ thou shalt be saved, and saved now. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are Christ Jesus." This is a great and glorious truth, and it is true to-day—"Whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life." "But is it true to me?" saith one. My text says "It is not a vain thing for you." "Oh, it will suit other people; it will not do for me." It will suit you, sir—"It is not a vain thing for you because it is your life." If you have come up from the country, it is no vain thing for you, my dear friends; if you reside in town, amidst its noise and occupations, it is not a vain thing for you, my dear hearers. It is not a vain thing for any; if you do but lay hold of it, and it lays hold of you—if you receive the reality and vitality of it into your soul, be you who you may, it will not be a vain thing to you; not a "perhaps" and an "if," a "but" and a "peradventure," but a "shall" and a "will," a divine, an eternal, an everlasting and immutable certainty. Whosoever believeth in Christ—let the earth shake; let the mountains rock; let the sun grow old with age, and the moon quench her light—shall be saved. Unless God can change his mind—and that is impossible; unless God can break his word—and to say so is blasphemy; unless Christ's blood can lose its efficacy—and that can never be; unless the Spirit can be anything but Eternal and Omnipotent—and to suppose so were ridiculous—he that believeth on Christ, must at last, before the eternal throne, sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb. "Well," says one. "'tis a vain thing, I'm sure, to me, for I'm only a poor working-man; religion no doubt, is a very fine thing for gentlefolk, but it doesn't do for a man as has to work hard, for he's something else to think on." Well, you are just the man that I should think it would do for. Why, it is little enough you have here, my dear friend, and that is the very reason why you should have eternal joys hereafter. If there be one man that religion can bless more than another—and I do not know that there is—it is the poor man in his humble cot. Why, this will put sweets into your cup; this will make your little into enough, and sometimes into more than enough; you shall be rich while you are poor, and happy when others think you are miserable. "Well," says the rich man, "It is nothing to me; I do not see that it will suit me."

Why, it is the very thing for you, sir; in fact, you are the man who ought to have it, because, see what you have to lose when you die, unless you have religion to make up for it! What a loss it will be for you when you have to lose all your grandeur and substance! What a loss it will be for you to go from the table of Dives to the hell of Dives! Surely it is not a vain thing for you. "Well," says another, "but I am a moral and upright person; indeed, I do not think anybody can pull my character to pieces." I hope nobody wants to; but this is not a vain thing for you, because, let me tell you, that fine righteousness of yours is only fine in your own esteem. If you could only see it as God sees it, you would see it to be as full of holes as ever beggars' rags were when at last they were consigned to the dust-heap. I say your fine righteousness, my lady, and yours, Sir Squire from the country, no matter though you have given to the poor, and fed the hungry, and done a thousand good things; if you are relying on them, you are relying on rotten rags, in which God can no more accept you than he can accept the thief in his dishonesties. "All our righteousness are as filthy rags, and we are all as an unclean thing." It is not a vain thing for you, then. "Oh, but I am a young man just in my teens, and growing up to manhood; I think I ought to have a little pleasure." So I think, friend, and if you want a great deal of it, be a Christian. "Oh, but I think young people should enjoy themselves." So do I. I never was an advocate for making sheep without their first being lambs, and I would let the lambs skip as much as they like; but if you want to lead a happy and a joyous life, give you young days to Jesus. Who says that a Christian is miserable? Sir, you lie; I tell you to your teeth that you know not what Christianity is, or else you would know that the Christians are the most joyous people under heaven. Young man, I would like you to have a glorious youth; I would like you to have all the sparkle and the brilliance which your young life can give you. What have you better than to live and to enjoy yourself? But how are you to do it? Give your Creator your heart, and the thing is done. It is not a vain thing for you. "Ah!" says the old man, "but it is a vain thing for me; my time is over; if I had begun when I was a lad it might have done; but I am settled in my habits now; I feel sure, sir, it is too late for me; when I hear my grand-children say their prayers as they are going to bed, pretty dears, when they are singing their evening hymn, I wish I was a child again; but my heart has got hard, and I cannot say "Our Father' now; and when I do get to "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them

that trespass against us,' I get stuck there, I do not know how to get over that, for I have not forgiven old Jones yet who robbed me in that lawsuit; and then you know I am infirm, and have these rheumatics, and a hundred other pains; I do not think religion will suit me." Well, it is just the very thing that will suit you, because it will make you young again. What, "Can a man be born again when he is old?" That is what Nicodemus asked. Yes, a man can be born again, so that the babe shall die a hundred years old. Oh! to make the autumn of your life and the coming winter of your last days into a new spring and a blessed summer—this is to be done by laying hold of Christ now; and then you shall feel in your old veins the young blood of the new spiritual life, and you will say, "I count the years I lived before a death, but now I begin to live."

I do not know whether I have picked out every character; I am afraid I have not; but this thing I know, though you may be under there, or up in the corner yonder where my eye cannot reach you, yet you may hear this voice and I hope you may hear it when you are gone from this house back to your country-towns and to your houses—

"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live!
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.

After death its joys will be
Lasting as eternity!
Be the living God my friend,
Then my bliss shall never end."

And this is the gospel which is preached unto you. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ"—that is trust him—"and thou shalt be saved." May God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

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"Bought with a Price"

"Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

Our beloved brother, Thomas Cook, who has for so long a time served this church as an honored deacon, has fallen asleep in Christ. We have laid his earthly remains in the tomb: his spirit rejoices before the throne of God. This day we thank God for his useful life, and ask for grace to imitate it. Before he closed his eyes in death he left a text of Scripture for the pastors: "Christ is all, and in all;" and he left another for his fellow church members, for all of you this day who are members of the body of Christ; and this is the legacy, which now, as a spiritual executor, I present to you: "Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." I have no doubt the intention of our departed brother was to promote God's glory by speaking to us even after he was dead concerning our sanctification, that so we might be stirred up to a greater consecration to the Lord our Savior.

You will notice that in this chapter the apostle Paul has been dealing with sins of the flesh, with fornication and adultery. Now, it is at all times exceedingly difficult for the preacher either to speak or to write upon this subject; it demands the strictest care to keep the language guarded, so that while we are denouncing a detestable evil we do not ourselves promote it by a single expression that should be otherwise than chaste and pure. Observe how well the apostle Paul succeeds, for though he does not mask the sin, but tears the veil from it, and lets us know well what it is that he is aiming at, yet there is no sentence which we could wish to alter. Herein he is a model for all ministers, both in fidelity and prudence.

Be sure also to note that the apostle, when he is exposing sin, does not trifle with it, but like a mighty hunter before the Lord, pursues it with all

his might; his hatred to it is intense; he drags it forth to the light; he bids us mark its hideous deformity; he hunts it through all its purlieus, hotfoot, as we say. He never leaves it breathing time; argument after argument he hurls like javelins upon it; he will by no means spare the filthy thing. He who above all others speaks most positively of salvation by grace, and is most clear upon the fact that salvation is not by the works of the law, is at the same time most intensely earnest for the holiness of Christians, and most zealously denounces those who would say, "Let us do evil, that good may come." In this particular instance he sets the sin of fornication in the light of the Holy Spirit; he holds up, as it were, the seven-branched candlestick before it, and lets us see what a filthy thing it is. He tells us that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and therefore ought not to be profaned; he declares that bodily unchastity is a sacrilegious desecration of our manhood, a violation of the sacred shrine wherein the Spirit takes up its dwelling-place; and then, as if this were not enough, he seizes the sin and drags it to the foot of the cross, and there nails it hand and foot, that it may die as a criminal; for these are his words: "Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price:" the price being the blood of Jesus. He finds no sharper weapon, no keener instrument of destruction than this. The redemption wrought on Calvary by the death of Jesus must be the death of this sin, and of all other sins, wherever the Spirit of God uses it as his sword of execution. Brethren and sisters, it is no slight thing to be holy. A man must not say, "I have faith," and then fall into the sins of an unbeliever; for, after all, our outer life is the test of our inner life; and if the outer life be not purified, rest assured the heart is not changed. That faith which does not bring forth the fruit of holiness is the faith of devils. The devils believe and tremble. Let us never be content with a faith which can live in hell, but rise to that which will save us—the faith of God's elect, which purifies the soul, casting down the power of evil, and setting up the throne of Jesus Christ, the throne of holiness within the spirit.

Noticing this as being the run of the chapter, we now come to the text itself, and in order to discuss it we must take it to pieces, and I think we shall see in it at once three things very clearly. The first is a blessed fact, "Ye are," or as it should be rendered, "Ye were bought with a price;" then comes a plain consequence from that fact, a consequence of a double

character, negative and positive: "Ye are not your own;" "your body and your spirit are God's;" and out of that there springs inevitably a natural conclusion: "Therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit."

I. Let us begin, then, first of all, with this BLESSED FACT—"Ye are bought with a price." Paul might, if his object were to prove that we are not our own, have said: "Ye did not make yourselves." Creation may well furnish motives for obedience to the great Lawgiver. He might also have said, "Ye do not preserve yourselves: it is God who keeps you in life; you would die if he withdrew his power." The preservation of divine providence might furnish abundant arguments for holiness. Surely he who feeds, nourishes, and upholds our life should have our service. But he prefers, for reasons known to himself, which it would not be hard to guess, to plead the tenderer theme, redemption. He sounds that note, which if it do not thunder with that crash of power which marked the six days' labor of Omnipotence, yet has a soft, piercing, subduing tone in it, which, like the still small voice to which Elias listened, has in it the presence of God.

The most potent plea for sanctity is not "Ye were made," or, "Ye are nourished," but "Ye are bought." This the apostle selects as a convincing proof of our duty, and as a means to make that duty our delight. And truly, beloved, it is so. If we have indeed experienced the power of redemption we fully admit that it is so. Look ye back to the day when ye were bought, when ye were bondslaves to your sins, when ye were under the just sentence of divine justice, when it was inevitable that God should punish your transgressions; remember how the Son of God became your substitute, how he bared his back to the lash that should have fallen upon you, and laid his soul beneath the sword which should have quenched its fury in your blood. You were redeemed then, redeemed from the punishment that was due to you, redeemed from the wrath of God, redeemed unto Christ to be his for ever.

You will notice the text says, "Ye were bought with a price." It is a common classical expression to signify that the purchase was expensive. Of course, the very expression, "Ye were bought," implies a price, but the words "with a price" are added, as if to show that it was not for nothing that ye were purchased. There was a something inestimably precious paid

for you; and ye need scarcely that I remind you that "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold;" "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Ah! those words slip over our tongue very glibly, but we may well chide ourselves that we can speak of redemption with dry eyes. That the blood of Christ was shed to buy our souls from death and hell is a wonder of compassion which fills angels with amazement, and it ought to overwhelm us with adoring love whenever we think of it, glance our eye over the recording pages, or even utter the word "redemption." What meant this purchasing us with blood? It signified pain. Have any of you lately been racked with pain? Have you suffered acutely? Ah! then at such times you know to some degree what the price was which the Savior paid. His bodily pains were great, hands and feet nailed to the wood, and the iron breaking through the tenderest nerves. His soul-pains were greater still, his heart was melted like wax, he was very heavy, his heart was broken with reproach, he was deserted of God, and left beneath the black thunder-clouds of divine wrath, his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. It was pain that bought you. We speak of the drops of blood, but we must not confine our thoughts to the crimson life-floods which distilled from the Savior's veins; we must think of the pangs which he endured, which were the equivalent for what we ought to have suffered, what we must have suffered had we endured the punishment of our guilt for ever in the flames of hell. But pain alone could not have redeemed us; it was by death that the Savior paid the ransom. Death is a word of horror to the ungodly. The righteous hath hope in his death; but as Christ's death was the substitute for the death of the ungodly, he was made a curse for us, and the presence of God was denied him. His death was attended with unusual darkness; he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" O think ye earnestly on this. The Ever-living died to redeem us; the Only Begotten bowed his head in agony, and was laid in the grave that we might be saved. Ye are bought then "with a price"—a price incalculable, stupendous, infinite, and this is the plea which the apostle uses to urge upon us that we should "be holiness to the Lord."

I desire upon this theme, which is a very simple and every-day one, but which is nevertheless of the weightiest consideration, to remind you, dearly beloved, who profess to be followers of Christ, that this matter of

your being "bought with a price" is an indisputable fact to every Christian. To every person here present it either is a fact or not. I scarcely need to ask whether any of you are prepared to abjure your redemption; and yet, professor of the faith of Christ, I shall put it to you now: Are you willing to have the negative put upon this? will you deny that you were "bought with a price?" Will you now confess that you were not redeemed on Calvary? You dare not, I am sure. You would sooner die than abjure your belief of it. Well, then, as certain as is your redemption, so certain is it that you "are not your own," but belong to God, and should glorify him. It is inevitable that if you be "bought with a price," you have ceased to be your own property, and belong to him who bought you. Holiness, therefore, is necessary to all the redeemed. If you cast off your responsibility to be holy, you at the same time cast away the benefit of redemption. Will you do this? As I am sure you could not renounce your salvation, and cast away your only hope, so I charge you by the living God be not so inconsistent as to say: "I am redeemed, and yet I will live as I list." As redeemed men, let the inevitable consequences follow from the fact, and be ye evidently the servants of the Lord Jesus.

Remember, too, that this fact is the most important one in all your history. That you were redeemed "with a price" is the greatest event in your biography. Even your birth, what was it unless a second birth had been yours! Might you not say: "Let the day perish wherein I was born and the night in which it was said, there is a man child conceived"? Would it not have been to you the direst calamity to be born into the world if you had not been rescued from the wrath of which you were the heir? You left your father's house, and it was an important step in life; perhaps you crossed the great and wide sea; it may be you aspired to high office in the state and you obtained it; it is possible you have been sore sick, or it may be you have sunk from affluence to poverty. Such events leave their impress upon the memory; men cannot forget these great changes in their lives; but they all shrivel into less than nothing compared with this fact that you were "bought with a price." Your connection with Calvary is the most important thing about you. Oh, I do beseech you then, if it be so, prove it; and remember the just and righteous proof is by your not being your own, but consecrated unto God. If it be the most important thing in the world to you, that you were "bought with a price,"

let it exercise the most prominent influence over your entire career. Be a man, be an Englishman, but be most of all Christ's man. A citizen, a friend, a philanthropist, a patriot: all these you may be, but be most of all a saint redeemed by blood.

Recollect, again, that your being "bought with a price" will be the most important fact in all your future existence. What say they in heaven when they sing? They would naturally select the noblest topic and that which most engrosses their minds, and yet in the whole range of their memory they find no theme so absorbing as this: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Redeeming love is the theme of heaven. When you reach the upper realms your most important memory will not be that you were wealthy or poor in this life, nor the fact that you sickened and died, but that you were "bought with a price." We do not know all that may occur in this world before the close of its history, but certainly it will be burnt up with fire, and you in yonder clouds with Christ may witness the awful conflagration. You will never forget it. There will be new heavens and new earth, and you with Christ may see the newborn heavens, and earth, laughing in the bright sunlight of God's good pleasure; you will never forget that joyous day. And you will be caught up to dwell with Jesus for ever and ever; and there will come a time when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father and God shall be all in all. You will never forget the time of which the poet sings—

"Then the end, beneath his rod
Man's last enemy shall fall.
Hallelujah, Christ in God,
God in Christ is all in all."

All these divinely glorious events will impress themselves upon you, but not one of them will make an impression so lasting, so clear, so deep as this, that you were "bought with a price." High over all the mountain tops, Calvary, that was but a little mount in human estimation, shall rise; stars shall the events of history be; but this event shall be the sun in whose presence all others hide their diminished heads. "Thou wast slain," the full chorus of heaven shall roll it forth in thundering accents of grateful zeal. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood;" the saints shall remember this first and foremost; and amidst the cycles of

eternity this shall have the chief place in every glorified memory. What then, beloved? Shall it not have the chief place with you now? It has been the fact of your life hitherto, it will be the fact of your entire eternal existence: let it saturate your soul, let it penetrate your spirit, let it subdue your faculties, let it take the reins of all your powers and guide you whither it will. Let the Redeemer, he whose hands were pierced for you, sway the scepter of your spirit and rule over you this day, and world without end.

If I had the power to do it, how would I seek to refresh in your souls a sense of this fact that you are "bought with a price." There in the midnight hour, amidst the olives of Gethsemane, kneels Immanuel the Son of God; he groans, he pleads in prayer, he wrestles; see the beady drops stand on his brow, drops of sweat, but not of such sweat as pours from men when they earn the bread of life, but the sweat of him who is procuring life itself for us. It is blood, it is crimson blood; great goutts of it are falling to the ground. O soul, thy Savior speaks to thee from out Gethsemane at this hour, and he says: "Here and thus I bought thee with a price." Come, stand and view him in the agony of the olive garden, and understand at what a cost he procured thy deliverance. Track him in all his path of shame and sorrow till you see him on the Pavement; mark how they bind his hands and fasten him to the whipping-post; see, they bring the scourges and the cruel Roman whips; they tear his flesh; the ploughers make deep furrows on his blessed body, and the blood gushes forth in streams, while rivulets from his temples, where the crown of thorns has pierced them, join to swell the purple stream. From beneath the scourges he speaks to you with accents soft and low, and he says, "My child, it is here and thus I bought thee with a price." But see him on the cross itself when the consummation of all has come; his hands and feet are fountains of blood, his soul is full of anguish even to heartbreak; and there, ere the soldier pierces with a spear his side, bowing down he whispers to thee and to me, "It was here and thus, I bought thee with a price." O by Gethsemane, by Gabbatha, by Golgotha, by every sacred name collected with the passion of our Lord, by sponge and vinegar, and nail and spear, and everything that helped the pang and increased the anguish of his death, I conjure you, my beloved brethren, to remember that ye were "bought with a price," and "are not your own." I push you to

this; you either were or were not so bought; if you were, it is the grand fact of your life; if you were, it is the greatest fact that ever will occur to you: let it operate upon you, let it dominate your entire nature, let it govern your body, your soul, your spirit, and from this day let it be said of you not only that you are a man, a man of good morals and respectable conduct, but this, above all things, that you are a man filled with love to him who bought you, a man who lives for Christ, and knows no other passion. Would God that redemption would become the paramount influence, the lord of our soul, and dictator of our being; then were we indeed true to our obligations: short of this we are not what love and justice both demand.

II. Now let us pass on to the second point. Here is A PLAIN CONSEQUENCE arising from the blessed fact. Ye were "bought with a price." Then first it is clear as a negative, that "Ye are not your own," and secondly, it is clear as a positive, that "Your body and spirit are God's."

Take first the negative: if bought, you are not your own. No argument is needed for this, and indeed it is so great a boon in itself that none of us could find it in our hearts to demur to it. It is a great privilege not to be one's own. A vessel is drifting on the Atlantic hither and thither, and its end no man knoweth. It is derelict, deserted by all its crew; it is the property of no man; it is the prey of every storm, and the sport of every wind: rocks, quicksands, and shoals wait to destroy it: the ocean yearns to engulf it. It drifts onward to no man's land, and no man will mourn its shipwreck. But mark well yonder barque in the Thames which its owner surveys with pleasure. In its attempt to reach the sea, it may run ashore, or come into collision with other vessels; or in a thousand ways suffer damage; but there is no fear, it will pass through the floating forest of "the Pool;" it will thread the winding channel, and reach the Nore because its owner will secure it pilotage, skillful and apt. How thankful you and I should be that we are not derelict to-day! we are not our own, not left on the wild waste of chance to be tossed to and fro by fortuitous circumstances; but there is a hand upon our helm; we have on board a pilot who owns us, and will surely steer us into the Fair Havens of eternal rest. The sheep is on the mountain side, and the winter is coming on; it may be buried in the snow; perhaps the wolf may seize it, or by-and-by,

when the summer crops have been eaten, there may be little fodder for it, and it may starve; but the sheep's comfort if it could think at all, would be this: it is not its own, it belonged to the shepherd, who will not willingly lose his property; it bears the mark of its owner, and is the object of his care. O happy sheep of God's pasture, what a bliss it is to you that you are not your own! Does any man here think it would be a pleasure to be his own? Let me assure him that there is no ruler so tyrannical as self. He that is his own master, has a fool and a tyrant to be his lord. No man ever yet governed himself after the will of the flesh but what he by degrees found the yoke heavy and the burden crushing. Self is a fierce dictator, a terrible oppressor; imperious lusts are cruel slavedrivers. But Christ, who says we are not our own, would have us view that truth in the light in which a loving wife would view it. She, too, is not her own. She gave herself away on a right memorable day, of which she bears the golden token on her finger. She did not weep when she surrendered herself and became her husband's; nor did they muffle the bells, or bid the organ play the "Dead March" in Saul: it was a happy day for her; she remembers it at this moment with glowing joy. She is not her own, but she has not regretted the giving herself away: she would make the same surrender again to the self-same beloved owner, if it were to be done. That she is her husband's does not bespeak her slavery, but her happiness; she has found rest in her husband's house, and to-day, when the Christian confesses that he is not his own, he does not wish that he were. He is married to the Savior; he has given himself up, body, soul, and spirit, to the blessed Bridegroom of his heart; it was the marriage-day of his true life when he became a Christian, and he looks back to it with joy and transport. Oh, it is a blissful thing not to be our own, so I shall not want arguments to prove that to which every gracious spirit gives a blissful consent.

Now, if it be true that we are not our own, and I hope it is true to many here present, then the inference from it is, "I have no right to injure myself in any way." My body is not my own, I have no right then, as a Christian man, to do anything with it that would defile it. The apostle is mainly arguing against sins of the flesh, and he says, "the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." We have no right to commit uncleanness, because our bodies are the members of Christ and not our own. He would say the same of drunkenness, gluttony,

idle sleep, and even of such excessive anxiety after wealth as injures health with carking care. We have no right to profane or injure the flesh and blood which are consecrated to God; every limb of our frame belongs to God; it is his property; he has bought it "with a price." Any honest man will be more concerned about an injury done to another's property placed under his care, than if it were his own. When the son of the prophet was hewing wood with Elisha, you remember how he said, when the axe head flew off into the water, "Alas! master, for it was borrowed." It would be bad enough to lose my own axe, but it is not my own, therefore I doubly deplore the accident. I know this would not operate upon thievish minds. There are some who, if it was another man's, and they had borrowed it, would have no further care about it: "Let the lender get it back, if he can." But we speak to honest men, and with them it is always a strong argument: Your body is another's, do it no injury. As for our spirit too, that is God's, and how careful we should be of it. I am asked sometimes to read an heretical book: well, if I believed my reading it would help its refutation, and might be an assistance to others in keeping them out of error, I might do it as a hard matter of duty, but I shall not do it unless I see some good will come from it. I am not going to drag my spirit through a ditch for the sake of having it washed afterwards, for it is not my own. It may be that good medicine would restore me if I poisoned myself with putrid meat, but I am not going to try it: I dare not experiment on a mind which no longer belongs to me. There is a mother and a child, and the child has a book to play with, and a blacklead pencil. It is making drawings and marks upon the book, and the mother takes no notice. It lays down one book and snatches another from the table, and at once the mother rises from her seat, and hurriedly takes the book away, saying: "No, my dear, you must not mark that, for it is not ours." So with my mind, intellect, and spirit; if it belonged to me I might or might not play tomfool with it, and go to hear Socinians, Ritualists, Universalists, and such like preach, but as it is not my own, I will preserve it from such fooleries, and the pure word shall not be mingled with the errors of men. Here is the drift of the apostle's argument—I have no right to injure that which does not belong to me, and as I am not my own, I have no right to injure myself.

But, further, I have no right to let myself lie waste. The man who had a

talent, and went and dug in the earth and hid it, had not he a right to do so? Yes, of course, if it was his own talent, and his own napkin. If any of you have money and do not put it out to interest, if it is all your own, nobody complains. But this talent belonged to the man's master, it was only intrusted to him as a steward, and he ought not to have let it rust in the ground. So I have no right to let my faculties run to waste since they do not belong to me. If I am a Christian I have no right to be idle. I saw the other day men using picks in the road in laying down new gas-pipes; they had been resting, and just as I passed the clock struck one, and the foreman gave a signal. I think he said, "Blow up;" and straightway each man took his pick or his shovel, and they were all at it in earnest. Close to them stood a fellow with a pipe in his mouth, who did not join in the work, but stood in a free-and-easy posture. It did not make any difference to him whether it was one o'clock or six. Why not? Because he was his own: the other men were the master's for the time being. He as an independent gentlemen might do as he liked, but those who were not their own fell to labor. If any of you idle professors can really prove that you belong to yourselves, I have nothing more to say to you, but if you profess to have a share in the redeeming sacrifice of Christ, I am ashamed of you if you do not go to work the very moment the signal is given. You have no right to waste what Jesus Christ has bought "with a price."

Further than that, if we are not our own, but "are bought with a price," we have no right to exercise any capricious government of ourselves. A man who is his own may say, "I shall go whither I will, and do what I will;" but if I am not my own but belong to God who has bought me, then I must submit to his government; his will must be my will, and his directions must be my law. I desire to enter a certain garden, and I ask the gardener at the gate if I may come in. "You should be very welcome, sir, indeed," says he, "if it were mine, but my master has told me not to admit strangers here, and therefore I must refuse you." Sometimes the devil would come into the garden of our souls. We tell him that our flesh might consent, but the garden is not ours, and we cannot give him space. Worldly ambition, covetousness, and so forth, might claim to walk through our soul, but we say, "No, it is not our own; we cannot, therefore, do what our old will would do, but we desire to be obedient to the will of our Father who is in heaven." Thy will be done, my God, in me, for so

should it be done where all is thine own by purchase.

Yet, again, if we are not our own, then we have no right to serve ourselves. The man who is living entirely for himself, whose object is his own ease, comfort, honor, or wealth, what knows he concerning redemption by Christ? If our aims rise no higher than our personal advantages, we are false to the fact that we "are bought with a price," we are treacherous to him in whose redemption we pretend to share.

But time would fail me if I dwelt upon this, or, indeed, at any length upon the positive side of this blessed fact: I will therefore only say a word or two concerning it. Our body and our spirit are God's; and, Christian, this is certainly a very high honor to you. Your body will rise again from the dead at the first resurrection, because it is not an ordinary body, it belongs to God: your spirit is distinguished from the souls of other men; it is God's spirit, and he has set his mark upon it, and honored you in so doing. You are God's, because a price has been paid for you. According to some, the allusion price here is to the dowry that was paid by a husband for his wife in ancient days. According to the Rabbis there were three ways by which a woman became the wife of a man, and one of these was by the payment of a dowry. This was always held good in Jewish law; the woman was not her own from the moment when the husband had paid to her father or natural guardian the stipulated price for her. Now, at this day, you and I rejoice that Jesus Christ has espoused us unto himself in righteousness or ever the earth was; we rejoice in that language which he uses by the prophet Hosea, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever;" but here is our comfort, the dowry money has been paid, Christ has redeemed us unto himself, and Christ's we are, Christ's for ever and ever.

Remember that our Lord has paid all the price for us; there is no mortgage or lien upon us; we have therefore no right to give a portion of ourselves to Satan. And he has bought us entirely from head to foot, every power, every passion, and every faculty, all our time, all our goods, all that we call our own, all that makes up ourselves in the largest sense of that term; we are altogether God's. Ah! it is very easy for people to say this, but how very difficult it is to feel it true and to act as such! I have no doubt there are many persons here who profess to be willing to give God all they have, who would not actually give him five shillings. We can sing

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"Here, Lord, I give myself away;"

and yet if it comes to yielding only a part of ourselves, if it requires self-denial, or self-sacrifice, straightway there is a drawing back. Now, was the cross a fiction? Was the death of Christ a fable? Were you only fancifully "bought with a price," and not in deed and in truth? If redemption be a fable, then return a fabled consecration; if your purchase be a fiction, then lead the fictitious lives that some of you do lead with regard to consecration to Christ. If it be only an idea, a pretty something that we read of in books, then let our belonging unto God be a mere idea and a piece of sentiment; but a real redemption demands real holiness. A true price, most certainly paid, demands from us a practical surrendering of ourselves to the service of God. From this day forth even for ever, "ye are not your own," ye are the Lord's.

III. And now I must close, and oh, may God give power to his word while I beg to speak upon the last point, namely, THE NATURAL CONCLUSION: "Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit." I am not clear that the last few words are in the original. A large number of the old manuscripts and versions, and some of the more important of them, finish the verse at the word "body"—"Therefore glorify God in your body." It was the body the apostle was speaking about, and not the spirit, and there is no necessity for the last words: still we will not further raise the question, but take them as being the inspired word of God: but still. I must make the remark, that according to the connection the force of the apostle's language falls upon the body; and perhaps it is so, because we are so apt to forget the truth, that the body is redeemed and is the Lord's, and should be made to glorify God.

The Christian man's body should glorify God by its chastity. Pure as the lily should we be from every taint of uncleanness. The body should glorify God by temperance also; in all things, in eating drinking, sleeping in everything that has to do with the flesh. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," or as the apostle puts it elsewhere, "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." The Christian

man can make every meal a sacrament, and his ordinary avocations the exercise of his spiritual priesthood. The body ought to glorify God by its industry. A lazy servant is a bad Christian. A working man who is always looking for Saturday night, a man who never spends a drop of sweat except when the master is looking on, does not glorify God in his body. The best Christian is the man who is not afraid of hard work when it is due, who works not as an eye-servant or man pleaser, but in singleness of heart seeks to glorify God. Our bodies used to work hard enough for the devil; now they belong to God we will make them work for him. Your legs used to carry you to the theater; be not too lazy to come out on a Thursday night to the house of God. Your eyes have been often open upon iniquity, keep them open during the sermon: do not drop asleep! Your ears have been sharp enough to catch the word of a lascivious song let them be quick to observe the word of God. Those hands have often squandered your earnings in sinfulness, let them give freely to the cause of Christ. Your body was a willing horse when it was in the service of the devil, let it not be a sluggish hack now that it draws the chariot of Christ. Make the tongue speak his praises, make the mouth sing of his glory, make the whole man bow in willing subservience to the will of him who bought it.

As for your spirit, let that glorify God too. Let your private meditations magnify God; let your songs be to him when no one hears you but himself, and let your public zeal, let the purity of your conversation, let the earnestness of your life, let the universal holiness of your character, glorify God with your body and with your spirit.

Beloved Christian friends, I want to say these few things and have done. Because you are God's, you will be looked at more than others, therefore, glorify him. You know it is not always the thing itself, but the ownership that causes curiosity. If you were to go to a cattle-show and it were said "such and such a bullock belongs to Her Majesty," it may be it is no better than another, but it would be of interest to thousands as belonging to royalty. See here, then, such and such a man belongs to God; what manner of person ought he to be? If there be any one in this world who will not be criticised, depend upon it, Christian, it is not the Christian; sharp eyes will be upon him, and worldly men will find faults in him

which they would not see if he were not a professor. For my part I am very glad of the lynx eyes of the worldlings. Let them watch if they will. I have heard of one who was a great caviller at Christian people, and after having annoyed a church a long time, he was about to leave, and therefore, as a parting jest with the minister, he said, "I have no doubt you will be very glad to know that I am going a hundred miles away?" "No," said the pastor, "I shall be sorry to lose you." "How? I never did you any good." "I don't know that, for I am sure that never one of my flock put half a foot through the hedge but what you began to yelp at him, and so you have been a famous sheep-dog for me." I am glad the world observes us. It has a right to do so. If a man says, "I am God's," he sets himself up for public observation. Ye are lights in the world, and what are lights intended for but to be looked at? A city set on a hill cannot be hid.

Moreover, the world has a right to expect more from a Christian than from anybody else. He says he is "bought with a price," he says he is God's, he therefore claims more than others, and he ought to render more. Stand in fancy in one of the fights of the old civil war. The Royalists are fighting desperately and are winning apace, but I hear a cry from the other side that Cromwell's Ironsides are coming. Now we shall see some fighting. Oliver and his men are lions. But, lo! I see that the fellows who come up hang fire, and are afraid to rush into the thick of the fight; surely these are not Cromwell's Ironsides, and yonder captain is not old Noll? I do not believe it: it cannot be. Why, if they were what they profess to be, they would have broken the ranks of those perfumed cavaliers long ago, and have made them fly before them like chaff before the wind. So when I hear men say, "Here is a body of Christians", What! those Christians? Those cowardly people, who hardly dare speak a word for Jesus! Those covetous people who give a few cheese-parings to his cause! Those inconsistent people whom you would not know to be Christian professors if they did not label themselves! What! such beings followers of a crucified Savior? The world sneers at such pretensions; and well it may. With such a leader let us follow bravely; and bought with such a price, and being owned by such a Master, let us glorify him who condescends to call such poor creatures as we are his portion, whom he hath set apart for himself.

And let us remember that by men who profess to be "bought with a price," the name of Christ is compromised if their behavior is unseemly. If we are not holy and gracious, ungodly men are sure to say, "That is one of your believers in God; that is one of your Christians." Do not let it be so. Every soldier in a regiment ought to feel that the renown of the whole army depends upon him, and he must fight as if the winning of the battle rested upon himself. This will cause every man to be a hero. Oh, that every Christian felt as if the honor of God and the church rested upon him, for in a measure it certainly does!

May we so seek God, that when we come to die we may feel that we have lived for something; that although our hope has rested alone in what Jesus did, yet we have not made that an excuse for doing nothing ourselves. Though we shall have no good works in which to glory, yet may we bring forth fruit that shall be for the glory of our Lord. I feel I so desire to glorify God, body, soul, and spirit while I breathe, that I would even do so on earth after I am dead. I would still urge my brethren on in our Lord's cause. Old Zizka, the Hussite leader, when about to die, said to his soldiers: "Our enemies have always been afraid of my name in the time of battle, and when I am dead take my skin, and make a drum-head of it, and beat it whenever you go to battle. When the foemen hear the sound they will tremble, and you will remember that Zizka calls on his brethren to fight valiantly." Let us so live that when we die, we live on, like Abel, who being dead yet speaketh. The only way to do this is to live in the power of the Immortal God, under the influence of his Holy Spirit: then out of our graves we shall speak to future generations. When Doctor Payson died, he desired that his body should be placed in a coffin, and that his hearers should be invited to come and see it. Across his breast was placed a paper bearing these words, "Remember the words which I spake unto you, being yet present with you." May our lives be such that even if we are not public speakers, yet others may remember our example, and so may hear what our lives spake while we were yet on earth. Your bodies and your spirits are God's: oh, live to God, and glorify him in the power of his Spirit as long as you have any breath below, that so when the breath is gone, your very bones, like those of Joseph, shall be a testimony. Even in the ashes of the saints their wonted fires live on. In their hallowed memories they rise like a phoenix from their ashes.

The Lord make us more and more practically his own, and may his name be glorious, for ever and ever. Amen, and amen.

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The Unkept Vineyard; Or, Personal Work Neglected

"They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept."

Song of Solomon 1:6.

The text is spoken in the first person singular; "They made me." Therefore let the preaching tonight be personal to you, dear friends- personal to the preacher first, and then to each one of this mixed multitude. May we at this hour think less of others than of ourselves! May the sermon be of practical value to our own hearts! I do not suppose that it will be a pleasing sermon- on the other hand it may be a saddening one. I may bring unhappy memories before you; but let us not be afraid of that holy sorrow which is health to the soul. Since the spouse in this text speaks of herself, "They made ME the keeper of the vineyards; but MY own vineyard have I not kept" -let each one of us copy her example, and think only of our own selves.

The text is the language of "complaint". We are all pretty ready at complaining, especially of other people. Not much good comes of picking holes in other men's characters; and yet many spend hours in that unprofitable occupation. It will be well for us, at this time, to let our complaint, like that of the text, deal with ourselves. If there is something wrong at home, let the father blame himself; if there is something ill with the children, let the mother look to her own personal conduct as their instructor. Do not let us lend out our ears, but let us keep them at home for our own use. Let us clear out an open passage to the heart, so that

everything that is said shall go down into the spirit, and purify our inner man. Let us from the heart make the confession "they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept."

Let us make the text "practical". Do not let us be satisfied to have uttered the language of complaint; but let us get rid of the evils which we deplore. If we have been wrong, let us labor to be right. If we have neglected our own vineyard, let us confess it with due humiliation; but let us not continue to neglect it. Let us ask of God that holy results may flow out of our self-lamentations, so that before many days we may begin to keep our own vineyards carefully by the grace of God; and then we shall better carry out the office of keeper of the vineyards of others, if we are called to such an employment.

There are two things upon which I am going to dwell at this time. The first is, that there are many Christian people I hope they are Christian people who will be compelled to confess that the greater part of their life is spent in labor which is not of the highest kind, and is not properly their own. I shall find out the worker who has forgotten his heavenly calling. And when I have done with this case and I am afraid that there will be much about it that may touch many of us I shall then take a more general view, and deal with any who are undertaking other works, and neglecting their own proper vocation.

I. First, then, let me begin with THE CHRISTIAN MAN WHO HAS FORGOTTEN HIS HIGH AND HEAVENLY CALLING.

In the day when you and I were born again, my brethren, we were born for God. In the day when we saw that Christ died for us, we were bound henceforth to be dead to the world. In the day when we were quickened by the Holy Spirit into newness of life, that life was bound to be a consecrated one. For a thousand reasons it is true that, "You are not your own: you are bought with a price."

The ideal Christian is one who has been made alive with a life which he lives for God. He has risen out of the dominion of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He reckons that "if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live for

themselves, but for him who died for them, and rose again." This you will not deny. Christian friends, you admit that you have a high, holy, and heavenly calling!

Now let us look back. We have not spent our life idly: we have been forced to be keepers of the vineyards. I hope I am not addressing anybody here who has tried to live without employment and labor of some kind. No, we have worked, and we have worked hard. Most men speak of their wages as "hard-earned," and I believe that in many cases they speak the bare truth. Many hours in the day have to be spent upon our occupations. We wake up in the morning, and think of what we have to do. We go to bed wearied at night by what we have done. This is as it should be, for God did not make us that we might sport and play, like leviathan in the deep. Even in Paradise man was bidden to dress the garden. There is something to be done by each man, and specially by each Christian man.

Come back to what I began with. In the day when we were born again, as many of us as are new creatures in Christ Jesus, we began to live to God, and not to ourselves. Have we carried out that life? We have worked, we have even worked hard; but the question comes to us What have we worked for? Who has been our master? With what object have we toiled? Of course, if I have been true to my profession as a Christian, I have lived and worked for God, for Christ, for the kingdom of heaven. But has it been so? And is it so now?

Many are working very hard for wealth, which means, of course, for "self", that they may be enriched. Some are working simply for a competence, which means, if it goes no farther, still for "self". Others work for their families, a motive good enough in its way, but still only an enlargement, after all, of "self". To the Christian there must always be a far higher, deeper, purer, truer motive than self in its widest sense; or else the day must come when he will look back upon his life, and say, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard" -that is, the service of Christ, the glory of him that bought me with his blood "have I not kept."

It seems to me to be a terrible calamity to have to look back on twenty years, and say, "What have I done in all those twenty years for Christ?"

How much of my energy has been spent in striving to glorify him? I have had talents: how many of those talents have been used for him who gave them to me? I have had wealth, or I have had influence. How much of that money have I spent distinctly for my Lord? How much of that influence have I used for the promotion of his kingdom?"

You have been busy with this notion, and that motive, and the other endeavor; but have you lived as you will wish to have lived when you stand at his right hand amid his glories? Have you so acted that you will then judge yourself to have well lived when your Lord and Master shall come to call you to account? Ask yourself, "Am I an earnest laborer together with God, or am I, after all, only a laborious trifler, an industrious doer of nothing, working hard to accomplish no purpose of the sort for which I ought to work, since I ought to live unto my Lord alone?" I invite all my fellow-servants to take a retrospect, and just to see whether they have kept their own vineyards. I suppose that they have worked hard. I only put the question Have they kept their own vineyards? Have they served the Lord in all things?

I am half afraid to go a step farther. To a very large degree we have not been true to our own professions: our highest work has been neglected, we have not kept our own vineyards. In looking back, how little time has been spent by us in communion with God! How little a part of our thoughts has been occupied with meditation, contemplation, adoration, and other acts of devotion! How little have we surveyed the beauties of Christ, his person, his work, his sufferings, his glory!

We say that it is "heaven below" to commune with Christ; but do we do it? We profess that there is no place like the mercy-seat. How much are we at that mercy-seat? We often say that the Word of God is precious that every page of it glows with a heavenly light. Do we study it? Friends, how much time do you spend upon it? I venture to say that the bulk of Christians spend more time in reading the newspaper than they do in reading the Word of God. I trust that I am too severe in this statement, but I am afraid, greatly afraid, that I am not.

The last new book, perhaps the last sentimental story, will win attentive reading; when the divine, mysterious, unutterable depths of heavenly

knowledge are disregarded by us. Our Puritan forefathers were strong men, because they lived on the Scriptures. None stood against them in their day, for they fed on good food, whereas their degenerate children are far too fond of unwholesome food. The 'chaff of fiction', and the 'bran of the Quarterlies', are poor substitutes for the 'old corn of Scripture', the 'fine flour of spiritual truth'. Alas, my brethren, too many eat the 'unripe fruit of the vineyards of Satan', and the fruits of the Lord's vines they utterly despise!

Think of our neglect of our God, and see whether it is not true that we have treated him very ill. We have been in the shop, we have been on the exchange, we have been at the markets, we have been in the fields, we have been in the public libraries, we have been in the lecture-room, we have been in the forum of debate; but our own closets and studies, our walk with God, and our fellowship with Jesus, we have far too much neglected.

Moreover, the vineyard of "holy service" for God we have too much left to go to ruin. I would ask you How about the work your God has called you to do? Men are dying; are you saving them? This great city is like a seething caldron, boiling and bubbling up with infamous iniquity- are we doing anything by way of antidote to the hell-broth concocted in that caldron? Are we indeed a power working towards righteousness? How much good have we done? What have I done to pluck brands from the burning? What have I done to find the lost sheep for whom my Savior laid down his life? Come, put the questions, and answer them honestly! No, do not back out, and say, "I have no ability." I do not fear have more ability than you will give an account of with joy at the last great day.

I remember a young man who complained that the little church over which he presided was so small. He said, "I cannot do much good. I have not above two hundred hearers." An older man replied, "Two hundred hearers are a great many to have to give an account of at the last great day." As I came in at yonder door this evening, and looked into these thousands of faces, I could not help trembling. How shall I answer for this solemn charge, for this enormous flock, in that last great day?

You have all a flock of some kind, larger or smaller. You have all, as

Christian people, somebody for whom you will have to answer. Have you done your Master's work in reference to those entrusted to you? O men and women, have you sought to save others from going down into the pit? You have the divine remedy: have you handed it out to these sick and dying ones? You have the heavenly word which can deliver them from destruction: have you spoken it in their ears, praying all the while that God might bless it to their souls. Might not many a man among you say to himself, "I have been a tailor," or "I have been a shop-keeper," or "I have been a mechanic," or "I have been a merchant," or "I have been a physician, and I have attended to these callings; but my own vineyard, which was my Master's, which I was bound to look to first of all, I have not kept?"

Well, now, what is the remedy for this? We need not talk of our fault any more; let us make each one his own personal confession, and then seek amendment. I believe the remedy is a very sweet one. It is not often that medicine is pleasant, but at this time I prescribe for you a charming potion. It is that you follow up the next verse to my text. Read it "My own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed, where you make your flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of your companions?"

Get to your Lord, and in him you will find recovery from your neglects. Ask him where he feeds his flock, and go with him. They have warm hearts who commune with Christ. They are prompt in duty who enjoy his fellowship. I cannot help reminding you of what I have often spoken of, namely, our Lord's language to the church at Laodicea. That church had come to be so bad that he said, "I will spue you out of my mouth." And yet what was the remedy for that church? "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." After supping with Christ you will not be lukewarm. Nobody can say, "I am neither cold nor hot" when they have been in his company. Rather they will enquire, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?"

If there be an angel, as Milton sings, whose name is Uriel, who lives in the sun, I will warrant you he is never cold; so likewise, he that lives in Christ, and walks with him, is never chill, nor slow in the divine service. Away to

your Lord, then! Hasten to your Lord, and you will soon begin to keep your vineyard; for in the Song you will see a happy change effected. The spouse began to keep her vineyard directly, and to do it in the best fashion. Within a very short time you find her saying, "Catch the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines." See, she is hunting out her sins and her follies. Farther on you find her with her Lord in the vineyard, crying, "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out!" She is evidently keeping her garden, and asking for heavenly influences to make the spices and flowers yield their perfume. She went down to see whether the vines flourished, and the pomegranates budded. Anon, with her beloved, she rises early to go to the vineyard, and watch the growth of the plants. Farther on you find her talking about all manner of fruits that she has laid up for her beloved.

Thus you see that to walk with Christ is the way to keep your vineyard, and serve your Lord. Come and sit at his feet; lean on his bosom; rest on his arm; and make him to be the joy of your spirit. The Lord grant, dear brethren, that this gentle word, which I have spoken as much to myself as to you, may be blessed to us all!

II. Now, I turn to the congregation in general, and speak with THE MAN WHO IN ANY PLACE HAS TAKEN OTHER WORK, AND NEGLECTED HIS OWN.

He can use the words of the text "they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept." We know many people who are always doing a great deal, and yet do nothing; fussy people, people to the front in every movement, people who could set the whole world right, but are not right themselves. Just before a general election there is a manifestation of most remarkable men generally people who know everything, and a few things besides, who, if they could but be sent to Parliament, would turn the whole world upside down, and put even Pandemonium to rights. They would pay the National Debt within six months, and do any other trifle that might occur to them. Very eminent men are these! I have come across impossibly great men. None could be so great as these feel themselves to be. They are an order of very superior people: reformers, or philosophers, who know what nobody else knows, only, happily, they have not patented the secret, but are prepared to tell it

out to others, and thereby illuminate us all.

I suggest to our highly-gifted friends that it is possible to be looking after a great many things, and yet to be neglecting your own vineyard. There is a vineyard that a great many neglect, and that is "their own heart". It is well to have talent; it is well to have influence; but it is better to be right within yourself. It is well for a man to see to his cattle, and look well to his flocks and to his herds; but let him not forget to cultivate that little patch of ground that lies in the center of his being.

Let him educate his head, and intermeddle with all knowledge; but let him not forget that there is another plot of ground called the heart, the character, which is more important still. Right principles are spiritual gold, and he that has them, and is ruled by them, is the man who truly lives. He has not life, whatever else he has, who has not his heart cultivated, and made right and pure.

Have you ever thought about your heart yet? Oh, I do not mean whether you have palpitations! I am no doctor. I am speaking now about the heart in its moral and spiritual aspect. What is your character, and do you seek to cultivate it? Do you ever use the hoe upon those weeds which are so plentiful in us all? Do you water those tiny plants of goodness which have begun to grow? Do you watch them to keep away the little foxes which would destroy them? Are you hopeful that yet there may be a harvest in your character which God may look upon with approval? I pray that we may all look to our hearts. "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Pray daily, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me;" for if not, you will go up and down in the world, and do a great deal, and when it comes to the end you will have neglected your noblest nature, and your poor starved soul will die that second death, which is the more dreadful because it is everlasting death. How terrible for a soul to die of 'neglect'! How can we escape who 'neglect' this great salvation? If we pay every attention to our bodies, but none to our immortal souls, how shall we justify our folly? God save us from suicide by neglect! May we not have to moan out eternally, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept!"

Now, pass over that point, and think of another vineyard. Are not some people neglecting their "families"? Next to our hearts, our households are the vineyards which we are most bound to cultivate. I shall never forget a man whom I knew in my youth, who used to accompany me at times in my walks to the villages to preach. He was always willing to go with me any evening; and I did not need to ask him, for he asked himself, until I purposely put him off from it. He liked also to preach himself much better than others liked to hear him; but he was a man who was sure to be somewhere to the front if he could. Even if you snuffed him out, he had a way of lighting himself up again. He was good-natured and irrepressible. He was, I believe, sincerely earnest in doing good. But two boys of his were well known to me, and they would swear horribly. They were ready for every vice, and were under no restraint. One of them drank himself into a dying state with brandy, though he was a mere boy. I do not believe his father had ever spoken to him about the habit of intoxication, though he certainly was sober and virtuous himself. I had no fault to find with him except this grave fault that he was seldom at home, was not master of the house, and could not control his children. Neither husband nor wife occupied any place of influence in the household; they were simply the slaves of their children: their children made themselves vile, and they restrained them not! This brother would pray for his children at the prayer-meeting, but I do not think he ever practiced family prayer.

It is shocking to find men and women speaking fluently about religion, and yet their houses are a disgrace to Christianity. I suppose that none of you are as bad as that; but, if it be so, please spell this text over: "they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept." The most careful and prayerful father cannot be held accountable for having wicked sons, if he has done his best to instruct them. The most anxious and tearful mother cannot be blamed if her daughter dishonors the family, provided her mother has done her best to train her up in the right way. But if the parents cannot say that they have done their best, and their children go astray, then they are blameworthy. If any of them have come to the Tabernacle tonight, and their boys and girls are they do not know where, let them go home quickly, and look them up. If any of my hearers exercise no parental discipline, nor seek to bring their children to Christ, I do implore them to give up every kind of public work

until they have first done their work at home.

Has anybody made you a minister, and you are not trying to save your own children? I tell you, sir, I do not believe that God made you a minister; for if he had, he would have begun with making you a minister to your own family. "They made me the keeper of the vineyards." "They" ought to have known better, and you ought to have known better than to accept the call. How can you be a steward in the great household of the Lord when you cannot even rule your own house? A Sunday-school teacher, teaching other people's children, and never praying with her own! Is not this a sad business? A teacher of a large class of youths who never has taken a class of his own sons and daughters! Why, what will he do when he lives to see his children plunged into vice and sin, and remembers that he has utterly neglected them?

This is plain dealing; but I never wear gloves when I preach. I know not where this knife may cut; but if it wounds, I beg you do not blunt its edge. Do you say that this is "very personal"? It is meant to be personal; and if anybody is offended by it, let him be offended with himself, and mend his ways. No longer let it be true of any of us, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept."

Besides that, every man who knows the Lord should feel that his vineyard lies also "around about his own house". If God has saved your children, then, dear friend, try to do something for your neighbors, for your work-people, for those with whom you associate in daily labor. God has appointed you to take care of those nearest home. They say the cobbler's wife goes barefooted. Do not let it be true. Begin at home, and go on with those nearest home. Manifest Christian love to your neighbors. It is a great pity that yonder Christian man, living in a very dark part of London, comes to the Tabernacle, and does good in our societies, but never speaks a word for Jesus in the court where he lives.

Poor stuff, poor stuff, is that salt which is only salt when it is in the salt-box! Throw that kind of salt away. We want a kind of salt that begins to bite into any bit of food it touches. Put it where you like, if it is good salt, it begins to operate upon that which is nearest to it. Some people are capital salt in the box: they are also good in the cake, they are beautifully

white to look at, and you can cut them into ornamental shapes; but they are never used; they are merely kept for show. If salt does not preserve anything, throw it away. Ask the farmer whether he would like it for his fields. "No," he says, "there is no goodness in it." Salt that has no saltiness in it is of no use. You can make the garden path of it. It is good to be trodden under foot of men, but that is all the use to which you can put it. O my beloved fellow Christians, do not let it be said that you reside in a place to which you do no good whatever.

I am sure if there were individual, personal work on the part of Christians in the localities where they reside, God the Holy Spirit would bless the unanimous action of his earnest, quickened church, and London would soon know that God has a people in the midst of it. If we keep away from the masses if we cannot think of laboring in a district because it is too low or too poor we shall have missed our vocation, and at the last we shall have to lament, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept." You and I must cry mightily to the Holy Spirit to help us to live really and truly, the lives which our professions demand of us. A day will come when all church-goings, and chapel-goings, and preachings, and singings, and sacraments, will seem fluff and useless stuff, if there has not been the substance of real living for Christ in all our religiousness. Oh that we would rouse ourselves to something like a divine earnestness! Oh that we felt the grandeur of our heavenly surroundings! We are no common men!

We are loved with no common love! Jesus died for us! He died for us! He died for us! And is this poor life of ours- so often dull and worldly, our sole return? Behold that piece of land! He that bought it paid his life for it, watered it with bloody sweat, and sowed in it a divine seed. And what is the harvest? We naturally expect great things. Is the poor starveling life of many a professor a fit harvest for Christ's sowing his heart's blood? God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, all in action what is the result? Omnipotence linking hands with love, and working out a miracle of grace! What comes of it, so far as 'you' are concerned? A halfhearted professor of religion. Is this all the result? O Lord, was there ever so small an effect from so great a cause? You might almost need a microscope to discover the result of the work of grace in some people's

lives. Ought it to be so? Shall it be so? In the name of him that lives and was dead, dare you let it be so? Help us, O God, to begin to live, and keep the vineyard which you yourself have given to us to keep, that we may render in our account at last with joy, and not with grief! Amen.

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The Fair Portrait of a Saint

"My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." -- Job 23:11, 12.

Thus Job speaks of himself, not by way of vaunting, but by way of vindication. Eliphaz the Temanite and his two companions had brought distinct charges against Job's character: because they saw him in such utter misery they concluded that his adversity must have been sent as a punishment for his sin, and therefore they judged him to be a hypocrite, who under cover of religion had exercised oppression and tyranny. Zophar had hinted that wickedness was sweet in Job's mouth, and that he hid iniquity under his tongue. Eliphaz charged him with hardness of heart to the poor, and dared to say, "Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing." This last from its very impossibility was meant to show the extreme meanness to which he falsely imagined that Job must have descended--how could he strip the naked? He was evidently firing at random. As neither he nor his companions could discover any palpable blot in Job upon which they could distinctly lay their finger, they bespattered him right and left with their groundless accusations. They made up in venom for the want of evidence to back their charges. They felt sure that there must be some great sin in him to have procured such extraordinary afflictions, and therefore by smiting him all over they hoped to touch the sore place. Let

them stand as a warning to us never to judge men by their circumstances, and never to conclude that a man must be wicked because he has fallen from riches to poverty.

Job, however, knew his innocence, and he was determined not to give way to them. He said, "Ye are forgers of lies, physicians of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom." He fought the battle right manfully; not, perhaps, without a little display of temper and self-righteousness, but still with much less of either than any of us would have shown had we been in the same plight, and had we been equally conscious of perfect integrity. He has in this part of his self-defense sketched a fine picture of a man perfect and upright before God. He has set before us the image to which we should seek to be conformed. Here is the high ideal after which every Christian man should strive; and happy shall he be who shall attain to it. Blessed is he who in the hour of his distress, if he be falsely accused, will be able to say with as much truth as the patriarch could, "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."

I ask you, first, to inspect the picture of Job's holy life, that you may make it your model. After we have done this, we will look a little below the surface, asking the question, "How was he enabled to lead such an admirable life as this? Upon what meat did this great patriarch feed that he had grown so eminent?" We shall find the answer in our second head, Job's holy sustenance -- "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." May he, who wrought in Job his patience and integrity, by this our meditation teach us the like virtues by the power of the Holy Ghost.

I. Let us sit down before this sketch of JOB' S HOLY LIFE: it will well repay a meditative study.

Note, first, that Job had been all along a man fearing God and walking after the divine rule. In the words before us he dwells much upon the things of God--"his steps," "his way," "the commandment of his lips," "the words of his mouth." He was pre-eminently one that "feared God and

eschewed evil." He knew God to be the Lord, and worthy to be served, and therefore he lived in obedience to his law, which was written upon his instructed conscience. His way was God's way; he chose that course which the Lord commanded. He did not seek his own pleasure, nor the carrying out of his own will: neither did he follow the fashion of the times, nor conform himself to the ruling opinion or custom of the age in which he lived: fashion and custom were nothing to him, he knew no rule but the will of the Almighty. Like some tall cliff which breasts the flood, he stood out almost alone, a witness for God in an idolatrous world. He owned the living God, and lived "as seeing him who is invisible." God's will had taken the helm of the vessel, and the ship was steered in God's course according to the divine compass of infallible justice and the unerring chart of the divine will. This is a great point to begin with; it is, indeed, the only sure basis of a noble character. Ask the man who seeks to be the architect of a great and honorable character this question--Where do you place God? Is he second with you? Ah, then, in the judgment of those whose view comprehends all human relationships you will lead a very secondary kind of life, for the first and most urgent obligation of your being will be disregarded. But is God first with you? Is this your determination, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"? Do you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? If so, you are laying the foundation for a whole or holy character, for you begin by acknowledging your highest responsibility. In this respect you will find that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Whether the way be rough or smooth, uphill or down dale, through green pastures or burning deserts, let God's way be your way. Where the fiery cloudy pillar of his providence leads be sure to follow, and where his holy statutes command, there promptly go. Ask the Lord to let you hear his Spirit speak like a voice behind you saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." As soon as you see from the Scriptures, or from conscience, or from providence, what the will of the Lord is, make haste and delay not to keep his commandments. Set the Lord always before you. Have respect unto his statutes at all times, and in all your ways acknowledge him. No man will be able to look back upon his life with complacency unless God has been sitting upon the throne of his heart and ruling all his thoughts, aims, and actions. Unless he can say with David, "My soul hath kept thy testimonies and I love them exceedingly," he will find much to weep over

and little with which to answer his accusers.

We must follow the Lord's way, or our end will be destruction; we must take hold upon Christ's steps, or our feet will soon be in slippery places; we must reverence God's words, or our own words will be idle and full of vanity; and we must keep God's commands, or we shall be destitute of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. I set not forth obedience to the law as the way of salvation; but I speak to those who profess to be saved already by faith in Christ Jesus, and I remind all of you who are numbered with the company of believers that if you are Christ's disciples you will bring forth the fruits of holiness, and if you are God's children you will be like your Father. Godliness breeds God-likeness. The fear of God leads to imitation of God, and where this is not so, the root of the matter is lacking. The scriptural rule is "by their fruits ye shall know them," and by this we must examine ourselves.

Let us now consider Job's first sentence. He says: "My foot hath held his steps." This expression sets forth great carefulness. He had watched every step of God, that is to say, he had been minute as to particulars, observing each precept, which he looked upon as being a footprint which the Lord had made for him to set his foot in; observing, also, each detail of the great example of his God; for in so far as God is imitable he is the great example of his people, as he saith--"Be ye holy, for I am holy": and again, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Job had observed the steps of God's justice, that he might be just; the steps of God's mercy, that he might be pitiful and compassionate; the steps of God's bounty, that he might never be guilty of churlishness or want of liberality; and the steps of God's truth, that he might never deceive. He had watched God's steps of forgiveness, that he might forgive his adversaries; and God's steps of benevolence, that he might also do good and communicate, according to his ability, to all that were in need. In consequence of this he became eyes to the blind and feet to the lame; he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless and him that had none to help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

"My foot," he saith, "hath held his steps": he means that he had labored to be exact in his obedience towards God, and in his imitation of the divine

character. Beloved, we shall do well if we are to the minutest point hourly observant of the precepts and example of God in all things. We must follow not only the right road, but his footprints in that road. We are to be obedient to our heavenly Father not only in some things, but in all things: not in some place but in all places, abroad and at home, in business and in devotion, in the words of our lips and in the thoughts of our hearts. There is no holy walking without careful watching. Depend upon it, no man was ever good by chance, nor did anyone ever become like the Lord Jesus by a happy accident. "I put gold into the furnace," said Aaron, "and there came out this calf," but nobody believed him. If the image was like a calf it was because he had shaped it with a graving tool; and if it is not to be believed that metal will of itself take the form of a calf, much less will character assume the likeness of God himself, as we see it in the Lord Jesus. The pattern is too rich and rare, too elaborate and perfect, ever to be reproduced by a careless, half-awakened trifler. No, we must give all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength to this business, and watch every step, or else our walk will not be close with God, nor pleasing in his sight. O to be able to say, "My foot hath held his steps."

Notice here that the expression has something in it of tenacity, he speaks of taking hold upon God's steps. The idea needs to be lit up by the illustration contained in the original expression. You must go to mountainous regions to understand it. In very rough ways a person may walk all the better for having no shoes to his feet. I sometimes pitied the women of Mentone coming down the rough places of the mountains barefooted, carrying heavy loads upon their heads, but I ceased to pity them when I observed that most of them had a capital pair of shoes in the basket at the top; and I perceived as I watched them that they could stand where I slipped, because their feet took hold upon the rock, almost like another pair of hands. Barefooted they could safely stand, and readily climb where feet encased after our fashion would never carry them. Many Orientals have a power of grasp in their feet which we appear to have lost from want of use. An Arab in taking a determined stand actually seems to grasp the ground with his toes. Roberts tells us in his well-known "Illustrations" that Easterns, instead of stooping to pick up things from the ground with their fingers, will take them up with their toes; and he tells of a criminal condemned to be beheaded, who, in order to stand firm

when about to die, grasped a shrub with his foot. Job declares that he took hold of God's steps, and thus secured a firm footing. He had a hearty grip of holiness, even as David said, "I have stuck unto thy testimonies." That eminent scholar Dr. Good renders the passage, "in his steps will I rivet my feet." He would set them as fast in the footprints of truth and righteousness as if they were riveted there, so firm was his grip upon that holy way which his heart had chosen. This is exactly what we need to do with regard to holiness: we must feel about for it with a sensitive conscience, to know where it is, and when we know it we must seize upon it eagerly, and hold to it as for our life. The way of holiness is often craggy, and Satan tries to make it very slippery, and unless we can take hold of God's steps we shall soon slip with our feet, and bring grievous injury upon ourselves, and dishonor to his holy name. Beloved, to make up a holy character there must be a tenacious adherence to integrity and piety. You must not be one that can be blown off his feet by the hope of a little gain, or by the threatening breath of an ungodly man: you must stand fast and stand firm, and against all pressure and blandishment you must seize and grasp the precepts of the Lord, and abide in them, riveted to them. Standfast is one of the best soldiers in the Prince Immanuel's army and one of the most fit to be trusted with the colors of his regiment. "Having done all, still stand."

To make a holy character we must take hold of the steps of God in the sense of promptness and speed. Here again I must take you to the East to get the illustration. They say of a man who closely imitates his religious teacher, "his feet have laid hold of his master's steps," meaning that he so closely follows his teacher that he seems to take hold of his heels. This is a blessed thing indeed, when grace enables us to follow our Lord closely. There is his foot, and close behind it is ours; and there again he takes another step, and we plant our feet where he has planted his. A very beautiful motto is hung up in our infant class-room at the Stockwell Orphanage, "What would Jesus do?" Not only may children take it as their guide, but all of us may do the same, whatever our age. "What would Jesus do?" If you desire to know what you ought to do under any circumstances, imagine Jesus to be in that position, and then think, "What would Jesus do? for what Jesus would do that ought I to do." In following Jesus we are following God, for in Christ Jesus the brightness of

the Father's glory is best seen. Our example is our Lord and Master, Jesus the Son of God, and therefore this question is but a beam from our guiding star. Ask in all cases--"What would Jesus do?" That unties the knot of all moral difficulty in the most practical way, and does it so simply that no great wit or wisdom will be needed. May God's Holy Spirit help us to copy the line which Jesus has written, even as scholars imitate their writing master in each stroke, and line, and mark, and dot. Oh, when we come to die, and have to look back upon our lives, it will be a blessed thing to have followed the Lord fully. They are happy who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Blessed are they in life and death of whom it can be said,--as he was so were they also in this world. Though misunderstood and misrepresented, yet they were honest imitators of their Lord. Such a truehearted Christian can say, "He knoweth the way that I take. He tried me, and I came forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps." Many a sorrow will you avoid if you keep close at your Master's heel. You know what came of Peter's following afar off; try what will come of close walking with Jesus. Abide in him, and let his words abide in you, so shall you be his disciples. You dare not trust in your works, and will not think of doing so, yet will you bless God that, being saved by his grace, you were enabled to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, by a close and exact following of the steps of your Lord.

Three things, then, we get in the first sentence,--an exactness of obedience, a tenacity of grip upon that which is good, and a promptness in endeavoring to keep touch with God, and to follow him in all respects. May these things be in us and abound.

We now pass on to the second sentence. I am afraid you will say, "Spare us, for even unto the first sentence we have not yet attained." Labor after it then, beloved; forgetting the things that are behind except to weep over them, press forward to that which is before. May God give you those sensitive grasping feet which we have tried to describe: feet that take hold on the Lord's way, and may you throughout life keep that hold; for "blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."

The next sentence runneth thus: "His way have I kept"; that is to say, Job had adhered to God's way as the rule of his life. When he knew that such-and-such a thing was the mind of God, either by his conscience telling

him that it was right, or by a divine revelation, then he obeyed the intimation and kept to it. He did not go out of God's way to indulge his own fancies, or to follow some supposed leader: to God's way he kept from his youth, even till the time when the Lord himself said of him, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" The Lord gave him this character to the devil, who could not deny it, and did not attempt to do so, but only muttered, "Doth Job serve God for nought? Hast thou not set a hedge about him and all that he hath?" When he uttered our text Job could have replied to the malicious accuser that, even when God had broken down his hedges and laid him waste, he had not sinned nor charged God foolishly. He heeded not his wife's rash counsels to curse God and die, but he still blessed the divine name even though everything was taken from him. What noble words are those: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Though bereft of all earthly comfort, he did not forsake the way of holiness, but still kept to his God.

Keeping to the way signifies not simply adherence, but continuance and progress in it. Job had gone on in the ways of God year after year. He had not grown tired of holiness, nor weary of devotion, neither had he grown sick of what men call straight-laced piety. He had kept the way of God on, and on, and on, delighting in what Coverdale's version calls God's "high street" --the highway of holiness. The further he went the more pleasure he took in it, and the more easy he found it to his feet, for God was with him and kept him, and so he kept God's way. "Thy way have I kept." He means that notwithstanding there were difficulties in the way he persevered in it. It was stormy weather, but Job kept to the old road; the sleet beat in his face, but he kept his way: he had gone that path in fair weather, and he was not going to forsake his God now that the storms were out; and so he kept his way. Then the scene changed, the sun was warm, and all the air was redolent with perfume, and merry with the song of birds, but Job kept his way. If God's providence flooded his sky with sunshine he did not forsake God because of prosperity, as some do, but kept his way--kept his way when it was rough, kept his way when it was smooth. When he met with adversities he did not turn into a bye-road, but traveled the King's highway, where a man is safest, for those who dare

to assail him will have to answer for it to a higher power. The high street of holiness is safe because the King's guarantee is given that "no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon." The righteous shall hold on his way, and so did Job, come fair, come foul. When there were others in the road with him, and when there were none, he kept his way. He would not even turn aside for those three good men, or men who thought themselves good, who sat by the wayside and miserably comforted, that is to say, tormented him; he kept God's way, as one whose mind is made up and whose face is set like a flint. There was no turning him, he would fight his way if he could not have it peaceably. I like a man whose mind is set upon being right with God, a self-contained man by God's grace, who does not want patting on the back and encouraging, and who on the other hand does not care if he is frowned at, but has counted the cost and abides by it. Give me a man who has a backbone; a brave fellow who has grit in him. It is well for a professor when God has put some soul into him, and made a man of him for if a Christian man is not a man as well as a Christian, he will not long remain a Christian man. Job was firm: a well-made character that did not shrink in the wetting. He believed his God, he knew God's way, and he kept to it under all circumstances from his first start in life even until that day when he sat on a dunghill and transformed it into a throne, whereon he reigned as among all mere men, the peerless prince of patience. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and of this as one part of it, that he kept the way of the Lord.

Now, dear brethren, on this second clause let me utter this word of self-examination. Have we, kept God's way? Have we got into it and do we mean to keep it still? Some are soon hot and soon cold; some set out for the New Jerusalem like Pliable, very eagerly, but the first slough of despond they tumble into shakes their resolution, and they crawl out on the homeward side and go back to the world again. There will be no comfort in such temporary religion, but dreadful misery when we come to consider it on a dying bed. Changeful Pliables will find it hard to die. O to be constant even to the end, so as to say, "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept." God grant us grace to do it, by his Spirit abiding in us.

The third clause is, "And not declined," by which I understand that he

had not declined from the way of holiness, nor declined in the way. First, he had not declined from it. He had not turned to the right hand nor to the left. Some turn away from God's way to the right hand by doing more than God's word has bidden them do; such as. invent religious ceremonies, and vows, and bonds, and become superstitious, falling under the bondage of priestcraft, and being led into will--worship, and things that are not Scriptural. This is as truly wandering as going out of the road to the left would be. Ah, dear friends, keep to the simplicity of the Bible. This is an age in which Holy Scripture is very little accounted of. If a church chooses to invent a ceremony, men fall into it, and practice it as if it were God's ordinance. Ay, and if neither church nor law recognize the performance, yet if certain self-willed priests choose to burn candles, and to wear all sorts of bedizenments, and bow, and cringe, and march in procession, there are plenty of simpletons who will go whichever way their clergyman chooses, even if he should lead them into downright heathenism. "Follow my leader" is the game of the day, but "Follow my God" is the motto of a true Christian. Job had not turned to the right.

Nor had he turned to the left. He had not been lax in observing God's commandments. He had shunned omission as well as commission. This is a very heart-searching matter; for how many there are whose greatest sins lie in omission. And remember, sins of omission, though they sit very light on many consciences, and though the bulk of professors do not even think them sins, are the very sins for which men will be condemned at the last. How do I prove that? What said the great Judge? "I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink, sick and in prison and ye visited me not." It was what they did not do that cursed them, more than what they did do. So look ye well to it, and pray God that you may not decline from the way of his precepts, from Jesus who, himself is the one and only way.

Furthermore, I take it Job means that he had not even declined in that way. He did not begin with running hard and then get out of breath, and sit by the wayside and say, "Rest and be thankful;" but he kept up the pace, and did not decline. If he was warm and zealous once he remained warm and zealous; if he was indefatigable in service, he did not gradually

tone down into a sluggard, but he could say, "I have not declined." Whereas we ought to make advances towards heaven, there are many who are, after twenty years profession, no forwarder than they were, but perhaps in a worse state. Oh, beware of a decline. We were accustomed to use that term years ago to signify the commencement of a consumption, or perhaps the effects of it; and indeed, a decline in the soul often leads on to a deadly consumption. In a spiritual consumption the very life of religion seems to ebb out by little and little. The man does not die by a wound that stabs his reputation, but by a secret weakness within him, which eats at the vitals of godliness and leaves the outward surface fair. God save us from declining. I am sure, dear friends, we cannot many of us afford to decline much, for we are none too earnest, none too much alive now; but this is one of the great faults of churches, so many of the members are in a decline that the church becomes a hospital instead of a barracks. Many professors are not what they were at first: they were very promising young men, but they are not performing old men. We are pleased to see the flowers on our fruit trees, but they disappoint us unless they knit into fruit, and we are not satisfied even then unless the fruit ripens to a mellow sweetness. We do not make orchards for the sake of blossoms, we want apples. So is it with the garden of grace, our Lord comes seeking fruit, and instead thereof he often finds nothing but leaves. May God grant. to us that we may not decline from the highest standard we have ever reached. "I would," said the Lord of the church of Laodicea, "that thou wert either cold or hot." Oh, you lukewarm ones take that warning to heart. Remember, Jesus cannot endure you; he will spue you out of his mouth; you make him sick to think of you. If you were downright. cold he would understand you; if you were hot he would delight in you; but being neither cold nor hot he is sick at the thought of you, he cannot endure you; and indeed, when we think of what the Lord has done for us, it is enough to make us sick to think that any one should drag on in a cold, inanimate manner in his service, who loved us, and gave himself for us.

Some decline because they become poor: they even stay from worship on that account. I hope none of you say, "I do not like to come to the Tabernacle because I have not fit clothes to come in." As I have often said, any clothes are fit for a man to come here in if he has paid for them. Let

each come by all manner of means in such garments as he has, and he shall be welcome. But I do know some very poor professors who, in the extremity of their anxiety and trouble, instead of flying to God, fly from him. This is very sad. The poorer you are, the more you want the rich consolations of grace. Do not let this temptation overcome you, but if you are as poor as Job, be as resolved as he to keep to the Lord's way and not decline. Others fly from their religion because they grow rich. They say that three generations never will come on wheels to a dissenting place of worship, and it has proved to be sadly true in many instances, though I have no cause to complain of you as yet. Some persons when they rise in the world turn up their noses at their poor friends. If any of you do so you will be worthy of pity, if not, of contempt. If you forsake the ways of God for the fashion of the world you will be poor gainers by your wealth. The Lord keep you from such a decline. Many decline because they conform to the fashion of the world, and the way of the world is not the way of God. Doth not James say, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Others wander because they get into ill company, among witty people, or clever people, or hospitable people, who are not gracious people. Such society is dangerous. People whom we esteem, but whom God does not esteem, are a great snare. It is very perilous to love those who love not God. He shall not be my bosom friend who is not God's friend, for I shall probably do him but little service, and he will do me much harm. May the grace of God prevent your growing cold from any of these causes, and may you be able to say, "I have not declined."

One more sentence remains: "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips": that is to say, as he had not slackened his pace, so much less had he turned back. May none of you ever go back. This is the most cutting grief of a pastor, that certain persons come in among us, and even come to the front, who after awhile turn back and walk no more with us. We know, as John says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us"; yet what anguish it causes when we see apostates among us and know their doom. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the

living God. Let Lot's wife be a warning. Season your souls with a fragment of salt from that pillar, and it may keep you from corruption.

Remember that you can turn back, not only from all the commandments, and so become an utter apostate, but there is such a thing as backing at single commandments. You know the precept to be right, but you cannot face it; you look at it, and look at it, and look at it, and then go back, back, back from it, refusing to obey. Job had never done so. If it was God's command he went forward to perform it. It may be that it seems impossible to go forward in the path of duty, but if you have faith you are to go on whatever the difficulty may be. The negro was right who said, "Massa, if God say, 'Sam, jump through the wall'; it is Sam's business to jump, and God's work to make me go through the wall." Leap at it, dear friends, even if it seem to be a wall of granite. God will clear the road. By faith the Israelites went through the Red Sea as on dry land. It is ours to do what God bids us, as he bids us, when he bids us, and no hurt can come of it. Strength equal to our day shall be given, only let us cry "Forward!" and push on.

Here just one other word. Let us take heed to ourselves that we do not go back, for going back is dangerous. We have no armor for our back, no promise of protection in retreat. Going back is ignoble and base. To have had a grand idea and then to turn back from it like a whipped cur, is disgraceful. Shame on the man who dares not be a Christian. Even sinners and ungodly men point at the man who put his hand to the plough and looked back, and was not worthy of the kingdom. Indeed, it is fatal; for the Lord has said, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Forward! Forward! though --death and hell obstruct the way, for backward is defeat, destruction, despair. O God, grant us of thy grace that when we come to the end of life we may say with joy, "I have not gone back from thy commandment." The covenant promises persevering grace, and it shall be yours, only look ye well that ye trifle not with this grace.

There is the picture which Job has sketched. Hang it up on the wall of your memory, and God help you to paint after this old master, whose skill is unrivalled.

II. Secondly, let us take a peep behind the wall to see how Job came by this character. Here we note Job's HOLY SUSTENANCE, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."

First, then, God spoke to Job. Did God ever speak to you? I do not suppose Job had a single page of inspired writing. Probably he had not--even seen the first books of Moses; he may have done so, but probably he had not. God spoke to him. Did he ever speak to you? No man will ever serve God aright unless God has spoken to him. You have the Bible, and God speaks in that book and through it; but mind you do not rest in the printed letter without discerning its spirit. You must try to hear God's voice in the printed letter. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"; but oh, pray that this divine Son may-speak by the Holy Ghost right into your heart. Anything which keeps you from personal contact with Jesus robs you of the best blessing. The Romanist says he uses a crucifix to help him to remember Christ, and then his prayers often stop at the crucifix, and do not get to Christ; and in like manner you can make an idol of your Bible by using the mere words as a substitute for God's voice to you. The book is to help you to remember God, but if you stick in the mere letter, and get not to God at all, you misuse the sacred word. When the Spirit of God speaks a text right into the soul, when God himself takes the promise or the precept --and sends it with living energy into the heart, this is that which makes a man have a reverence for the word: he feels its awful majesty, its divine supremacy, and while he trembles at it he rejoices, and goes forward to obey because God has spoken to him. Dear friends, when God speaks be sure that you have open ears to hear, for oftentimes he speaketh and men regard him not. In a vision of the night when deep sleep falleth upon men God has spoken to his prophets, but now he speaks by his word, applying it to the heart with power by his Spirit. If God speaks but little to us it is because we are dull of hearing. Renewed hearts are never long without a whisper from the Lord. He is not a dumb God' nor is he so far away that we cannot hear him: they that keep his ways and hold his steps, as Job did, shall hear many of his words to their soul's delight and profit. God's having spoken to Job was the secret of his consistently holy life.

Then note, that what God had spoken to him he treasured up. He says in

the Hebrew that he had hid God's word more than ever he had hidden his necessary food. They had to hide grain away in those days to guard it from wandering Arabs. Job had been more careful to store up God's word than to store up his wheat and his barley; more anxious to preserve the memory of what God had spoken than to garner his harvests. Do you treasure up what God has spoken? Do you study the Word? Do you read it? Oh, how little do we search it compared with what we ought to do. Do you meditate on it? Do you suck out its secret sweets? Do you store up its essence as bees gather the life-blood of flowers, and hoard up their honey for winter food? Bible study is the metal that makes a Christian; this is the strong meat on which holy men are nourished; this is that which makes the bone and sinew of men who keep God's way in defiance of every adversary. God spake to Job, and Job treasured up his words.

We learn from our version of the text that Job lived on God's word: he reckoned it to be better to him than his necessary food. He ate it. This is an art which some do not understand--eating the word of the Lord. Some look at the surface of the Scriptures, some pull the Scriptures to pieces without mercy, some cut the heavenly bread into dice pieces, and show their cleverness, some pick it over for plums, like children with a cake; but blessed is he that makes it his meat and drink. He takes the word of God to be what is, namely, a word from the mouth of the Eternal, and he says, "God is speaking to me in this, and I will satisfy my soul upon it; I do not want anything better than this, anything truer than this, anything safer than this, but having got this it shall abide in me, in my heart, in the very bowels of my life, it shall be interwoven with the warp and woof of my being.

But the text adds that he esteemed it more than his necessary food. Not more than dainties only, for those are superfluities, but more than his necessary food, and you know that a man's necessary food is a thing which he esteems very highly. He must have it. What, take away my bread? says he, as if this could not be borne. To take the bread out of a poor man's mouth is looked upon as the highest kind of villainy: but Job would sooner that they took the bread out of his mouth than the word of God out of his heart. He thought more of it than of his needful food, and I suppose it was because meat would only sustain his body, but the word of

God feeds the soul. The nourishment given by bread is soon gone, but the nourishment given by the word of God abideth in us, and makes us to live for ever. The natural life is more than meat, but our spiritual life feeds on meat even nobler than itself, for it feeds on the bread of heaven, the person of the Lord Jesus. Bread is sweet to the hungry man, but we are not always hungry, and sometimes we have no appetite; but the best of God's word is that he who lives near to God has always an appetite for it, and the more he eats of it the more he can eat. I do confess I have often fed upon God's word when I have had no appetite for it, until I have gained an appetite. I have grown hungry in proportion as I have felt satisfied: my emptiness seemed to kill my hunger, but as I have been revived by the word I have longed for more. So it is written, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled:" and when they are filled they shall continue to enjoy the benediction, for they shall hunger and thirst still though filled with grace. God's word is sweeter to the taste than bread to a hungry man, and its sweetness never cloyes, though it dwells long on the palate. You cannot be always eating bread, but you can always feed on the word of God. You cannot eat all the meat that is set before you, your capacity is limited that way, and none but a glutton wishes it otherwise; but oh, you may be ravenous of God's word, and devour it all, and yet have no surfeit. You are like a little mouse in a great cheese, and you shall have permission to eat it all, though it be a thousand times greater than yourself. Though God's thoughts are greater than your thoughts, and his ways are greater than your ways, yet may his ways be in your heart, and your heart in his ways. You may be filled with all the fullness of God, though it seems a paradox. His fullness is greater than you, and all his fullness is infinitely greater than you, yet you may be filled with all the fullness of God. So that the word of God is better than our necessary food: it hath qualities which our necessary food hath not.

No more, except it be this: you cannot be holy, my brethren, unless you do in secret live upon the blessed word of God, and you will not live on it unless it comes to you as the word of his mouth. It is very sweet to get a letter from home when you are far away: it is like a bunch of fresh flowers in winter time. A letter from the dear one at home is as music heard over the water; but half a dozen words from that dear mouth are better than a

score pages of manuscript, for there is a sweetness about the look and the tone which paper cannot carry. Now, I want you to get the Bible to be not a book only but a speaking trumpet, through which God speaks from afar to you, so that you may catch the very tones of his voice. You must read the word of God to this end, for it is while reading, meditating, and studying, and seeking to dip yourself into its spirit, that it seems suddenly to change from a written book into a talking book or phonograph; it whispers to you or thunders at you as though God had hidden himself among its leaves and spoke to your condition; as though Jesus who feedeth among the lilies had made the chapters to be lily beds, and had come to feed there. Ask Jesus to cause his word to come fresh from his own mouth to your soul; and if it be so, and you thus live in daily communion with a personal Christ, my brethren, you will then with your feet take hold upon his steps; then will you keep his way, then will you never decline or go back from his commandments, but you will make good speed in your pilgrim way to the eternal city. May the Holy Ghost daily be with you. May every one of you live under his sacred bedewing, and be fruitful in every good word and work. Amen and amen.

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Churchianity versus Christianity

When a genuine Christian happens to find himself settled down as a clergyman of the church of England in addition to the troublesome memories of the inconvenient declarations by which he reached his position, he must frequently be the victim of mental nausea at the sight of the motley squadron in which he is enrolled. There is good Mr. Ryle, an indefatigable Tractarian, who hates Romish Tractarianism, and preaches the gospel thoroughly and there are many, like him the excellent of the earth, distinguished for piety, who would be an honor to any denomination of Christians: a believer in Jesus feels much comfort in such company; but who are those spirits in red, white, and blue? Aliens

from the commonwealth of Israel, in their dress at any rate. Their voice is Babylonian even as their apparel; they hail from Rome, and are affectionately attached to the Mother of Harlots. Can the lover of truth go with these? Can the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ's pure gospel sit in the same congress with these priests? Bow at the same altar? Unite in church fellowship with them? Surely the more gracious a man is the more irksome must such fellowship become. That searching question, "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" if it ever intrudes itself into rectories, must torture any evangelical clergyman who keeps a tender conscience. Moreover, on the other side of the quadrangle of the Establishment one sees a Philistine regiment of skeptics, with a bishop to head them, and all sorts of dignitaries to make up the battalion. Can the spiritual mind find peace in an affinity with these? Can it be to the evangelical clergyman, who is truly converted, a fact to sleep quietly upon, that he is in full communion with these unbelievers? The apostolical inquiry, "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" must surely at times ring through the manse, and startle the quiet of the vicarage library. How our brethren manage to read the burial service over ungodly men, how they can subscribe to the catechism, and many other enormities of the Book of Common Prayer, remains to us an enigma towards the solution of which we have not advanced a hair's breadth since the day when we provoked so much indignation by our sermon on "Baptismal Regeneration;" but the first bitter draught of subscription, and the subsequent doses of catechism and rubric, are not all the annoyances of conforming Puritans, for many of them are so sorely vexed with daily ecclesiastical troubles, that they might almost say with David, "All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." We would pity them for being placed in so unenviable a position were they not free to get out of it whenever they please: lacking room for commiseration, we adopt another form of good wishing, and pray that their yoke may become heavier day by day, and their surroundings more and more intolerable, until they are driven forth from their self-chosen bonds. We are the best friend of the Evangelicals, because we do not delude them into the notion that their ecclesiastical union with Puseysim and Rationalism is justifiable, but honestly urge them to quit their indefensible and dishonorable position, and come out decidedly from all communion with the monster evils of the Establishment. None will welcome them more heartily or help them more

industriously than he whom they adjudged to be unkind because of his outspoken rebukes. Disapproving of Episcopacy as a form of church government, many Dissenters would nevertheless rejoice to assist a free evangelical Episcopal community formed by a great secession from the state church, and freed from its glaring errors; and such a church would be vexed by no special bickerings and jealousies between itself and the other members of the great evangelical family, it would most probably enjoy a place of more than ordinary prestige, and might possibly become the largest religious community in England. A little Scotch backbone and wonders would be wrought. Alas! we fear that the Record school teaches no lessons which can educate heroes, and we are afraid the evangelicals will continue to be what the Puseyites call them, "the jellies," to the end of the chapter.

In their work for the Lord, our Christian brethren in the Establishment of the bolder stamp frequently find Churchianity a sad incumbrance to them. In favored regions, where the gospel has long been preached, a circle of believers has been formed, who form a church within the church, and contribute greatly to the success and comfort of the clergyman; but in other cases the Churchmen of the parish are a terrible nuisance to the Christian incumbent. Laying aside for a moment our opinion of the inconsistency of his official position, we cannot help sympathizing deeply with the minister who, hampered and bound by his ecclesiastical connections, is nevertheless struggling, as manfully as his condition allows, to preserve a gospel testimony in the land. We wish God-speed to all such, as ministers of our Lord Jesus, although we anxiously desire that their membership with the corrupt church of England may, at any cost, speedily come to an end. We know that hundreds of the excellent of the earth are preaching the pure word of truth every Sabbath within the bounds of Episcopalianism, with hearts breaking for heaviness because their parishioners loathe the gospel, and hate them for the gospel's sake. "Ah," said a clergyman to us a few months ago, "your people love you, and if you are ill they are all praying to have you restored, but as for me, they would set the bells ringing in my parish if I were dead, for gospel truth is abominable in the esteem of most of them, and they hate me for keeping ritualism out of my church." This was, probably, an extreme case, but there are many of a similar kind, though not so intense in degree. May

such brethren be upheld by their great Master to war a good warfare, and to remain faithful to the faith once committed to the saints. Inconsistent as they are, we cannot deliberate for a single moment as to which side to take in the contest between them and Ritualists and worldlings; they are our brethren notwithstanding their shortcoming, their cause is the cause of truth and righteousness, so far as they preach the gospel of Jesus, and may it triumph beyond their own expectation, even to the destruction of the union between church and state. They deserve to be driven out of the Establishment, in which they are intruders, towards which they are Dissenters, for which they have defiled their reputations among their Nonconforming brethren, but, as men fighting in a wicked world against deadly errors, they deserve the prayers of all believers, and the best assistance that can be rendered by all Christians.

In the Bucks Herald a serious complaint is laid against the zealous Vicar of Winslow, by a Churchman, which we shall use as an illustration of the quarrel between Christianity and Churchianity. The allegations appear to us to be very justly brought by the writer from his Churchianity point of view; the vicar is a Christian, and has no right in the Anglican church, and when his vestry condemns him, it is simply the voice of the church with which he has unhappily allied himself protesting against the religion of Jesus, which shines in his course of action. If an honest Englishman enlists in the French army in time of war, he must not wonder if his British manners are offensive to his Gallic connections; he should not put himself in so false a position, but range himself on the side to which, by lineage and loyalty, he belongs. It is curious to note that the great sins which the Vicar of Winslow has committed against Churchianity, are precisely the very acts which, under Christianity, are accounted as virtues. His good before the Lord of hosts is evil in the judgment of perverse men. "In Winslow," says the Churchman, "there is a most decided church feeling. Many of us, with the greatest regret, leave our parish church, who have never done so before; others, who from circumstances are unable to do so, feel the want of good services, but submit to what they get. Our vicar, I believe, thinks himself sincere and right; but he forgets that other persons may (as in this instance they do) hold contrary views to his, to which views he will not yield in the slightest degree, although it would be for the benefit of the church of which he is a

priest, and of which we are the true and loving people." Of course he is a priest, and his own prayer book calls him so, and yet we venture to guess that he disowns the title. His parishioners are right enough in murmuring at his want of churchmanship, but he is more right still, though very inconsistent, in putting Christ before the church.

Now for the gross transgressions of the vicar, which are chiefly threefold. Item the first. He has been guilty of Christian love. He has committed against Churchianity the high crime and misdemeanor of loving his brethren in the faith, whereas he ought to have denounced them all as schismatics and heretics. The charge needs no comment from us, all sound judges will see that the case is parallel to that against Paul and Silas, at Philippi, "these men, being Christians, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, being Churchmen." Here are the very words of the accusation—"the holding of prayer meetings, at which all denominations of Christians were invited to attend, and to offer up prayer in alphabetical order, regardless of sect, and under the presidency of the vicar." Horrible! is it not, O bitter bigot? Lovely! is it not, disciple of Jesus?

Item second. He has vindicated, as well as he could, a weak point in his teaching, and has been anxious to win over those who differ. He is accused of preaching "special sermons upon such subjects as Holy Baptism, and inviting the Baptists to attend, when that denomination of Christians had just established a new place of worship." Churchianity does not think those vile Baptists to be worth powder and shot. To preach to them is as bad as Paul preaching among the uncircumcised Gentiles. It is useless to try to convert them, and it is dangerous to ventilate the subject of Baptism, because the church is so very fond of Infant Baptism, and the matter is so exceedingly doubtful, that it is better not to stir in it. The Baptists, mark you, reader, do not complain; they are glad that every Paedobaptist should declare his own views, and they feel so safe in their own entrenchments that they look for converts whenever the subject is brought before the public mind; but the churchman complains grievously because Baptists are even bidden to come and be rectified by the vicar; let them alone, they are heretics and arch enemies of Churchianity; let them go to their own place, both here and hereafter.

Item third. The vicar has had the impertinence to be faithful as a pastor. This is a very serious business, and, we should imagine, is at the bottom of the whole complaint. He has trodden on some people's gouty toes, and touched their besetting sins with too rough a hand. "Thus," saith the church-scribe, "the preaching of sermons upon such subjects as balls and concerts, when such private and public entertainments were about to be given; I say that, in my belief, these things have been calculated to send church-goers elsewhere, such sermons as I have mentioned coming under the head of personal ones, which should always be avoided." Christianity approves of holy boldness in reproof, and integrity in declaring the whole counsel of God, but Churchianity loves gaiety and frivolity, and would have a dumb dog in the pulpit, who will not rebuke it. Whenever Churchianity has ruled, revelry and wantonness have been winked at, so long as saints' days, sacraments, and priests have been regarded. God's law is nothing to the high church, so long as church forms are scrupulously and ostentatiously observed. We should see maypoles erected and danced around on a Sunday afternoon within a year, if Churchianity had its way; the Book of Sports would be revived, and the evening of the Lord's day would be dedicated to the devil. Leave the church open, observe saints' days, decorate the altar, sing "Hymns Ancient and Modern," put on tagrags, and all goes smoothly with Churchianity: preach the gospel, and denounce sin, and straightway there is no small stir.

Well, good Mr. Vicar, may you be yet more vile in these men's sight, until they cast you out of the national church as your Master was driven forth before you. May you please God more and more, and make the devil and all his allies heartily sick of you. Saving your vicarage, and professed churchmanship, about which we can see nothing desirable, we esteem you highly, and hope that you and the like of you may evermore be sustained by the abounding mercy of the great Head of the one only true church, which is the remnant according to the election of grace: May Christianity rule and Churchianity be cast to the moles and to the bats.

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How a Man's Conduct Comes Home to Him

“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.”—Proverbs 14:14.

A common principle is here laid down and declared to be equally true in reference to two characters, who in other respects are a contrast. Men are affected by the course which they pursue; for good or bad, their own conduct comes home to them. The backslider and the good man are very different, but in each of them the same rule is exemplified—they are both filled by the result of their lives. The backslider becomes filled by that which is within him, as seen in his life, and the good man also is filled by that which grace implants within his soul. The evil leaven in the backslider leavens his entire being and sours his existence, while the gracious fountain in the sanctified believer saturates his whole manhood, and baptizes his entire life. In each case the fullness arises from that which is within the man, and is in its nature like the man's character; the fullness of the backslider's misery will come out of his own ways, and the fullness of the good man's content will spring out of the love of God which is shed abroad in his heart.

The meaning of this passage will come out better if we begin with an illustration. Here are two pieces of sponge, and we wish to fill them: you shall place one of them in a pool of foul water, it will be filled, and filled with that which it lies in; you shall put the other sponge into a pure crystal stream, and it will also become full, full of the element in which it is placed. The backslider lies asoak in the dead sea of his own ways, and the brine fills him; the good man is plunged like a pitcher into “Siloa's brook, which flows hard by the oracle of God,” and the river of the water of life fills him to the brim. A wandering heart will be filled with sorrow, and a heart confiding in the Lord will be satisfied with joy and peace. Or, take two farmsteads; one farmer sows tares in his field, and in due time his barns are filled therewith; another sows wheat, and his garner is stored with precious grain. Or follow out our Lord's parable: one builder places his frail dwelling on the sand, and when the tempest rages he is swept away in it naturally enough; another lays deep the foundations of his house and sets it fast on a rock, and as an equally natural consequence

he smiles upon the storm, protected by his well-founded dwelling-place. What a man is by sin or by grace will be the cause of his sorrow or of his satisfaction.

I. I shall take the two characters without further preface, and first let us speak awhile about the backslider. This is a very solemn subject, but one which it is needful to bring before the present audience, since we all have some share in it. I trust there may not be many present who are backsliders in the worst sense of the term, but very, very few among us are quite free from the charge of having backslidden in some measure at some time or other since conversion. Even those who sincerely love the Master sometimes wander, and we all need to take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

There are several kinds of persons who may with more or less propriety be comprehended under the term “backsliders,” and these will each in his own measure be filled with his own ways.

There are first, apostates, those who unite themselves with the church of Christ, and for a time act as if they were subjects of a real change of heart. These persons are frequently very zealous for a season, and may become prominent if not eminent in the church of God. They did run well like those mentioned by the apostle, but by some means they are, first of all, hindered, and slacken their pace; after that they linger and loiter, and leave the crown of the causeway for the side of the road. By-and-by in their hearts they go back into Egypt, and at last, finding an opportunity to return, they break loose from all the restraints of their profession and openly forsake the Lord. Truly the last end of such men is worse than the first. Judas is the great type of these pre-eminent backsliders. Judas was a professed believer in Jesus, a follower of the Lord, a minister of the gospel, an apostle of Christ, the trusted treasurer of the college of the apostles, and after all turned out to be the “son of perdition” who sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. He ere long was filled with his own ways, for, tormented with remorse, he threw down the blood-money he had so dearly earned, hanged himself, and went to his own place. The story of Judas has been written over and over again in the lives of other traitors. We have heard of Judas as a deacon, and as an elder; we have heard Judas preach, we have read the works of Judas the bishop, and

seen Judas the missionary. Judas sometimes continues in his profession for many years, but sooner or later the true character of the man is discovered; his sin returns upon his own head, and if he does not make an end of himself, I do not doubt but what, even in this life, he often lives in such horrible remorse that his soul would choose strangling rather than life. He has gathered the grapes of Gomorrah and he has to drink the wine; he has planted a bitter tree and he must eat the fruit thereof. Oh sirs, may none of you betray your Lord and Master. God grant I never may. "Traitor! Traitor!" Shall that ever be written across your brow? You have been baptised into the name of the adorable Trinity, you have eaten the tokens of the Redeemer's body and blood, you have sung the Songs of Zion, you have stood forward to pray in the midst of the people of God, and will you act so base a part as to betray your Lord? Shall it ever be said of you, "Take him to the place from whence he came, for he is a traitor"? I cannot conceive of anything more ignominious than for a soldier to be drummed out of a regiment of Her Majesty's soldiers, but what must it be to be cast out of the host of God! What must it be to be set up as the target of eternal shame and everlasting contempt for having crucified the Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame! How shameful will it be to be branded as an apostate from truth and holiness, from Christ and his ways. Better never to have made a profession than to have belied it so wretchedly, and to have it said of us, "it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Of such John has said, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

This title of backslider applies also to another class, not so desperate but still most sad, of which not Judas but David may serve as the type: we refer to backsliders who go into open sin. There are men who descend from purity to careless living, and from careless living to indulgence of the flesh, and from indulgence of the flesh in little matters into known sin, and from one sin to another till they plunge into uncleanness. They have been born again and therefore the trembling and almost extinct life within must and shall revive and bring them to repentance: they will come back weary, weeping, humbled, and brokenhearted, and they will

be restored, but they will never be what they were before; their voices will be hoarse like that of David after his crime, for he never again sung so jubilantly as in his former days. Life will be more full of trembling and trial, and manifest less of buoyancy and joy of spirit. Broken bones make hard travelling, and even when they are set they are very subject to shooting pains when ill weathers are abroad. I may be addressing some of this sort this morning, and if so I would speak with much faithful love. Dear brother, if you are now following Jesus afar off you will ere long, like Peter, deny him. Even though you will obtain mercy of the Lord, yet the text will certainly be fulfilled in you, and you will be “filled with your own ways.” As certainly as Moses took the golden calf and ground it into powder, and then mixed it with the water which the sinful Israelites had to drink till they all tasted the grit in their mouths, so will the Lord do with you if you are indeed his child: he will take your idol of sin and grind it to powder, and your life shall be made bitter with it for years to come. When the gall and wormwood are most manifest in the cup of life, it will be a mournful thing to feel “I procured this unto myself by my shameful folly.” O Lord, hold thou us up, and keep us from falling by little and little lest we plunge into overt sin and continue in it for a season; for surely the anguish which comes of such an evil is terrible as death itself. If David could rise from his grave and appear before you with his face seamed with sorrow and his brow wrinkled with his many griefs, he would say to you “keep your hearts with all diligence lest ye bring woe upon yourselves. Watch unto prayer, and guard against the beginnings of sin lest your bones wax old through your roarings, and your moisture be turned into the drought of summer.” O beware of a wandering heart, for it will be an awful thing to be filled with your own backslidings.

But there is a third sort of backsliding, and I am afraid a very large number of us have at times come under the title—I mean those who in any measure or degree, even for a very little time, decline from the point which they have reached. Perhaps such a man hardly ought to be called a backslider because it is not his predominant character, yet he backslides. If he does not believe as firmly, and love as intensely, and serve as zealously as he formerly did, he has in a measure backslidden, and any measure of backsliding, be it less or be it more, is sinful, and will in proportion as it is real backsliding fill us with our own ways. If you only

sow two or three seeds of the thistle there will not be so many of the ill weeds on your farm as if you had emptied out a whole sack, but still there will be enough and more than enough. Every little backsliding, as men call it, is a great mischief; every little going back even in heart from God, if it never comes to words or deeds, yet will involve us in some measure of sorrow. If sin were clean removed from us, sorrow would be removed also, in fact we should be in heaven since a state of perfect holiness must involve perfect blessedness. Sin in any degree will bear its own fruit, and that fruit will be sure to set our teeth on edge; it is ill therefore to be a backslider even in the least degree.

Having said so much, let me now continue to think of the last two kinds of backsliders, and leave out the apostate. Let us first read his name, and then let us read his history, we have both in our text.

The first part of his name is “backslider.” He is not a back runner, nor a back leaper, but a backslider, that is to say he slides back with an easy, effortless motion, softly, quietly, perhaps unsuspected by himself or anybody else. The Christian life is very much like climbing a hill of ice. You cannot slide up, nay, you have to cut every step with an ice axe; only with incessant labor in cutting and chipping can you make any progress; you need a guide to help you, and you are not safe unless you are fastened to the guide, for you may slip into a crevasse. Nobody ever slides up, but if great care be not taken they will slide down, slide back, or in other words backslide. This is very easily done. If you want to know how to backslide, the answer is leave off going forward and you will slide backward, cease going upward and you will go downward of necessity, for stand still you never can. To lead us to backslide, Satan acts with us as engineers do with a road down the mountains side. If they desire to carry the road from yonder alp right down into the valley far below, they never think of making the road plunge over a precipice, or straight down the face of the rock, for nobody would ever use such a road; but the road makers wind and twist. See, the track descends very gently to the right, you can hardly see that it does run downwards; anon it turns to the left with a small incline, and so by turning this way and then that, the traveler finds himself in the vale below. Thus the crafty enemy of souls fetches saints down from their high places; whenever he gets a good man down it

is usually by slow degrees. Now and then, by sudden opportunity and strong temptation, the Christian man has been plunged right from the pinnacle of the temple into the dungeon of despair in a moment, but it is not often the case; the gentle decline is the devil's favourite piece of engineering, and he manages it with amazing skill. The soul scarcely knows it is going down, it seems to be maintaining the even tenor of its way, but ere long it is far below the line of peace and consecration. Our dear brother, Dr. Arnot, of the Free Church, illustrates this very beautifully by supposing a balance. This is the heavy scale loaded with seeds, and the other is high in the air. One morning you are very much surprised to find that what had been the heavier scale is aloft, while the other has descended. You do not understand it till you discover that certain little insects had silently transferred the seeds one by one. At first they made no apparent change, by-and-bye there was a little motion, one more little seed was laid in the scales and the balance turned in a moment. Thus silently the balance of a man's soul may be affected, and everything made ready for that one temptation by which the fatal turn is made, and the man becomes an open transgressor. Apparently insignificant agencies may gradually convey our strength from the right side to the wrong by grains and half-grains, till at last the balance is turned in the actual life and we are no more fit to be numbered with the visible saints of God.

Think again of this man's name. He is a "backslider," but what from? He is a man who knows the sweetness of the things of God and yet leaves off feeding upon them. He is one who has been favored to wait at the Lord's own table, and yet he deserts his honorable post, backslides from the things which he has known, and felt, and tasted, and handled, and rejoiced in— things that are the priceless gifts of God. He is a backslider from the condition in which he has enjoyed a heaven below; he is a backslider from the love of him who bought him with his blood; he slides back from the wounds of Christ, from the works of the Eternal Spirit, from the crown of life which hangs over his head, and from a familiar intercourse with God which angels might envy him. Had he not been so highly favored he could not have been so basely wicked. O fool and slow of heart to slide from wealth to poverty, from health to disease, from liberty to bondage, from light to darkness; from the love of God, from

abiding in Christ, and from the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, into lukewarmness, worldliness, and sin. The text however, gives the man's name at greater length, "The backslider in heart." Now the heart is the fountain of evil. A man need not be a backslider in action to get the text fulfilled in him, he need only be a backslider in heart. All backsliding begins within, begins with the heart's growing lukewarm, begins with the love of Christ being less powerful in the soul. Perhaps you think that so long as backsliding is confined to the heart it does not matter much; but consider for a minute, and you will confess your error. If you went to your physician and said, "Sir, I feel a severe pain in my body," would you feel comforted if he replied "There is no local cause for your suffering, it arises entirely from disease of the heart"? Would you not be far more alarmed than before? A case is serious indeed when it involves the heart. The heart is hard to reach and difficult to understand, and moreover it is so powerful over the rest of the system, and has such power to injure all the members of the body, that a disease in the heart is an injury to a vital organ, a pollution of the springs of life. A wound wherein there are a thousand wounds, a complicated wounding of all the members with a stroke. Look ye well then to your hearts, and pray, "O Lord cleanse thou the secret parts of our spirit and preserve us to thy eternal kingdom and glory!"

Now let us read this man's history—"he shall be filled with his own ways," from which it is clear that he falls into ways of his own. When he was in his right state he followed the Lord's ways, he delighted himself in the law of the Lord, and he gave him the desire of his heart; but now he has ways of his own which he prefers to the ways of God. And what comes of this perverseness? Does he prosper? No; he is before long filled with his own ways; we will see what that means.

The first kind of fullness with his own ways is absorption in his carnal pursuits. He has not much time to spend upon religion; he has other things to attend to. If you speak to him of the deep things of God he is weary of you, and even of the daily necessities of godliness he has no care to hear much, except at service time. He has his business to see to, or he has to go out to a dinner party, or a few friends are coming to spend the evening: in any case, his answer to you is "I pray thee have me excused."

Now, this pre-occupation with trifles is always mischievous, for when the soul is filled with chaff there is no room left for wheat; when all your mind is taken up with frivolities, the weighty matters of eternity cannot enter. Many professed Christians spend far too much time in amusements, which they call recreation, but which I fear is far rather a redestruction than a recreation. The pleasures, cares, pursuits, and ambitions of the world swell in the heart when they once enter, and by-and-bye they fill it completely. Like the young cuckoo in the sparrow's nest, worldliness grows and grows and tries its best to cast out the true owner of the heart. Whatever your soul is full of, if it be not full of Christ, it is in an evil case.

Then backsliders generally proceed a stage further, and become full of their own ways by beginning to pride themselves upon their condition and to glory in their shame. Not that they really are satisfied at heart, on the contrary, they have a suspicion that things are not quite as they ought to be, and therefore they put on a bold front and try to deceive themselves and others. It is rather dangerous to tell them of their faults, for they will not accept your rebuke, but will defend themselves, and even carry the war into your camp. They will say, "Ah, you are puritanical, strict and straight-laced, and your manners and ways do mischief rather than good." They would not bring up their children as you do yours, so they say. Their mouths are very full because their hearts are empty, and they talk very loudly in defense of themselves because their conscience has been making a great stir within them. They call sinful pleasure a little unbending of the bow, greed is prudence, covetousness is economy, and dishonesty is cleverness. It is dreadful to think that men who know better should attempt thus to excuse themselves. Generally the warmest defender of a sinful practice is the man who has the most qualms of conscience about it. He himself knows that he is not living as he should, but he does not intend to cave in just yet, nor at all if he can help it. He is filled with his ways in a boasted self-content as to them.

Ere long this fullness reaches another stage, for if the backslider is a gracious man at all, he encounters chastisement, and that from a rod of his own making. A considerable time elapses before you can eat bread of your own growing: the ground must be ploughed and sown, and the

wheat has to come up, to ripen, and to be reaped and threshed and ground in the mill, and the flour must be kneaded and baked in the oven; but the bread comes to the table and is eaten at last. Even so the backslider must eat of the fruit of his own ways. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Now look at the backslider eating the fruit of his ways. He neglected prayer, and when he tries to pray he cannot; his powers of desire, emotion, faith, and entreaty have failed; he kneels awhile, but he cannot pray; the Spirit of supplications is grieved, and no longer helps his infirmities. He reaches down his Bible; he commences to read a chapter, but he has disregarded the word of God so long that he finds it to be more like a dead letter than a living voice, though it used to be a sweet book before he became a backslider. The minister, too, is altered; he used to hear him with delight; but now the poor preacher has lost all his early power, so the backslider thinks. Other people do not think so, the place is just as crowded, there are as many saints edified and sinners saved as before; but the wanderer in heart began criticizing, and now he is entangled in the habit, and he criticises every thing, but never feeds upon the truth at all. Like a madman at table he puts his fork into the morsel and holds it up, looks at it, finds fault with it, and throws it on the floor. Nor does he act better towards the saints in whose company he once delighted; they are dull society and he shuns them. Of all the things which bear upon his spiritual life he is weary, he has trifled with them, and now he cannot enjoy them. Hear him sing, or rather sigh —

"Thy saints are comforted, I know,

And love thy house of prayer;

I sometimes go where others go,

But find no comfort there."

How can it be otherwise? He is drinking water out of his own cistern and eating the bread of which he sowed the corn some years ago. His ways have come home to him.

Chastisement also comes out of his conduct in other ways. He was very worldly and gave gay parties, and his girls have grown up and grieved him by their conduct. He himself went into sin, and now that his sons outdo his example, what can he say? Can he wonder at anything? Look at David's case. David fell into a gross sin, and soon Amnon his son rivalled him in iniquity. He murdered Uriah the Hittite, and Absalom murdered his brother Amnon. He rebelled against God, and lo, Absalom lifted up the standard of revolt against him. He disturbed the relationships of another man's family in a disgraceful manner, and behold his own family rent in pieces, and never restored to peace; so that even when he lay a-dying he had to say, "My house is not so with God." He was filled with his own ways and it always will be so, even if the sin be forgotten. If you have sent forth a dove or a raven from the ark of your soul, it will come back to you just as you sent it out. May God save us from being backsliders lest the smooth current of our life should turn into a raging torrent of woe.

The fourth stage, blessed be God, is at length reached by gracious men and women, and what a mercy it is they ever do reach it! At last they become filled with their own ways in another sense; namely, satiated and dissatisfied, miserable and discontented. They sought the world and they gained it, but now it has lost all charms to them. They went after other lovers, but these deceivers have been false to them, and they wring their hands and say, "Oh that I could return to my first husband for it was better with me then than now." Many have lived at a distance from Jesus Christ, but now they can bear it no longer; they cannot be happy till they return. Hear them cry in the language of the fifty-first psalm, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." But, I tell you, they cannot get back very easily. It is hard to retrace your steps from backsliding, even if it be but a small measure of it; but to get back from great wanderings is hard indeed, much harder than going over the road the first time. I believe that if the mental sufferings of some returning backsliders could be written and faithfully published they would astound you, and be a more horrible story to read than all the torments of the Inquisition. What racks a man is stretched upon who has been unfaithful to his covenant with God! What fires have burned within the souls of those men who have been untrue to Christ and his cause! What dungeons, what grim and dark prisons under ground have saints of

God lain in who have gone aside into By-path Meadow instead of keeping to The King's Highway. Their sighs and cries, for which after all they have learned to be thankful, are dolorous and terrible to listen to, and make us learn that he who sins must smart, and especially if he be a child of God, for the Lord has said of his people, "you only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Whoever may go unchastised, a child of God never shall: the Lord will let his adversaries do a thousand things and not punish them in this life, since he reserves vengeance for them in the life to come, but as for his own children, they cannot sin without being visited with stripes.

Beloved friends, let all go straight away to the cross at once for fear we should be backsliders—

"Come, let us to the Lord our God

With contrite hearts return

Our God is gracious, nor will leave

The penitent to mourn."

Let us confess every degree and form of backsliding, every wandering of heart, every decline of love, every wavering of faith, every flagging of zeal, every dulness of desire, every failure of confidence. Behold, the Lord says unto us, "Return"; therefore let us return. Even if we be not backsliders it will do us no hurt to come to the cross as penitents, indeed, it is well to abide there evermore. O Spirit of the living God, preserve us in believing penitence all our days.

II. I have but little time for the second part of my text. Excuse me therefore if I do not attempt to go into it very deeply. As it is true of the backslider that he grows at last full of that which is within him and his wickedness, it is true also of the Christian, that in pursuing the paths of righteousness and the way of faith, he becomes filled and contented too. That which grace has placed within him fills him in due time.

Here then we have the good man's name and history.

Notice first, his name. It is a very remarkable thing that as a backslider, if you call out his name, will not as a rule answer to it, even so a good man will not acknowledge the title here assigned him. Where is the good man? Know that every man here who is right before God will pass the question on, saying, "There is none good save One, that is, God." The good man will also question my text and say "I cannot feel satisfied with myself." No, dear friend, but mind you read the words aright. It does not say "satisfied with himself," no truly good man ever was self-satisfied, and when any talk as if they are self-satisfied it is time to doubt whether they know much about the matter. All the good men I have ever met with have always wanted to be better; they have longed for something higher than as yet they have reached. They would not own to it that they were satisfied, and they certainly were by no means satisfied with themselves. The text does not say that they are, but it says something that reads so much like it that care is needed. Now, if I should seem to say this morning that a good man looks within and is quite satisfied with what he finds there, please let me say at once, I mean nothing of the sort. I should like to say exactly what the text means, but I do not know quite whether I shall manage to do it, except you will help me by not misunderstanding me, even if there should be a strong temptation to do so. Here is the good man's history, he is "satisfied from himself," but first I must read his name again, though he does not own to it, what is he good for? He says, "good for nothing," but in truth he is good for much when the Lord uses him. Remember that he is good because the Lord has made him over again by the Holy Spirit. Is not that good which God makes? When he created nature at the first he said of all things that they were very good; how could they be otherwise, since he made them? So in the new creation a new heart and right spirit are from God, and must be good. Where there is grace in the heart the grace is good and makes the heart good. A man who has the righteousness of Jesus, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is good in the sight of God.

A good man is on the side of good. If I were to ask, who is on the side of good? we would not pass on that question. No, we would step out and say "I am. I am not all I ought to be, or wish to be, but I am on the side of

justice, truth, and holiness; I would live to promote goodness, and even die rather than become the advocate of evil.” And what is the man who loves that which is good? Is he evil? I trow not. He who truly loves that which is good must be in a measure good himself. Who is he that strives to be good, and groans and sighs over his failures, yea and rules his daily life by the laws of God? Is he not one of the world’s best men? I trust without self-righteousness the grace of God has made some of us good in this sense, for what the Spirit of God has made is good, and if in Christ Jesus we are new creatures, we cannot contradict Solomon, nor criticize the Bible if it calls such persons good, though we dare not call ourselves good.

Now, a good man’s history is this, “He is satisfied from himself.”

That means first that he is independent of outward circumstances. He does not derive satisfaction from his birth, or honors, or properties; but that which fills him with content is within himself. Our hymn puts it so truly—

I need not go abroad for joys,

I have a feast at home,

My sighs are turned into songs,

My heart has ceased to roam.

Down from above the blessed Dove

Is come into my breast,

To witness thine eternal love

And give my spirit rest.”

Other men must bring music from abroad if they have any, but in the gracious man’s bosom there lives a little bird that sings sweetly to him.

He has a flower in his own garden more sweet than any he could buy in the market or find in the king's palace. He may be poor, but still he would not change his estate in the kingdom of heaven for all the grandeur of the rich. His joy and peace are not even dependent upon the health of his body, he is often well in soul when sick as to his flesh; he is frequently full of pain and yet perfectly satisfied. He may carry about with him an incurable disease which he knows will shorten and eventually end his life, but he does not look to this poor life for satisfaction, he carries that within him which creates immortal joy: the love of God shed abroad in his soul by the Holy Ghost yields a perfume sweeter than the flowers of Paradise. The fulfillment of the text is partly found in the fact that the good man is independent of his surroundings.

And he is also independent of the praise of others. The backslider keeps easy because the minister thinks well of him and Christian friends think well of him, but the genuine Christian who is living near to God thinks little of the verdict of men. What other people think of him is not his chief concern; he is sure that he is a child of God, he knows he can say, "Abba, Father," he glories that for him to live is Christ, and to die is gain, and therefore he does not need the approbation of others to buoy up his confidence. He runs alone, and does not need, like a weakly child, to be carried in arms. He knows whom he has believed, and his heart rests in Jesus; thus he is satisfied not from other people and from their judgment, but "from himself."

Then again, the Christian man is content with the well of upspringing water of life which the Lord has placed within him. There, my brethren, up on the everlasting hills is the divine reservoir of all-sufficient grace, and down here in our bosom is a spring which bubbles up unto everlasting life. It has been welling up in some of us these five and-twenty years, but why is it so? The grand secret is that there is an unbroken connection between the little spring within the renewed breast and that vast unfathomed fount of God, and because of this the well-spring never fails; in summer it still continues to flow. And now if you ask me if I am dissatisfied with the spring within my soul which is fed by the all-sufficiency of God, I reply, no, I am not. If you could by any possibility cut the connection between my soul and my Lord I should despair altogether,

but as long as none can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, I am satisfied and at rest. Like Naphtali we are “satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord.”

Faith is in the good man’s heart and he is satisfied with what faith brings him, for it conveys to him the perfect pardon of his sin. Faith brings him nearer to Christ. Faith brings him adoption into the family of God. Faith secures him conquest over temptation. Faith procures for him everything he requires. He finds that by believing he has all the blessings of the covenant daily to enjoy. Well may he be satisfied with such an enriching grace. The just shall live by faith.

In addition to faith, he has another filling grace called hope, which reveals to him the world to come, and gives him assurance that when he falls asleep he will sleep in Jesus, and that when he awakes he will arise in the likeness of Jesus. Hope delights him with the promise that his body shall rise, and that in his flesh he shall see God. This hope of his sets the pearly gates wide open before him, reveals the streets of gold, and makes him hear the music of the celestial harpers. Surely a man may well be satisfied with this.

The godly heart is also satisfied with what love brings him; for love though it seem but a gentle maid, is strong as a giant, and becomes in some respects the most potent of all the graces. Love first opens wide herself like the flowers in the sunshine, and drinks in the love of God, and then she joys in God and begins to sing:—

“I am so glad that Jesus loves me.”

She loves Jesus, and there is such an interchange of delight between the love of her soul to Christ and the love of Christ to her, that heaven itself can scarce be sweeter. He who knew this deep mysterious love will be more than filled with it, he will need to be enlarged to hold the bliss which it creates. The love of Jesus is known, but yet it passeth knowledge. It fills the entire man, so that he has no room for the idolatrous love of the creature, he is satisfied from himself and asks no other joy.

Beloved, when the good man is enabled by divine grace to live in obedience to God, he must as a necessary consequence, enjoy peace of mind. His hope is alone fixed on Jesus, but a life which evidences his possession of salvation casts many a sweet ingredient into his cup. He who takes the yoke of Christ upon him and learns of him finds rest unto his soul. When we keep his commandments we consciously enjoy his love, which we could not do if we walked in opposition to his will. To know that you have acted from a pure motive, to know that you have done the right is a grand means of full content. What matters the frown of foes or the prejudice of friends, if the testimony of a good conscience is heard within? We dare not rely upon our own works, neither have we had a desire or need to do so, for our Lord Jesus has saved us everlastingly; still, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

The Christian needs to maintain unbroken fellowship with Jesus his Lord if he would be good as a soldier of Christ, but if his communion be broken his satisfaction will depart. If Jesus be within we shall be satisfied from within, but not else; if our fellowship with him be kept up, and it may be from day to day, and month to month, and year to year (and why should it ever be snapped at all), then the satisfaction will continue and the soul will continue to be full even to the brim with the bliss which God alone can give. If we are by the Holy Spirit made to be abundant in labor or patient in suffering, if, in a word, we resign ourselves fully up to God, we shall find a fullness of his grace placed within ourselves. An enemy compared some of us to cracked vessels, and we may humbly accept the description. We do find it difficult to retain good things, they run away from our leaking pitchers; but I will tell how a cracked pitcher can be kept continually full. Put it in the bottom of an ever-flowing river, and it must be full. Even so though we are leaking and broken, if we abide in the love of Christ we shall be filled with his fullness. Such an experience is possible; we may be

"Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,

And lost in his immensity,”

Then we shall be full—full to running over; as the Psalmist says, “my cup runneth over.” The man who walks in God’s ways, obediently resting wholly upon Christ, looking for all his supplies to the great eternal deeps, that is the man who will be filled—filled with the very things which he has chosen for his own, filled with those things which are his daily delight and desire. Well may the faithful believer be filled, for he has eternity to fill him—The Lord has loved him with an everlasting love; —there is the eternity past: “The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my covenant shall not depart from thee”—there is the eternity to come. He has infinity, yea the infinite One himself, for the Father is his Father, the Son is his Savior, the Spirit of God dwells within him—the Trinity may well fill the heart of man. The believer has omnipotence to fill him, for all power is given unto Christ, and of that power Christ will give to us according as we have need. Living in Christ and hanging upon him from day to day, beloved, we shall have a “peace of God which passeth all understanding to keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” May we enjoy this peace and magnify the name of the Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

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Unsound Spiritual Trading

“All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.”—Proverbs 16:2.

During the last two years some of the most notable commercial reputations have been hopelessly destroyed. Men in the great world of trade who were trusted for hundreds of thousands of pounds, around whose characters there hovered no cloud of suspicion nor even the shade of doubt, have proved themselves reckless of honesty and devoid of

principle. The fiery trial has been too much for the wood, hay, and stubble of many a gigantic firm. Houses of business which seemed to be founded upon a rock, and to stand as fast as the commonwealth of England itself, have been shaken to their foundations and have caved in with a tremendous crash: on all sides we see the wrecks of great reputations and colossal fortunes. There is wailing in the palaces of sham, and desolation in the halls of pretense. Bubbles are bursting, windbags are collapsing, paint is cracking, gilt is peeling off. Probably we have more of this to come, more revelations still to be made of apparent wealth which covered insolvency, as a rich paper may cover a mud wall; crafty schemes which duped the public with profits never made, and tempted them to advance to deeper speculations, even as the mirage of the desert mocks the traveler. We have seen in the public prints month after month, fresh discoveries of the modes of financing adopted by the villainy of this present age, to accomplish robbery respectably, and achieve felony with credit. We have been astonished and amazed at the vile tricks and shameless devices to which men of eminence have condescended. And yet we have been compelled to hear justifications of gigantic frauds, and have even been compelled to believe that the perpetrators of them did not consider themselves to be acting disreputably, their own previous successes, and the low state of morality, together having lulled them into a state in which conscience, if not dead, was thoroughly asleep. I say, we may probably have yet more to see of this school of dishonesty; but it is a pity that we should—and altogether needless—for the whole trade of financing is now to be examined by the diligent student, with models and living examples, more than enough to illustrate every single portion of the art. Some ages may have been great in science, others in art, and others in war, but our era overtops every other in the proficiency of its rascals; this is the classic period of chicanery, the golden age of fraud. Let a man have a base heart, and a seared conscience, and a plausible mode of address, and let him resolve upon deluding the public out of millions, he need not travel to learn the readiest method, he can find examples near at home amongst high professors and the great ones of the earth. My brethren, these noises of falling towers on the right, these sounds of crumbling battlements on the left, these cries of the shipwrecked everywhere along the coasts of trade, have not only awakened within me many thoughts relative to themselves and the rottenness of modern society, but they

have made me muse upon similar catastrophes evermore occurring in the spiritual world. Unrecorded in the journals, and unmourned by unregenerate men, there are failures and frauds and bankruptcies of soul most horrible to think upon. There is a spiritual trading just as pretentious and apparently just as successful as your vaunted limited liability juggle, but really just as rotten and as sure to end in hopeless overthrow. Speculation is a spiritual vice as well as a commercial one—trading without capital is common in the religious world, and puffery and deception are every-day practices. The outer world is always the representative of the inner; the life which clusters round the Exchange illustrates that which gathers within the church; and if our eyes were opened and our ears were able to hear, the sights and the sounds of the spirit world would far more interest us and sadden us than the doings which begin in the directors' board-room and end we know not where. We should see at this moment colossal religious fortunes melting into abject spiritual poverty. We should see high professors, much revered and held in esteem, brought into shame and everlasting contempt. We should see the wealthy in divine matters, whom men have unwisely trusted as their guides and counsellors as to their souls' best interests, unmasked and proved to be deceitful through and through. I seem at this moment to be peering into the world of spiritual things, and I see many a Babel tower tottering and ready to fall; many a fair tree decaying at the heart; many a blooming cheek undermined by disease. Yes, a sound comes to my ear of men in the church, apparently rich and increased in goods, who are naked, and poor, and miserable, and great men whose towering glories are but a fading flower. There ever have been such, there are many now, and there will be to the end.

The supply of deceivers is sure to be maintained since the text tells us that all the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; there is a propensity in human nature which leads men, even when they are most wrong, to judge themselves most right. The text at the same time suggests the terrible conclusion to which all self-deception will certainly come, for the judgment of man concerning himself is not final, and there comes a day when the Lord who weigheth the spirits will reverse the verdict of a perjured conscience, and make the man to stand no longer in the false light which his conceit has thrown around him, but in the true light, in

which all his fancied glory shall vanish as a dream.

Travelling some time ago in an iron steamboat to the Continent, the captain told me that the compass was far from trustworthy where so much iron was on every side, and that sometimes, when so far as he knew he had steered correctly, he had found himself very considerably out of his course. Though the compass was fixed aloft so as to be as much as possible out of the region of the metallic attraction, yet the deflection and aberrations in the case of his own compass had been occasionally most remarkable. In like manner our conscience originally as it came from God was no doubt an exceedingly correct standard of right and wrong, and if we had sailed by it we must have reached the haven safely enough; but conscience is now placed in connection with a depraved nature which forbids its accurate working. Now, if the laws of nature would vary to make up for its defects when the compass erred, the aberrations would not matter; but if the man is misled by the perverted needle he may unexpectedly be upon a rock, and will be as surely wrecked as if the helmsman had neglected the compass altogether. So, if God's law could be shaped to suit the errors of our judgment it might not matter; but the laws of God stand sternly and inflexibly the same, and if we deviate from the right way through this false judgment of ours we shall be none the less guilty, and we shall find our fate to be none the less terrible. Hence I do approach this matter with a greater vehemence and earnestness this morning, on your account, and with more brokenness and humility of spirit on my own, desiring to speak with divers classes among you, urging you not to be so flattered by your own conceptions of your position as to get out of the course in which you ought to steer; beseeching you to remember that however well you may cajole yourselves with the idea that your way is right and clear, yet the inevitable judgment-day will come to end all delusions, however pleasant. Spiritual traders, I speak to you this day, reminding you of the great audit which hastens on, and warning you lest you make a fair show for awhile, and then in the end come down with a crash. I am sure there is much rotten spiritual trading abroad, and to save you from it I pray the Holy Ghost to help me speak plainly and searchingly this morning.

As God shall help me, I intend to address the text to different characters.

We will endeavor to be practical throughout the sermon, and to push home vital truth with great earnestness upon each one.

I. The ways of the openly wicked are clean in their own eyes, but the Lord will weigh their spirits.

At first sight this statement seems to be rash. The drunkard, the blasphemer, the Sabbath-breaker, can it be that these people are right in their own eyes? Solomon was a profound student of human nature, and when he penned this sentence you may rest assured he knew what he wrote. They who are best acquainted with mankind will tell you that self-righteousness is not the peculiar sin of the virtuous, but that most remarkably it flourishes best where there appears to be the least soil for it. Those men who in the judgment of their fellows distinctly and plainly have no righteousness in which they can glory, are the very persons who, when you come to search into the depth of their nature, are relying upon a fancied goodness which they dream about and rest upon. Take the outwardly immoral for a moment and begin to talk with them about their sins, and you will find that they are accustomed to speak of their faults under very different names from those which Scripture and right reason would use. They do not call drunkenness “drunkenness,” for instance, but it is “taking a glass.” They would not for a moment advocate downright blasphemy, but it is “strong language which a fellow must use if he’s to get on,” or “letting slip an ugly word or so, because you were plagued so.” They disguise vice to themselves as pleasure; they label their uncleanness as gaiety, their filthiness as lightheartedness. They speak of their sins as though they had no enormity about them, but were trifles light as air—if wrong at all, themes rather for the feather lash of ridicule than for the scourge of reproof. Moreover, the most of them will claim that they are not so bad as others. There is some one point in their character in which they do not go so far as some of their fellows, and this is a grand point and a vast comfort to them. They will confess that they are sinners, not meaning it for a moment; and if you come to particulars and details, if they are in an honest frame of mind they will recede step by step, admitting fault after fault, till they come to a particular point, and there they take their footing with virtuous indignation. “Here I am right beyond all rebuke, and even deserving of praise. So far my sin has come, but how

thoroughly sound at heart must I be that I have never permitted it to advance further!" This boasted line is frequently so singular and mysterious in its direction, that no one but the man himself can see any reason or consistency in it; and the satirist who shoots at folly as it flies, finds abundant objects for his arrows. Yet to that man himself, his pausing there is the saving clause of his life; he looks to that as the sheet anchor of his character. The woman whose character long since has gone, will yet boast some limit to her licentiousness which is merit in her esteem—merit sufficient to make all her ways clean in her own eyes.

Moreover, the worst of men conceive that they have some excellences and virtues, which, if they do not quite atone for their faults, yet at any rate greatly diminish the measure of blame which should be awarded them. The man is a spendthrift, "But sir, he was always freehearted, and nobody's enemy but his own." The man, it is true, would curse God, but then, well, it was a mere habit, he always was a dashing blade, but he meant no harm; and besides he never was such a liar as So-and-So; and indeed, he scorned to tell a lie upon any business subject. Another has cheated his creditors, but he was such a nice man; and although, poor fellow, he never could keep accounts or manage money matters, yet he always had a good word for everybody. The immoral man, if he sits down to write his own character, and summons all the partiality he is capable of, will say "I am a sad dog in some respects, sowing a great many wild oats, but I have a fine character underlying it all which will no doubt come up some day, so that my end shall be bright and glorious notwithstanding all. That last point that I hinted at is very often the righteousness of men who have no other, namely, their intention one of these days much to amend and improve. To make up for present poverty of righteousness they draw a bill upon the future. Their promises and resolves are a sort of paper currency on which they imagine they can trade for eternity. "Is it not often done in business?" say they: "A man who has no present income may have a reversionary interest in an estate; he gets advances thereon—why should not we?" Thus the open sinner, easing his all too ready conscience with the imaginary picture of his future repentance and amendment, begins to feel himself already meritorious and bids defiance to all the threatenings of the word of God.

I may be speaking to some to whom these remarks are very applicable, and if so I pray that they may lead to serious thought. My hearer, you must know, or at any rate a few sober moments of reflection would make you know, that there is no truth in the pleas, excuses, and promises with which you now quiet your conscience; your peace is founded on a lie, and is upheld by the father of lies. Whilst you are continuing recklessly to break the laws of God in your ordinary life and to take pleasure in sin, you most assuredly are under the anger of God and you are heaping up wrath against the day of wrath, and when the measure of your iniquity is full then shall you receive the terrible reward of transgression. The Judge of all the earth will not pay regard to the idle preterites which now stultify your conscience. He is not a man that he should be flattered as you flatter and deceive yourself. You would not have the impertinence to tell your excuses to him. Dare you kneel down now and speak to the great God in heaven and tell him all these fine things with which you are now smoothing your downward road? I hope you have not come to such a brazen pitch of impertinence as that, but if you have let me remind you of that second sentence of my text, "The Lord weigheth the spirits." A just and true balance will be used upon you ere long. When the Lord puts such as you are into the scale, there will be no need for delay; the sentence will go forth at once and from it there shall be no appeal: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." Ah then my hearer, when that conscience of yours wakes up, how it will torment you! It sleeps now, drugged by the opiates of your ignorance and perverseness; but it will start up soon like a giant refreshed with new wine, and then with strength and fury unthought of before it will pull down the temple of your peace about your ears, even as Samson smote the Philistines. An awakened conscience in another world is the worm that dieth not and the fire which never can be quenched. O sirs, it is a dreadful thing to be delivered up to one's own conscience when that conscience is enlisted on the side of right. Old tyrants had their terrible headsman with grim masks across their brows who carried the bright and gleaming axe; the old inquisitors had their familiars arrayed in gowns of serge and cowls, from the loopholes of which their fierce eyes gleamed like wolves; but no tormentors, yea, no fiends of hell, can ever prove more terrible to a man than his conscience when its lash is corded with truth and weighted with honesty. Did you ever spell the burning letters of that word remorse?

Within the bowels of that single word there lieth hell with all its torments. O sirs, if you be but a little aroused now by an earnest sermon or a sudden death, how wretched you feel and how desperately you plunge into fresh gaiety and wantonness to drown your thoughts; but what will you do with thoughts which no dissipation can drown, and remembrances which no mirth can banish? What will it be to be haunted by your sins for ever and for ever? What to have it made sure to you that from the guilt and punishment no way of escape can ever be discovered?

O you who fondly dream that the broad road to destruction is the upward path to celestial bliss, I beseech you, learn wisdom and hearken to the voice of instruction; consider your ways and seek unto the precious blood which alone can blot out your sins.

II. A second class I will now address. The ways of the godless man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits.

The godless man is often exceedingly upright and moral in his outward behavior to his fellow men. He has no religion, but he glories in a multitude of virtues of another kind. It is unhappily true that there are many who have much that is amiable about them who nevertheless are unamiable and unjust towards the one Being who ought to have the most of their love, and who should have been respected in their conduct first of all. How often have I met with the ungodly man who has said, "You talk to me about fearing God! I know him not, neither do I regard him, but I am much better than those who do." He will sometimes say, "Your religion I look upon as a mere farce: I regard Christians as being made up of two sorts, knaves and fools. They are either duped by others, or else for purposes of their own they are deceiving others. Their talk about God, sir, it is all cant; with some of them I grant you it is not quite that, but then they have too few brains to be able to discover that they are deceived. However, take the whole thing for all in all, it is all a piece of nonsense, and if people just behave as they ought towards their neighbors and do their duty in their station in life, that is enough." Yes, and there are in this city of London thousands, and hundreds of thousands, who think this to be good logic, and indeed who open their eyes with astonishment if for a single moment you are supposed to contradict their statement that such a style of life is the best and most commendable; and yet if they would but

think, nothing can be more unsound than their life and its supposed excellence. Here is a man created by his God, and he is put down amongst his fellow creatures; surely the first duty that he owes is towards his Creator. His life depends entirely upon that Creator's will—it must be his first duty to have respect to him in whose hands his breath is; but this man not only refuses to be obedient to the law of his Creator and have regard to him in his daily actions, but turns round to his neighbours who are mere creatures like himself, and he says "I will have respect to you, but not to God. Any laws of the state which bind me in my relation to you I will obey; but any laws which describe my relation to God I will not consider except it be to ridicule and laugh at them. I will be obedient to any but to God; I will do the right thing to any but to the Most High. I have a sense of right and wrong but I will restrict its action to my fellow men, and that sense of right and wrong when it comes in relation to God I will utterly obliterate." Now if there were no God this man were wise enough, but as there is a God who created us, and who shall surely come in the clouds of heaven to call every one of us to account for the things which we have done in the body, what think you will be the judgment dealt out to this unfaithful servant? Will he dare to say unto his King, "I knew that thou wast my Maker and Lord, but I considered that if I served my fellow servants it would be enough. I knew what was right to them, but I disregarded the doing of anything that was right towards thee"? Shall not the answer be, "Thou wicked and faithless servant, thou knewest what was right and wrong, and yet towards me, having first claim upon thee, thou hast acted unjustly, and whilst thou wouldst bow thy neck to others thou wouldst not yield to me. Depart from me, I know thee not. Thou didst not know me, neither do I know thee. I weigh thee in the balances, and I find thee utterly reprobate. Thou art cast away for ever." O ungodly man, let this warning, if thou be here this morning, sound in thy heart as well as thy ears: no longer set thyself in defiance to thy Creator or live in negligence of him, but say, "I will arise and go unto my Father; I will confess that I have forgotten him and despised him, and I will seek peace through the blood of Jesus Christ."

III. Further, I shall address myself to another class of persons. In all ages of the church, and especially at this time, there are numbers of persons who are outwardly religious, but whose religion ends there. Now it seems

to some of us amazingly strange that a man should be acting viciously, should be living wickedly, and yet should think that his ways are clean because he takes a sacrament or attends a certain place of worship. I must confess to my mind this seems a very strange phenomenon, that there should exist men of intelligence in this world who know that their conduct is altogether blameworthy and yet feel perfectly at ease because a chosen ritual has been diligently observed; as if bowing and scraping, singing or groaning could be a substitute for holiness of heart. Look at the Pharisee and tell me if he be not a moral wonder! He devours widows' houses, he is ready to prey on everything that comes to hand; he is a detestable hypocrite, but the man is perfectly at ease because he has made broad the border of his garments, because he fasts twice in the week, and strains out gnats from the wine that he drinks; he is quite content with himself and all his ways seem right, so right, indeed, that other men who are better than he, he passes by with contempt, afraid lest they should come between the wind and his nobility. He thanks God that he is not as other men, when so far as you and I can judge he is ten thousand fathoms deeper down in dark damnation in his horribly hypocritical character. Yet brethren, some form or other of this is very common. All the ways of a man are clean unto him when he once imbibes the idea that ceremonial religion, or religious talk, or religious profession, can make up for moral sin. Ah brethren, this evil may even creep in among ourselves. Let us not be so swift in condemning the Pharisee when perhaps the same sin may pollute our own souls. I have known the man who was reckoned a sound Calvinist and believed in very high doctrine, live a very unhallowed life. He despised "Arminians," as he chose to call them, though some of these despised ones lived very near to God and walked in holiness and integrity. The Arminian, forsooth, godly man as he was, would be lost; but this self-righteous orthodox man who could at the same time drink and cheat thought that he should be saved because he had been able to see the truth of certain doctrines, which also the devil sees as well as he. I have known another who thought he had a deep and memorable experience who would talk by the yard of the depravity of his heart. Some people thinking that he ought to be able to talk about that very truly, for he proved it in his life; and yet because he could repeat cant phrases and had picked up certain rich expressions of experience from books, he verily thought within himself that he was not only as good as

others but a very pattern for others to copy. Right and left such men as these will hurl curses and anathemas upon the best and most earnest of saints. They are the men—wisdom will die with them. Holiness being dead already with them, it is no wonder that wisdom should die too. Ah! take care lest you and I drink in the same spirit in another shape. Ah! preacher, thy preaching may be all well and good, it may be sound enough and right enough, and it may be even edifying to the people of God and arousing to the unconverted. But remember, God will not judge thee by thy sermons but by thy spirit, for he weigheth not thy words but thy motive, thy desire, thine object in preaching the gospel. Deacon of the church, you may have walked in all honor for many years and may be universally respected, and thine office may have been well maintained in all the outward duties of it, but if thy heart be not right, if some secret sin be indulged, if there be a canker upon thy profession which none know but thine own self, the Lord who weighs the spirit will make nothing of thy deaconship and thy carrying round the cups and bread at the communion, but thou shalt be found wanting and cast away. Thou too, brother elder, thy labors and thy prayers are nothing if the heart be evil. Thou mayst have visited others and instructed them and been a judge of their state; still, if thou hast not served God and his church out of a pure desire for his glory, thou too, put into the scales, shall be rejected with abhorrence. I often pray—I wish however I prayed it more—that none of us here may be preached into the idea that we are all right if we are all wrong. It is not your coming to the Tabernacle, it is not your joining the church, your being baptised, your attending prayer-meetings, or your doing anything that will be the slightest matter in this business—it is your giving up your hearts to God truly, and your living in conformity with your profession; and unless the grace of God be really given you, helping you to do this, your ways may be clean unto you because of your outward profession; but the Lord who weigheth the spirits will make short work of these bubbles, he will break this confectionery, smash to pieces these shams, and leave the man who ought to have a palace over his head throughout eternity to sit down and shiver amongst the ruins of his Babylon, and cry out and weep and wail amongst dragons and fiends.

IV. But to pass on, there is another character that must be addressed. “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes,” so are the ways of the

covetous professor.

It is marvellous to some of us that a man whose object in life is merely to get money and who withholds what he has from the cause of God should take up the profession of being a Christian man, because none of all the vices is more contrary to true religion than covetousness. Where will you find an instance of a single saint in Scripture that ever fell into covetousness? Into all other sins have they fallen, but into this one I do not remember that one child of God mentioned in Scripture ever descended. Grace may exist where there are many occasional sins, but never where there is abiding covetousness. Think of Paul's words: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither, fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Luther used to say, "I have been tempted to all sins but covetousness." This he so detested that he distributed gifts made to him lest he should have his portion in this world. Adams, in his book on Peter, well remarks, "Noah was once drunk with wine but never with the world; Lot, twice incestuous, never covetous; Peter denied his Master thrice, but it was not the love but the fear of the world that brought him to it. Once David was overcome by the flesh, never by covetousness. Why did not these purge themselves from adultery, anger, and the like? Because into these sins the infirmities of a saint may fall, but if once into covetousness there is nothing of a saint left—not even the name. Covetousness hath the brand of God's hate full on its brow." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" and when a professor shows the love of the world in its grossest shape, when he gives way to being the slave of "Mammon, the least erect of all the fiends," he bears evidence to all who judge righteously according to Scripture that the love of God is not in him, and cannot be in him; the two things are inconsistent. Yet, strange to say we do know not a few whose way seems very clean to them. They screw here and there, now their servants, and now their customers: the widow and the fatherless would not be safe from them if they could pick their bones. What they scrape together is held with an iron grasp. Let souls be damned, they shall have no missionary sent to them by their money. Let this London fester with sin, let it be covered with the ulcers of

the most fearful depravity, they are never stirred to give any assistance towards the healing of the city's wounds. And yet while their damnation awaits them certainly, and their condemnation stares them in the face as plainly as the sun in the heavens, yet their ways seem clean unto them. Strange it should be so, but the Lord weigheth the spirits, and what a weighing that shall be when men who escape church censure because theirs was a sin of which the church could not deal with, shall be found guilty of it, and God shall cast them away! Vain will be their pretensions that they ate and they drank in God's house, for the answer shall come, "I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not. I was sick and in prison, and ye did not minister unto me. Verily I say unto you, I know ye not!" O let this truth, for truth it is, pierce like a two-edged sword right through the hearts of any of you who are beginning to yield to this damning vice. Cry unto God that as he gives you substance you may use it for his glory. Ask him that you may never perish with a millstone about your neck; for even if that killing weight be made of gold it will be no better perishing for all that.

V. Another character must have a word also: we will now note the ways of the worldly professor.

It is amazing how some people making a profession of religion, square it with their conscience that they live as they do live. You could not with a microscope detect any difference between them and common worldlings, and yet they think there is a vast difference, and they would be insulted if you did not allow it. Here they come up to the house of God to-day, but to what amusements have they been during the week? How are they dressed? How are their children educated? Is there any family prayer? Is there anything in the household that is Christian? Look at them in business. Do not they trade precisely like those who make no pretensions to religion? Ask their workpeople, just go yourselves and watch them—see if they cannot tell white lies as well as others, whether they are not for all the world as alike as two peas are to one another, like other unregenerate and unconverted people! and yet their ways seem very clean unto them, very clean indeed, and their conscience does not trouble them in any way whatever. I have but this word to say in all affection to such, earnestly

desiring that they may be plucked out of this fire, “the Lord will weigh the spirits.” The whole of our life is known to him. He will not judge us without book. When he comes to the account he will not be like a judge who has to learn the facts; he will come to the last assize, having seen with those eyes of fire the secret thoughts, the private feelings of our life. God be merciful to us sinners, we may all of us say; but God especially save us from being like the ungodly.

VI. Yet another word, and this is addressed to all professors here more or less: it is a solemn word concerning the ways of secure backsliders.

Do you not know brethren and sisters, that very often our ways seem very clean to us when they are not. I have learned by experience most painful to my own soul, that I am not in the least qualified to judge of my own spiritual health: I have thought myself gradually advancing in the ways of God when I have been going back, and I have had the conceit crossing my mind that I had now overcome a certain besetting sin, when to my surprise I had found it return with greater force than before. Fellow professor, you may be at this moment walking as you think very rightly, and going off very well and comfortably, but let me ask you a few questions: are you not less in private prayer than you used to be? Do you not now hurry over it, do you not sometimes omit it altogether? Do you not frequently come from your closet without really having spoken to God, having merely gone through the form for the sake of quieting yourself? Your way may seem clean, but is it not foul when the mercy-seat becomes neglected? How about your Bible, is that read as it once was, and are the promises as sweet to you? Do they ever rise from the page and talk with you? Oh, but if your Bible be neglected my brother, you may be just as diligent in attending to the house of God as you used to be, but is not yours a sad state of decay? Let me come closer still. Is there the vitality about your profession that there used to be? There are some in this house this morning who if they could speak, would tell you that when to their great sorrow they fell into sin, it was because by little and little their piety began to lose its force and power of life. They have been restored, but their bones still ache where they were once broken, and I am sure they would say to their brethren “Take care of allowing a gracious spirit to evaporate, as it were, by slow degrees. Watch carefully

over it, lest settling upon your lees and not being emptied from vessel to vessel you should by-and-by become carnally secure, and afterwards fall into actual sin. I ask some of my brethren here, and I ask the question because I have asked it of my own soul and answered it very tearfully, may not some of us be growing hardened in heart with regard to the salvation of our fellow creatures? Do we not love less now than we used to do, those who are crying to us, "Come over and help us"? Do we not think ourselves getting to be experienced saints? We are not the poor sinners we once used to be. We do not come broken-heartedly to the mercy-seat as we did. We begin to judge our fellow Christians and we think far less of them than we did years ago when we used almost to love the ground that the Lord's saints did tread upon, thinking ourselves to be less than nothing in their sight. Now if it were the case in others, that they were growing proud, or becoming cold, or waxing hard of heart, we should say of them, "they are in great danger," but what about ourselves if that be the case with us? For my own self, I dread lest I should come to this pulpit merely to preach to you because the time has come and I must get through an hour or an hour-and-a-half of worship. I dread getting to be a mere preaching machine without my heart and soul being exercised in this solemn duty; and I dread for you, my dear friends who hear me constantly, lest it should be a mere piece of clock-work that you should be in the seats at certain times in the week, and should sit there and patiently hear the din which my noise makes in your ears. We must have vital godliness, and the vitality of it must be maintained, and the force and energy of our religion must go on to increase day by day, or else though our ways may seem to be very clean the Lord will soon weigh our spirits to our eternal confusion. Do you know that to his people the divine weighing in fatherly chastisement is rough work, for he can put the soul into the scale to our own consciousness, and when we think that it weighs pounds he can reveal to us that it does not even reach to drachms! "There," saith he, "see what you are!" and he begins to strip off the veil of self-conceit, and we see the loathsomeness and falsehood of our nature, and we are utterly dismayed. Or perhaps the Lord does worse than that. He suffers a temptation to come when we do not expect it, and then the evil bolls up within us, and we who thought we were next door to the cherubs find ourselves near akin to the demons; wondering too that such a wild beast should have slumbered in the den of our hearts, whereas we

ought to have known it was always there and to have walked humbly with God, and watched and guarded ourselves. Rest assured beloved, great falls and terrible mischief never come to a Christian man at once, they are a work of slow degrees; and be assured too that you may glide down the smooth waters of the river and never dream of the Niagara beyond, and yet you may be speeding towards it. An awful crash may yet come to the highest professor among us that shall make the world to ring with blasphemy against God, and the church to resound with bitter lamentations because the mighty have fallen. God will keep his own, but how if I should turn out not to be his own! He will keep the feet of his saints, but what if I leave off to watch and my feet should not be kept, and I should turn out to be no saint of his, but a mere intruder into his family, and a pretender to have what I never had! O God, through Christ Jesus deliver each of us from this.

VII. Had time not failed me I meant to speak concerning the seventh and last character, namely, the ways of the deceived man.

There are, no doubt, many in the world who will never find out that their ways which they thought to be so clean are all foul till they enter upon another world. There are some men who are Christians in all but this, that they have not true faith in Jesus. There are others who apparently are saved, but they have never been really born again. There are many who have everything but the one thing needful, and who think they have that, and persuade their fellows that they have that. How near a man may come to being a Christian and yet miss salvation it were difficult to tell; but certainly he may come so near that no man nor yet the angels of God shall be able to tell the difference between him and a saved soul, only God shall discern the difference when he comes to weigh the spirits.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. It is this: let us come my brethren, all of us, to the place of confession of sin and acknowledge that we have broken God's law, and deserve his just displeasure. Let us go by the help of his Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of supplication, and let us confess the depravity of our nature and the error of our hearts. Let us pray that instead of thinking our ways clean, we may know them to be foul, may mourn over them, and may learn to see them as God sees them, as crooked ways and wrong ways in themselves not to be boasted of, but

to be remembered with shame and confusion of face. Blessed is he who is delivered from any rejoicing in himself. Happy is that man who can see no speck of soundness in his own flesh, but who feels that the leprosy of sin hath covered him without and within from head to foot. And brethren, if we come to such deep humiliation of spirit, the next word is this: let us go together to the great salvation which God has provided in the person of Christ Jesus. Come, linking hand in hand, saint and sinner, now all sinners consciously, let us stand and see where sin has pierced the body of the blessed Substitute with yonder bleeding wounds. Let us read the lines of grief written upon that blessed face; let us gaze into the depth of his soul filled with an ocean of anguish, lashed to a tempest of suffering; let us believe that he suffered in our stead and so roll our sin and our sinfulness on him. Jesus, accept a sinner, a poor sinner still; though these twenty years I have known thy name, yet still a sinner I come to thee, the chief of sinners! Ah, brethren and sisters, we are never safer I am sure, never healthier, never in a better frame than when we are right flat down on the ground before the cross. When you feel yourself to be utterly unworthy you have hit the truth. When you think you are doing something and are rich and flourishing, you are poor, and naked, and miserable; but when you are consciously weak and sinful, then you are rich. When you are weak you are strong; but O God, save us from letting our ways seem clean in our own sight, but may we weigh our spirits by the help of thy Spirit, and condemn ourselves that we may not be condemned of the Lord.

The Lord bless you richly and freely for his name's sake. Amen.

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The Character of Christ's People

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. - John 17:16

Christ's prayer was for a special people. He declared that he did not offer an universal intercession. "I pray for them," said he. "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." In reading this beautiful prayer through, only one question arises to our minds; Who are the people that are described as "them," or as "they?" Who are these favoured individuals, who share a Saviour's prayers, are recognized by a Saviour's love, have their names written on the stones of his precious breastplate, and have their characters and their circumstances mentioned by the lips of the High Priest before the throne on high? The answer to that question is supplied by the words of our text. The people for whom Christ prays are an unearthly people. They are a people somewhat, above the world, distinguished altogether from it. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

I shall treat my text, first of all, doctrinally; secondly, experimentally; and thirdly, practically.

I. First, we shall take our text and look at it DOCTRINALLY.

The doctrine of it is, that God's people are people who are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. It is not so much that they are not of the world, as that they are "not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world." This is an important distinction, for there are to be found certain people who are not of the world, and yet they are not Christians. Amongst these I would mention sentimentalists—people who are always crying and groaning in affected sentimental ways. Their spirits are so

refined, their characters are so delicate, that they could not attend to ordinary business. They would think it rather degrading to their spiritual nature to attend to anything connected with the world. They live much in the air of romances and novels; love to read things that fetch tears from their eyes; they would like continually to live in a cottage near a wood, or to inhabit some quiet cave, where they could read "Zimmerman on Solitude" for ever; for they feel that they are "not of the world." The fact is, there is something too flimsy about them to stand the wear and tear of this wicked world. They are so pre-eminently good, that they cannot bear to do as we poor human creatures do. I have heard of one young lady, who thought herself so spiritually-minded that she could not work. A very wise minister said to her, "That is quite correct! you are so spiritually-minded that you cannot work; very well, you are so spiritually-minded that you shall not eat unless you do." That brought her back from her great spiritual-mindedness. There is a stupid sentimentalism that certain persons nurse themselves into. They read a parcel of books that intoxicate their brains, and then fancy that they have a lofty destiny. These people are "not of the world," truly; but the world does not want them, and the world would not miss them much, if they were clean gone for ever. There is such a thing as being "not of the world," from a high order of sentimentalism, and yet not being a Christian after all. For it is not so much being "not of the world," as being "not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world." There are others, too, like your monks, and those other made individuals of the Catholic church, who are not of the world. They are so awfully good, that they could not live with us sinful creatures at all. They must be distinguished from us altogether. They must not wear, of course, a boot that would at all approach to a worldly shoe, but they must have a sole of leather strapped on with two or three thongs, like the far-famed Father Ignatius. They could not be expected to wear worldly coats and waistcoats; but they must have peculiar garbs, cut in certain fashions, like the Passionists. They must wear particular dresses, particular garments, particular habits. And we know that some men are "not of the world," by the peculiar mouthing they give to all their words—the sort of sweet, savoury, buttery flavor they give to the English language, because they think themselves so eminently sanctified that they fancy it would be wrong to indulge in anything in which ordinary mortals indulge. Such persons are, however, reminded, that their being "not of

the world," has nothing to do with it. It is not being "not of the world," so much as being "not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world."

This is the distinguishing mark—being different from the world in those respects in which Christ was different. Not making ourselves singular in unimportant points, as those poor creatures do, but being different from the world in those respects in which the Son of God and the Son of man, Jesus Christ, was not of the world in nature; that he was not of the world again, in office; and above all, that he was not of the world in his character.

1. First, Christ was not of the world in nature. What was there about Christ that was worldly? In one point of view his nature was divine; and as divine, it was perfect, pure unsullied, spotless, he could not descend to things of earthliness and sin; in another sense he was human; and his human nature, which was born of the Virgin Mary, was begotten of the Holy Ghost, and therefore was so pure that in it rested nothing that was worldly. He was not like ordinary men. We are all born with worldliness in our hearts. Solomon well says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child." It is not only there, but it is bound up in it; it is tied up in his heart, and is difficult to remove. And so with each of us; when we were children, earthliness and carnality were bound up in our nature. But Christ was not so. His nature was not a worldly one; it was essentially different from that of every one else, although he sat down and talked with them. Mark the difference! He stood side by side with a Pharisee; but every one could see he was not of the Pharisee's world. He sat by a Samaritan woman, and though he conversed with her very freely, who is it that fails to see that he was not of that Samaritan woman's world—not a sinner like her? He mingled with the Publicans, nay, he sat down at the Publican's feast, and eat with Publicans and sinners; but you could see by the holy actions and the peculiar gestures he there carried with him, that he was not of the Publicans' world, though he mixed with them. There was something so different in his nature, that you could not have found an individual in all the world whom could have set beside him and said, "There! he is of that man's world," Nay, not even John, though he leaned on his bosom and partook very much of his Lord's spirit, was exactly of that world to which Jesus belonged; for even he once in his Boanergean

spirit, said words to this effect, "Let us call down fire from heaven on the heads of those who oppose thee,"—a thing that Christ could not endure for a moment, and thereby proved that he was something even beyond John's world.

Well, beloved, in some sense, the Christian man is not of the world even in his nature. I do not mean in his corrupt and fallen nature, but in his new nature. There is something in a Christian that is utterly and entirely distinct from that of anybody else. Many persons think that the difference between a Christian and worldling consists in this: one goes to chapel twice on a Sabbath-day, another does not go but once, or perhaps not at all; one of them takes the sacrament, the other does not; one pays attention to holy things, the other pays very little attention to them. But, ah, beloved, that does not make a Christian. The distinction between a Christian and a worldling is not merely external, but internal. The difference is one of nature, and not of act.

A Christian is as essentially difference from a worldling as a dove is from a raven, or a lamb from a lion. He is not of the world even in his nature. You could not make him a worldling. You might do what you liked; you might cause him to fall into some temporary sin; but you could not make him a worldling. You might cause him to backslide; but you could not make him a sinner, as he used to be. He is not of the world by his nature. He is a twice-born man; in his veins run the blood of the royal family of the universe. He is a nobleman; he is a heaven-born child. His freedom is not merely a bought one, but he hath his liberty his new-born nature; he is essentially and entirely different from the world. There are persons in this chapel now who are more totally distinct from one another than you can even conceive. I have some here who are intelligent, and some who are ignorant; some who are rich, and some who are poor; but I do not allude to those distinctions: they all melt away into nothing in that great distinction—dead or alive, spiritual or carnal, Christian or worldling. And oh! if ye are God's people, then ye are not of the world in your nature; for ye are "not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world."

2. Again: you are not of the world in your office. Christ's office had nothing to do with worldly things. "Art thou a king them?" Yes; I am a

king; but my kingdom is not of this world. "Art thou a priest?" Yes; I am a priest; but my priesthood is not the priesthood which I shall soon lay aside, or which shall be discontinued as that of others has been. "Art thou a teacher?" Yes; but my doctrines are not the doctrines of morality, doctrines that concern earthly dealings between man and man simply; my doctrine cometh down from heaven. So Jesus Christ, we say, is "not of the world." He had no office that could be termed a worldly one, and he had no aim which was in the least worldly. He did not seek his own applause, his own fame, his own honour; his very office was not of the world. And, O believer! what is thy office? Hast thou none at all? Why, yes, man! Thou art a priest unto the Lord thy God; thy office is to offer a sacrifice of prayer and praise each day. Ask a Christian what he is. Say to him: "What is your official standing? What are you by office?" Well, if he answers you properly, he will not say, "I am a draper, or druggist," or anything of that sort. No; he will say, "I am a priest unto my God. The office unto which I am called, is to be the salt of the earth. I am a city set on a hill, a light that cannot be hid. That is my office. My office is not a worldly one." Whether yours be the office of the minister, or the deacon, or the church member, ye are not of this world is your office, even as Christ was not of the world; your occupation is not a worldly one.

3. Again, ye are not of the world in your character; for that is the chief point in which Christ was not of the world. And now, brethren, I shall have to turn somewhat from doctrine to practice before I get rightly to this part of the subject; for I must reprove many of the Lord's people, that they do not sufficiently manifest that they are not of the world in character, even as Christ was not of the world. Oh! how many of you there are, who will assemble around the table at the supper of your Lord, who do not live like your Saviour. How many of you there are, who join our church and walk with us, and yet are not worthy of your high calling and profession. Mark you the churches all around, and let your eyes run with tears, when you remember that of many of their members it cannot be said, "ye are not of this world," for they are of the world. O, my hearers, I fear many of you are worldly, carnal, and covetous; and yet ye join the churches, and stand well with God's people by a hypocritical profession. O ye whitewashed sepulchres! ye would deceive even the very elect! ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but your inward part is

very wickedness. O that a thundering voice might speak this to your ears! —"Those whom Christ loves are not of the world," but ye are of the world; therefore ye cannot be his, even though ye profess so to be; for those that love him are not such as you. Look at Jesus character; how different from every other man's—pure, perfect, spotless, even such should be the life of the believer. I plead not for the possibility of sinless conduct in Christians, but I must hold that grace makes men to differ, and that God's people will be very different from other kinds of people. A servant of God will be a God's-man everywhere. As a chemist, he could not indulge in any tricks that such men might play with their drugs; as a grocer—if indeed it be not a phantom that such things are done—he could not mix sloe leaves with tea or red lead in the pepper; if he practised any other kind of business, he could not for a moment condescend to the little petty shifts, called "methods of business." To him it is nothing what is called "business;" it is what is called God's law, he feels that he is not of the world, consequently, he goes against its fashions and its maxims. A singular story is told of a certain Quaker. One day he was bathing in the Thames, and a waterman called out to him, "Ha! there goes the Quaker." "How do you know I'm a Quaker?" "Because you swim against the stream; it is the way the Quakers always do." That is the way Christians always ought to do—to swim against the stream. The Lord's people should not go along with the rest in their worldliness. Their characters should be visibly different. You should be such men that your fellows can recognise you without any difficulty, and say, "Such a man is a Christian." Ah! beloved, it would puzzle the angel Gabriel himself, to tell whether some of you are Christians or not, if he were sent down to the world to pick out the righteous from the wicked. None but God could do it, for in these days of worldly religion they are so much alike. It was an ill day for the world, when the sons of God and the daughters of men were mingled together: and it is an ill day now, when Christians and worldlings are so mixed, that you cannot tell the difference between them. God save us from a day of fire that may devour us in consequence! But O beloved! the Christian will be always different from the world. This is a great doctrine, and it will be found as true in ages to come as in the centuries which are past. Looking back into history, we read this lesson: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We see them driven to the catacombs of Rome; we see them hunted about like partridges; and

wherever in history you find God's servants, you can recognise them by their distinct, unvarying character—they are not of the world, but were a people scarred and peeled; a people entirely distinct from the nations. And if in this age, there are no different people, if there are none to be found who differ from other people, there are no Christians; for Christians will be always different from the world. They are not of the world; even as Christ is not of the world. This is the doctrine.

II. But now for treating this text EXPERIMENTALLY.

Do we, dearly beloved, feel this truth? Has it ever been laid to our souls, so that we can feel it is ours? "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Have we ever felt that we are not of the world? Perhaps there is a believer sitting in a pew to-night, who says, "Well, sire, I can't say that I feel as if I was not of the world, for I have just come from my shop, and worldliness is still hanging about me." Another says, "I have been in trouble and my mind is very much harassed—I can't feel that I am different from the world; I am afraid that I am of the world." But, beloved, we must not judge ourselves rashly, because just at this moment we discern not the spot of God's children. Let me tell you, there are always certain testing moments when you can tell of what kind of stuff a man is made. Two men are walking. Part of the way their road lies side by side. How do you tell which man is going to the right, and which to the left? Why, when they come to the turning point. Now, to-night is not a turning point, for you are sitting with worldly people here, but at other times we may distinguish.

Let me tell you one or two turning points, when every Christian will feel that he is not of the world. One is, when he gets into very deep trouble. I do believe and protest, that we never feel so unearthly as when we get plunged down into trouble. Ah! when some creature comfort hath been swept away, when some precious blessing hath withered in our sight, like the fair lily, snapped at the stalk; when some mercy has been withered, like Jonah's gourd in the night—then it is that the Christian feels, "I am not of the world." His cloak is torn from him, and the cold wind whistles almost through him; and then he says, "I am a stranger in the world, as all my fathers were. Lord, thou hast been my dwelling-place in all

generations." You have had at times deep sorrows. Thank God for them! They are testing moments. When the furnace is hot, it is then that the gold is tried best. Have you felt at such a time that you were not of the world? Or, have you rather sat down, and said, "Oh! I do not deserve this trouble?" Did you break under it? Did you bow down before it and let it crush you while you cursed your Maker? Or did your spirit, even under its load, still lift itself unto him, like a man all dislocated on the battle-field, whose limbs are cut away, but who still lifts himself up as best he can, and looks over the field to see if there be a friend approaching. Did you do so? Or did you lie down in desperation and despair? If you did that, methinks you are no Christian; but if there was a rising up, it was a testing moment, and it proved that you were "not of the world," because you could master affliction; because you could tread it under foot, and say

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"When all created streams are dry,
His goodness is the same;
With this I well am satisfied,
And glory in his name."

But another testing moment is prosperity. Oh! there have been some of God's people, who have been more tried by prosperity than by adversity. Of the two trials, the trial of adversity is less severe to the spiritual man than that of prosperity. "As the fining pot for silver, so is a man to his praise." It is a terrible thing to be prosperous. You had need to pray to God, not only to help you in your troubles, but to help you in your blessings. Mr. Whitfield once had a petition to put up for a young man who had—stop, you will think it was for a young man who had lost his father or his property. No! "The prayers of the congregation are he has need of much grace to keep him humble in the midst of riches." That is the kind of prayer that ought to be put up; for prosperity is a hard thing to bear. Now, perhaps you have become almost intoxicated with worldly delights, even as a Christian. Everything goes well with you; you have loved, and you are loved. Your affairs are prosperous; your heart rejoices, your eyes sparkle; you tread the earth with a happy soul and a joyous countenance; you are a happy man, for you have found that even in worldly things, "godliness with contentment is great gain." Did you ever

feel, -

"These can never satisfy;
Give me Christ, or else I die."

Did you feel that these comforts were nothing but the leaves of the tree, and not the fruit, and that you could not live upon mere leaves? Did you feel they were after all nothing but husks? Or did you not sit down and say, "Now, soul, take thine ease; thou hast goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry?" If you did imitate the rich fool, then you were of the world; but if your spirit went up above your prosperity so that you still lived near to God, then you proved that you were a child of God, for you were not of the world. These are testing points; both prosperity and adversity.

Again: you may test yourselves in this way in solitude and in company. In solitude you may tell whether you are not of the world. I sit me down, throw the window up, look out on the stars, and think of them as the eyes of God looking down upon me! And oh! does it not seem glorious at times to consider the heavens when we can say, "Ah! beyond those stars in my house not made with hands; those stars are mile-stones on the road to glory, and I shall soon tread the glittering way, or be carried by seraphs far beyond them, and be there!" Have you felt in solitude that you are not of the world? And so again in company. Ah! beloved, believe me, company is one of the best tests for a Christian. You are invited to an evening party. Sundry amusements are provided which are not considered exactly sinful, but which certainly cannot come under the name of pious amusements. You sit there with the rest; there is a deal of idle chat going on, you would be thought puritanical to protest against it. Have you not come away—and notwithstanding all has been very pleasant, and friends have been very agreeable—have you not been inclined to say, "Ah! that does not do for me; I would rather be in a prayer meeting; I could be with the people of God, than in fine rooms with all the dainties and delicacies that could be provided without the company of Jesus. By God's grace I will seek to shun all these places as much as possible." That is a good test. You will prove in this way that you are not of the world. And you may do so in great many other ways, which I have

no time to mention. Have you felt this experimentally, so that you can say, "I know that I am not of the world, I feel it; I experience it." Don't talk of doctrine. Give me doctrine ground into experience. Doctrine is good; but experience is better. Experimental doctrine is the true doctrine which comforts and which edifies.

IV. And now, lastly we must briefly apply this in PRACTICE. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And, first, allow me, man or woman, to apply this to thee. Thou who art of the world, whose maxims, whose habits, whose behaviour, whose feelings, whose everything is worldly and carnal, list thee to this. Perhaps thou makest some profession of religion. Hear me, then. Thy boasting of religion is empty as a phantom, and shall pass away when the sun rises, as the ghosts sleep in their grave at the crowing of the cock. Thou hast some pleasure in that professioned religion of thine wherewith thou art arrayed, and which thou carriest about thee as a cloak, and usest as a stalking-horse to thy business, and a net to catch the honour of the world, and yet thou art worldly, like other men. Then I tell thee if there be no distinction between thyself and the worldly, the doom of the worldly shall be thy doom. If thou wert marked and watched, thy next door tradesman would act as thou dost, and thou actest as he does; there is no distinction between thee and the world. Hear me, then; it is God's solemn truth. Thou art none of his. If thou art like the rest of the world, thou art of the world. Thou art a goat, and with goats thou shalt be cursed; for the sheep can always be distinguished from the goats by their appearance. O ye worldly men of the world! ye carnal professors, ye who crowd our churches, and fill our places of worship, this is God's truth! let me say it solemnly. If I should say it as I ought, it would be weeping tears of blood. Ye are, with all your profession, "in the gall of bitterness;" with all your boastings, ye are "in bonds of iniquity;" for ye act as others and ye shall come where others come; and it shall be done with you as with more notorious heirs of hell. There is an old story which was once told of a Dissenting minister. The old custom was, that a minister might stop at an inn, and not pay anything for his bed or his board; and when he went to preach, from place to place, he was charged nothing for the conveyance in which he rode. But on one occasion, a certain minister stopped at an inn and went to bed. The landlord listened and heard no prayer; so when he

came down in the morning, he presented his bill. "Oh! I am not going to pay that, for I am a minister." "Ah!" said the landlord, "you went to bed last night like a sinner, and you shall pay this morning like a sinner; I will not let you go." Now, it strikes me, that this will be the case with some of you when you come to God's bar. Though you pretended to be a Christian, you acted like a sinner, and you shall fare like a sinner too. Your actions were unrighteous; they were far from God; and you shall have a portion with those whose character was the same as yours. "Be not deceived;" it is easy to be so. "God is not mocked," though we often are, both minister and people. "God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

And now we want to apply this to many true children of God who are here, by way of caution. I say, my brother Christian, you are not of the world. I am not going to speak hardly to you, because you are my brother, and in speaking to you I speak to myself also, for I am as guilty as thou art. Brother, have we not often been too much like the world? Do we not sometimes in our conversation, talk too much like the world? Come, let me ask myself, are there not too many idle words that I say? Ay, that there are. And do I not sometimes give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme, because I am not so different from the world as I ought to be? Come, brother; let us confess our sins together. Have we not been too worldly? Ah! we have. Oh! let this solemn thought cross our minds: suppose that after all we should not be his! for it is written, "Ye are not of the world." O God! if we are not right, make us so; where we are a little right, make us still more right; and where we are wrong, amend us! Allow me to tell a story to you; I told it when I was preaching last Tuesday morning, but it is worth telling again. There is a great evil in many of us being too light and frothy in our conversation. A very solemn thing once happened. A minister had been preaching in a country village, very earnestly and fervently. in the midst of his congregation there was a young man who was deeply impressed with a sense of sin under the sermon; he therefore sought the minister as he went out, in hopes of walking home with him. They walked till they came to a friend's house. On the road the minister had talked about anything except the subject on which he had preached, though he had preached very earnestly, and even with tears in his eyes. The young man thought within himself, "Oh! I wish

I could unburden my heart and speak to him; but I cannot. He does not say anything now about what he spoke of in the pulpit." When they were at supper that evening, the conversation was very far from what it should be, and the minister indulged in all kinds of jokes and light sayings. The young man had gone into the house with eyes filled with tears, feeling like a sinner should feel; but as soon as he got outside, after the conversation, he stamped his foot, and said, "It is a lie from beginning to end. That man has preached like an angel; and now he has talked like a devil." Some years after the young man was taken ill, and sent for this same minister. The minister did not know him. "Do you remember preaching at such-and-such a village?" asked the young man. "I do." "your text was very deeply laid to my heart." "Thank God for that," said the minister. "Do not be so quick about thanking God," said the young man. "Do you know what you talked of that evening afterwards, when I went to supper with you. Sir, I shall be damned! And I will charge you before God's throne with being the author of my damnation. On that night I did feel my sin; but you were the means of scattering all my impressions." That is a solemn thought, brother, and teaches us how we should curb our tongues, especially those who are so light hearted, after solemn services and earnest preachings, that we should not betray levity. Oh! let us take heed that we are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world.

And Christian, lastly, by way of practice, let me comfort thee with this. Thou art not of the world for thy home is in heaven. Be content to be here a little, for thou art not of the world, and thou shalt go up to thine own bright inheritance by-and-bye. A man in travelling goes into an inn; it is rather uncomfortable, "Well," says he, "I shall not have to stay here many nights; I have only to sleep here to-night, I shall be at home in the morning, so that I don't care much about one night's lodging being a little uncomfortable." So, Christian, this world is never a very comfortable one; but recollect, you are not of the world. This world is like an inn; you are only lodging here a little while. Put up with a little inconvenience, because you are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world; and by-and-bye, up yonder, you shall be gathered into your father's house, and there you will find that there is a new heaven and a new earth provided for those who are "not of the world."

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Good Cheer for Christmas

"And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."--Isaiah 25:6. We have nearly arrived at the great merry-making season of the year. On Christmas-day we shall find all the world in England enjoying themselves with all the good cheer which they can afford. Servants of God, you who have the largest share in the person of him who was born at Bethlehem, I invite you to the best of all Christmas fare--to nobler food than makes the table groan--bread from heaven, food for your spirit. Behold, how rich and how abundant are the provisions which God has made for the high festival which he would have his servants keep, not now and then, but all the days of their lives!

God, in the verse before us, has been pleased to describe the provisions of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Although many other interpretations have been suggested for this verse, they are all flat and stale, and utterly unworthy of such expressions as those before us. When we behold the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed--when we see him offered up upon the chosen mountain, we then discover a fulness of meaning in these gracious words of sacred hospitality, "The Lord shall make a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow." Our Lord himself was very fond of describing his gospel under the selfsame image as that which is here employed. He spoke of the marriage-supper of the king, who said "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready;" and it did not seem as if he could even complete the beauty of the parable of the prodigal son without the killing of the fat calf and the feasting and the music and dancing. As a festival on earth is looked forward to and looked back upon as an oasis amid a desert of time, so the gospel of Jesus Christ is to the soul its sweet release from bondage and distress, its mirth and joy. Upon this subject we intend to speak this morning, hoping to be helped by the great Master of the feast.

Our first head will be the feast; the second will be the banqueting-hall-- "in this mountain;" the third will be the Host--"The Lord shall make a feast; and the fourth shall be the guests--he shall make it "unto all people."

I. First, then, we have to consider THE FEAST.

It is described as consisting of viands of the best, nay, of the best of the best. They are fat things, but they are also fat things full of marrow. Wines are provided of the most delicious and invigorating kind, wines on the lees, which retain their aroma, their strength, and their flavour; but these are most ancient and rare, having been so long kept that they have become well refined; by long standing they have purified, clarified themselves, and brought themselves to the highest degree of brightness and excellence. The best of the best God has provided in the gospel for the sons of men.

Let us attentively survey the blessings of the gospel, and observe that they are fat things, and fat things full of marrow. One of the first gospel blessings is that of complete justification. A sinner, though guilty in himself, no sooner believes in Jesus than all his sins are pardoned. The righteousness of Christ becomes his righteousness, and he is accepted in the Beloved. Now, this is a delicious dish indeed. Here is something for the soul to feed upon. To think that I, though a deeply guilty one, am absolved of God, and set free from the bondage of the law! To think that I, though once an heir of wrath, am now as accepted before God as Adam was when he walked in the Garden without a sin; nay, more accepted still, for the divine righteousness of Christ belongs to me, and I stand complete in him, beloved in the Beloved, and accepted in him too! Beloved, this is such a precious truth, that when the soul feeds on it, it experiences a quiet peace, a deep and heavenly calm, to be found nowhere on earth besides.

This is a kind of honey which never cloy, to be assured by the word of God, and by the witness of the Holy Ghost within you, that you are reconciled and brought nigh by the blood and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is a choice mercy. This is a fat thing indeed; but this is not all, it is a fat thing full of marrow too. There is an inner lusciousness in it

when you reach the heart and soul of the matter, transcendent in richness; for remember that this righteousness, this acceptance, this justification, becomes ours in a perfectly legal way, one against which Satan himself cannot raise a demurrer, for our Substitute has paid our debt, therefore are we righteously discharged. Christ has fulfilled the law, and made it honourable for us, and therefore are we justly accepted and beloved. Here is marrow indeed when we perceive the truth and reality of the substitution of Jesus, and grasp with heart and soul the fact of our great Surety standing in our stead at the bar of justice, that we might stand in his stead in the place of honour and love. What bliss it is to cry with the apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Come hither, all ye whose spiritual tastes are purified by grace, and feed upon this choice provision, which shall be sweet to your taste, sweeter, also, than honey and the honeycomb.

Meditate upon a second blessing of the covenant of grace, namely, that of adoption. It is plainly revealed to us, that as many as have believed in Christ Jesus unto the salvation of their souls, are the sons of God. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Here, indeed, is a fat thing. What, shall a worm of the dust become a child of God? A rebel be adopted into the heavenly family? A condemned criminal not only forgiven, but actually made a child of God? Wonder of wonders! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!" To which of the kings and princes of this earth did he ever say, "Thou art my son"? He has not spoken thus to the great ones and to the mighty, but God hath chosen the base things of this world and things that are despised, yea, and things that are not, and made these to be of the seed royal. The wise and prudent are passed over, but babes receive the revelation of his love. Lord, whence is this to me? What am I and what is my father's house, that thou shouldst speak of making me thy child? This gloriously fat thing is also "full of marrow." There is an inner richness in adoption, for, "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Well does the apostle remind us that if children, then

heirs, for we are thus assured of our blessed heritage. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Here are royal dainties of which the Word has said most truly, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house."

Passing on from the blessing of adoption, let us remember that every child of God is the object of eternal love without beginning and without end. This is one of the fat things full of marrow. Is it so, that I, a believer in Jesus, unworthy as I am, am the object of the eternal love of God? What transport lies in that thought! Long before the Lord began to create the world, he had thought of me. Long ere Adam fell or Christ was born, and the angels sung their first choral over Bethlehem's miracle, the eye and the heart of God were towards his elect people. He never began to love them, they were always "a people near unto him." Is it not so written, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"? Some kick at the doctrine of election, but they are ill advised, since they labour to overturn one of the noblest dishes of the feast; they would dam up one of the coolest streams that flow from Lebanon; they would cover over with rubbish one of the richest veins of golden ore that make rich the people of God.

For this doctrine of a love that hath no commencement, is the best wine of our Beloved, and "that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of them that are asleep to speak." How joyously doth the heart exult and leap for very joy when this truth is brought home by the witness of the Spirit of God! then the soul is satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord.

Equally delightful is the corresponding reflection that this love which had no beginning shall have no end. He is a God that changeth not. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Where he has once set his heart of love upon a man, he never turns away from doing him good. He saith by the mouth of his servant the prophet, that he hateth putting away. Though we sin against him often, and provoke him to jealousy, yet still, as the waters of Noah, so is his covenant to us; for as the waters of

Noah shall no more go over the earth, so he swears that he will not be wroth with us nor rebuke us. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

Why, beloved, this indeed is a fat thing; and I may add that it is full of marrow when you remember that not merely has the Lord thought of you from everlasting, but loved you. Oh! the depth of that word "love," as it applies to the infinite Jehovah, whose name, whose essence, whose nature is love! He has loved you with all the immutable intensity of his heart, never more and never less; loved you so much that he gave his only begotten Son for you; loved you so well that nothing could content him but making you to be conformed into the image of his dear Son, and causing you to partake of his glory that you may be with him where he is! Come, feed on this, ye heirs of eternal life, for here are fat things full of marrow.

We should not, beloved, have completed this list if we had omitted one precious doctrine, which needs a refined taste perhaps, but which, when a man hath once learned to feed on it, seemeth to him to be best of all--I mean the great truth of union to Christ. We are plainly taught in the word of God that as many as have believed are one with Christ: they are married to him, there is a conjugal union based upon mutual affection. The union is closer still, for there is a vital union between Christ and his saints. They are in him as the branches are in the vine; they are members of the body of which he is the head. They are one with Jesus in such a true and real sense that with him they died, with him they have been buried, with him they are risen, with him they are raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places. There is an indissoluble union between Christ and all his people: "I in them and they in me." Thus the union may be described:--Christ is in his people the hope of glory, and they are dead and their life is hid with Christ in God. This is a union of the most

wonderful kind, which figures may faintly set forth, but which it were impossible for language completely to explain. Oneness to Jesus is one of the fat things full of marrow. For if it be so, indeed, that we are one with Christ, then because he lives we must live also; because he was justified by his resurrection, we also are justified in him; because he is rewarded and for ever sits down at his Father's right hand, we also have obtained the inheritance in him and by faith grasp it now, and enjoy its earnest. Oh, can it be that this aching head already has a right to a celestial crown! That this palpitating heart has a claim to the rest which remaineth for the people of God! That these weary feet have a title to tread the sacred halls of the New Jerusalem! It is so, for if we are one with Christ, then all he has belongs to us, and it is but a matter of time, and of gracious arrangement when we shall come into the full enjoyment thereof. Truly, in meditation upon this topic, we may each of us exclaim, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."

I cannot bring forth all the courses of my Lord's banquet; one serving man cannot bear before you the riches of such a surpassing feast; but I would remind you of one more, and that is the doctrine of resurrection and everlasting life. This poor world dimly guessed at the immortality of the soul, but it knew nothing of the resurrection of the body: the gospel of Jesus has brought life and immortality to light, and he himself has declared to us of Jesus, that he that believeth in him shall never die. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet should he live." Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Not the soul only, but the body also shall partake of immortality, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. We expect to die, but we are assured of living again. If the Lord come not, we know that our bodies shall see corruption; but here is our comfort, we dread no annihilation, that dark shadow never crosses our spirits; we dread no hell, no purgatory, no judgment--Christ hath perfected for ever them that are set apart; none can condemn whom he absolves. The saints shall judge the angels, and sit with their Lord in the day of the great assize. To us the coming of Christ will be a day of joy and of rejoicing: we shall be caught up together with him; his reign shall be our reign, his glory our glory. Wherefore comfort one another with these words, and as ye see your

brethren and your sisters departing one by one from among you, sorrow not as those that are without hope, but say unto each other, "They are not lost, but they have gone before," for, "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Here are fat things full of marrow, for ours is a glorious hope, and full of immortality. Our expected immortality is not that of mere existence, it is not the barren privilege of life without bliss, existence without happiness--it is full of glory; for "we shall be like him when we shall see him as he is;" we shall be with God, at whose right hand there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. He shall make us to drink of the river of his pleasures; songs and everlasting joy shall be upon our heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

"Oh, for the no more weeping,
Within that land of love!

The endless joy of keeping
The bridal feast above!

Oh, for the hour of seeing
My Saviour face to face!

The hope of ever being
In that sweet meeting-place."

Thus I have set before you a few of the fat things full of marrow which the King of kings has set before his guests at the wedding feast of his love.

Changing the run of the thought, and yet really keeping to the same subject, let me now bring before you the goblets of wine. "Wines on the lees--wines on the lees well refined." These we shall consider as symbolising the joys of the gospel. What are these? I can only speak of those which I have myself been permitted to sip at. One of the dearest joys of the Christian life is a sense of perfect peace with God. Oh, I tell you when one is quiet for awhile, and the din and noise of business is out of one's ears, it is one of the most delicious things in all the world to meditate upon God, and to feel he is no enemy to me, and I am no enemy to him. It is beyond comparison cheering, musingly to feel, I love him. If

there be anything which I can do to serve him, I will do it. If there be any suffering which would honour him, if he would give me the strength to endure it, it should be my happiness, though it caused me to die a martyr's death a thousand times. If I could but honour my God, my Father, and my Friend, all should be acceptable to me. There is nothing between the Lord and me by way of difference or alienation; I am brought nigh through the blood of his dear and only begotten Son. He is my God, my Father, and my all, and I am his child. Some of us have tried the imaginary happiness of laughter; we have mixed with the giddy throng, and tasted the wines of the house of carnal merriment, but our honest experience is that one single draught from the cup of salvation is worth rivers of worldly mirth.

"Solid joys and lasting pleasures Only Zion's children know."

A quiet heart, resting in the love of God, dwelling in perfect peace, hath a royalty about it which cannot for a moment be matched by the fleeting joys of this world. Our joy sometimes flashes with a brighter light, but even then it is not less pure and safe. You may look upon this wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it moveth itself aright, for there is no woe, no redness of the eyes reserved for those who drink even to inebriation of this sacred wine. This sacred exhilaration is caused by a sense of security. A child of God, when he has looked well to his Redeemer, and seen the merit of the precious blood, and the power of the never-ceasing plea, feels himself safe, perfectly safe. I do not understand the child of God reading his Bible and yet being afraid of being cast into hell. I can understand that the fear may cross his mind lest after all he should prove a castaway; but as he approaches once again to the foot of the cross, and looks up to Jesus, he feels that it cannot be. None were ever cast away who stood at the cross foot; for it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." A child of God, with no hope but what he finds in Christ, has no cause to think his eternal state to be insecure. All are safe who are in Christ, even as all were safe who were in Noah's ark. No flood, no storm could hurt the man of whom it was said, "The Lord shut him in." The Lord has shut in all his people in Christ, and they are eternally safe in Christ. When the spirit knows that "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," then is it

replenished with delight. When one feels that live or die, or work or suffer, all is well, how free from care is the heart! How divinely joyful to know that if one should lose all his earthly substance, the Lord will provide; that if one should be tempted, tempted greatly, yet with the temptation the way of escape shall be made! here is assurance rich with consolation. When one feels that all is safe, all safe eternally, for life or death all secured, I tell you that this is wine on the lees, wine on the lees well refined, and he who wins a draught thereof need not envy the angels their celestial banquets.

This joy of ours will sometimes rise to an elevation yet more sublime when it is caused by communion with God. Believers, while engaged in prayer and praise, in service and in suffering, are enabled by the Holy Spirit to hold high converse with their Lord. Do not imagine that Abraham's speech with God was an unusual privilege. The father of the faithful did but enjoy what all the faithful ones participate in according to the grace given them. We tell to God our griefs; discoursing upon our sorrows not in fiction, but declaring them in real conversation, as when a man speaketh with his neighbour: meanwhile the Lord's Spirit whispers to us with the still small voice of the promise, such words as calm our minds and guide our feet. Yes, and when our Beloved takes us into the banqueting-house of real conscious fellowship with himself, and waves the love-banner over us, our holy joy is as much superior to all merely human mirth, as the heavens are above the earth. Then do we speak and sing with sacred zest, and feel as if we could weep for very joy of heart, for our Beloved is ours and we are his. His left hand is under our head, and his right hand doth embrace us, and our only fear is lest anything should grieve our Beloved and cause him to withdraw himself from us; for it is heaven on earth, and the fair antepast of heaven above to see his face, to taste his love. Communion with Christ is as the wine on the lees well refined.

We will place on the table one goblet more, of which you may drink as much as you will. We have provided for us the pleasures of hope, a hope most sure and steadfast, most bright and glorious--the hope that what we know to-day shall be outdone by what we shall know to-morrow; the hope that by-and-by what we now see, as in a glass darkly, shall be seen face to

face. We shall say, as in heaven, as the Queen of Sheba did in Jerusalem, "The half hath not been told us." We are looking forward to a speedy day when we shall be unburdened of this creaking tabernacle, and being absent from the body shall be present with the Lord. Our hope of future bliss is elevated and confident. Oh, the vision of his face! Oh, the sight of Jesus in his exaltation! Oh, the kiss of his lips--the word, "Well done, good and faithful servant" from that dear mouth! and then for ever to lie in his bosom. Begone, ye cares, begone, ye sorrows; if heaven be so near, ye shall not molest us. The inn may be a rough and poverty-stricken one, but we are only travellers, not tenants upon lease. This is not our place of resting; we are on our journey home! Beloved, in the prospect of the quiet resting-places in the land which floweth with milk and honey, you have wines on the lees well refined.

If we were not limited to time this morning, as, alas! we are, I should have reminded you that these joys of the believer are ancient in their origin, for that is shown in the text. Old wines are intended by "wines well refined;" they have stood long on the lees, have drawn out all the virtue from them, and have been cleared of all the coarser material. In the East, wine will be improved by keeping even more than the wines of the West! and even so the mercies of God are the sweeter to our meditations because of their antiquity. From old eternity, or ever the earth was, the covenant engagements of everlasting love have been resting like wines on the lees, and to-day they bring to us the utmost riches of all the attributes of God. I should also have reminded you of the fulness of their excellence, because the wine on the lees holds its flavour, and retains its aroma; and there is a fulness and richness about the blessings of divine grace which endears them to our hearts. The joys of grace are not fantastical emotions, or transient flashes of a meteoric excitement, they are based on substantial truth; are reasonable, fit, and proper. They belong not to the superficial and frothy emotions of mere feeling, but are deep, solemn, earnest motions, justified by the clearest judgment. Our bliss is not of the foam and the surge, it dwells in the innermost caverns of our heart. I would also remind you of their refined nature. No sin mingled with the joys of the gospel and the delights of communion--they are well refined. Gospel joys are elevating, they make men like angels. As in the gospel God comes down to men, so by the gospel men go up to God. I might also have shown

you how absolutely peerless are the provisions of grace. There is no feast like that of the gospel, no meat like the flesh of Jesus, no drink like his blood, no joys like that which crowns the gospel feast.

II. I can say no more: the table is before you, and now we must pass on with great brevity to notice THE BANQUETING-HALL.

"In this mountain." There is a reference here to three things--the same symbol bearing three interpretations. First, literally, the mountain upon which Jerusalem is built. I do not doubt that the reference is here to the hill of the Lord upon which Jerusalem stood; the great transaction which was fulfilled at Jerusalem upon Calvary hath made to all nations a great feast. It was there where that centre cross bore upon it One who joined earth and heaven in mysterious union; it was there where amidst thick darkness the Son of God was made a curse for men; it was there where sorrow culminated that joy was consummated. On that very mountain where Jews and Gentiles met together, and with clamorous wrath cried, "Let him be crucified"--it was there in the giving up of the Only-begotten, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed, that the Lord made a feast of fat things. Everything I have spoken of this morning is found in Christ. He is the resurrection and the life: in him we are justified, adopted, and made secure; every drop of joy we drink streams from his flowing veins.

A second meaning is the church. Frequently Jerusalem is used as the symbol of the church of God, and it is within the pale of the church that the great feast of the Lord is made unto all nations. I am in the truest sense a very sound churchman. I am indeed a high churchman; a most determined stickler for the church. I do not believe in salvation outside of the pale of the church. I believe that the salvation of God is confined to the church, and to the church alone. "But," says one, "what church?" Ay! that's the question: God forbid I should mean by that either the Baptist church, or the Independent church, or the Episcopalian church, or the Presbyterian, or any other--I mean the church of Jesus Christ, the company of God's chosen, the fellowship of the blood-bought, the family of believers, be they where they may, for them is provided the feast of fat things. Whatever outward and visible church they may have associated themselves with, they shall drink of the wines on the lees well refined; but

the feast is only to be found where they are found who put their trust in Jesus. There is but one church in heaven and earth, composed of men called by the Holy Ghost, and made to live anew by his quickening power; and it is through the ministry of this church that an abundant feast is spread for all nations, a feast to which the nations are summoned by chosen herald, whom God calls to proclaim the good news of salvation by Jesus Christ.

But, brethren, the mountain sometimes means the church of God exalted to its latter-day glory. This mountain is to be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. This text will have its grandest fulfillment in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then shall the glory of the gospel be unveiled more clearly than at this present. Men shall have a fuller perception of the glory of the Lord, and a deeper enjoyment of his grace; while happiness and peace shall reign with unmolested quiet. Soon shall come the golden age which has been so long foretold, for which we cry with unceasing expectation. The Lord send it speedily, and his be the praise.

III. Thirdly, let us think of THE HOST of the feast.

"In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things." Mark well the truth that in the gospel banquet there is not a single dish brought by man. The Lord makes it, and he makes it all. I know some would like to bring a little with them to the banquet, something at least by way of trimming and adornment, so that they might have a share of the honour; but it must not be, the Lord of hosts makes the feast, and he will not even permit the guests to bring their own wedding garments--they must stop at the door and put on the robe which the Lord has provided, for salvation is all grace from first to last, and all of him who is wondrous in working, and who doeth all things according to the counsels of his will. Out of all the precious truths which I spoke of at the beginning of this sermon, there is not one which comes from any source but a divine one; and of all the joys which I tried feebly to picture there is not one which takes its rise from earth's springs; they all flow from the eternal fount. The Lord makes the feast; and, observe, he does it, too, as the Lord of hosts, as a sovereign, as a ruler, doing as he wills amongst the sons of men, preparing what he wills for the good of his

creatures, and constraining whom he wills to come to the marriage-feast. The Lord provides sovereignly as Lord of hosts, and all-sufficiently as Jehovah. It needed the all-sufficiency of God to provide a feast for hungry sinners. No other than the infinite "I AM" could provide a feast substantial enough to supply the wants of immortal spirits; but he has done it, and you may guess of the value of the viands by the nature of our entertainer. If God spread the feast it is not to be despised; if the Lord has put forth all the omnipotence of his eternal power and Godhead in preparing the banquet for the multitude of the sons of men, then depend upon it it is a banquet worthy of him, one to which they may come with confidence, for it must be such a banquet as their souls require, and such as the world never saw before.

O my soul, rejoice thou in thy God and King. If he provides the feast, let him have all the glory of it. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." O King immortal, eternal, invisible, thou feddest thy children in the wilderness with manna which dropped from heaven, and with water that flowed out of a flinty rock, and they gave thanks unto thy name; but now thou fillest us with nobler food. They did eat manna and are dead, but we live on the immortal bread, even Jesus, and therefore we can never die. They drank of the water which flowed from the rock, and yet they thirsted again, but we shall never thirst, but for ever abide near to thyself, while the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us unto living fountains of water. Therefore, blessed be thy name, yea, a thousand times blessed be thy name, O thou Most High! Let all heaven say "Amen" to the praises of our hearts, and let the multitude of thy children here on earth, for whom this feast is spread, laud and magnify and bless thy name from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same.

IV. Lastly, a word or two upon THE GUESTS.

The Lord has made this banquet "for all people". What a precious word this is! "For all people." Then this includes not merely the chosen people, the Jews, whose were the oracles, but it encompasses the poor uncircumcised Gentiles, who by Jesus are brought nigh. The barbarian is invited to this feast; the Scythian is not rejected. The polished Greek finds an open door; the hardy Roman shall meet with an equal welcome.

Caesar's household, if they come, shall receive a portion, and so shall the beggar's brethren. Blessed be God for that word, "unto all people," for it permits missionary enterprise in every land; however degraded a race may be, we have here provision made for it. This feast of fat things is made as much for the Sudra as for the Brahmin; the gospel is as much to be preached to the degraded Bushman as to the civilised Chinese. Dwell on that word, "all people," and you will see it includes the rich, for there is a feast of fat things for them, such as their gold could never buy; and it includes the poor, for they being rich in faith shall have fellowship with God. "All people." This takes in the man of enlarged intelligence and extensive knowledge; but it equally encompasses the illiterate man who cannot read. The Lord makes this feast "for all people;" for you old people, if you come to Jesus you shall find that he is suitable to you; for you young men and maidens, and you little children, if you put your trust in God's appointed Saviour, there shall be much joy and happiness for you--"For all people"? Methinks, if I were now seeking and had not laid hold on Christ, this word, "all people" would be a great comfort to me, because it gives hope to all who desire to come. None have ever been rejected of all who have ever come to Christ and asked for mercy. Still is it true, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Some very odd people have come to him, some very wicked people, some very hardened people, but the door was never closed in any one's face. Why should Jesus begin hard dealings with you? He cannot, because he cannot change. If he says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," make one of the "hims" that come, and he cannot cast you out. There is another thought, namely, that between the covers of the Bible there is no mention made of one person who may not come. There is no description given of a person who is forbidden to trust Christ. I should like you to look the book through, you who dream that Jesus will reject you, and find where it is said, "Such a one I will reject; such a one I will refuse." When you find such a rejecting clause, then you will have a right to be unbelieving, but till you do I beseech you do not needlessly torment yourself. Why needlessly sow doubts and fears? There will be enough of them without your making them for yourself. Do not limit what the Lord does not limit. I know he has an elect people; I rejoice in it--I hope you will rejoice in it too one day; and I know that his people have this marrow and fatness provided for them and for them alone; but still this does not at all conflict

with the other precious truth that whosoever believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life. If you believe in Jesus Christ, all these things are yours. Come, poor trembler, the silver trumpet soundeth, and this is the note it rings, "Come and welcome, come and welcome, come and welcome." The harsher trumpet of the law which waxed exceedingly loud and long at Sinai had this for its note, "Set bounds about the mount: let none touch it lest they die." But the trumpet for Calvary sounds with the opposite note; it is, "Come and welcome, come and welcome, sinner, come! Come as you are, sinful as you are, hardened as you are, careless as you think you are, and having no good thing whatsoever, come to your God in Christ!" O may you come to him who gave his Son to bleed in the sinner's stead, and casting yourself on what Christ has done, may you resolve, "If I perish, I will trust in him; if I be cast away, I will rely on him." You shall not perish, but for you there shall be the feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. The Lord bless you very richly, for his name's sake. Amen.

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The First Christmas Carol

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:14 (KJV)

It is wrong to worship angels; but it is appropriate to love them. Although it would be a great sin, and a crime against the Sovereign Court of Heaven to pay the slightest adoration to the mightiest angel, yet it would be unkind and inappropriate, if we did not give holy angels a place in our heart's warmest love. In fact, he that studies the character of angels, and notes their many deeds of compassion with men, and kindness towards them, cannot resist the impulse of his nature--the impulse of love towards them.

The one incident in angelic history, to which our text refers, is enough to bond our hearts to them forever. How free from envy the angels were!

Christ did not come from heaven to save angels when they fell. When Satan, the mighty angel, dragged with him a third part of the stars of heaven [angels], Christ did not stoop from His throne to die for them; but He left them to be reserved in chains and darkness until the last great day of judgment. Yet angels did not envy men. Though they remembered that He did not save angels, yet they did not murmur when He decided to redeem the seed of Abraham; and though the blessed Master had never condescended to take the angel's form, they did not think it beneath them to express their joy when they found Him arrayed in the body of an infant.

How free, too, they were from pride! They were not ashamed to come and tell the news to humble shepherds. I think, they had as much joy in pouring out their songs that night before the shepherds, who were watching with their flocks, as they would have had if they had been commanded by their Master to sing their hymn in the halls of Caesar. Mere men--men possessed with pride, think it a fine thing to preach before kings and princes; and think it great condescension now and then to have to minister to the humble crowd. Not so the angels. They stretched their willing wings, and gladly sped from their bright seats above, to tell the shepherds on the hillside at night, the marvelous story of an Incarnate God. And note how well they told the story, and surely you will love them! Not with the stammering tongue of him that tells a story in which he has no interest; nor even with the feigned interest of a man that would move the passions of others, when he feels no emotion himself; but with joy and gladness, such as angels only can know. They "sang" the story out, for they could not stay to tell it in ordinary language. They sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." I think, they sang it with gladness in their eyes; with their hearts burning with love and joy as if the good news to man had been good to themselves. And, truly, it was good news to them, for the heart of compassion makes the good news of others, good news to itself.

Don't you love the angels? You will not bow before them, and that is right; but won't you love them? Doesn't it make up one part of your anticipation of heaven, that in heaven you will live with the holy angels, as well as with the redeemed believers of all the ages? Oh how sweet to

think that these holy and lovely beings guard us every hour! They keep watch and deflect evil away from us, both during the brightest noonday sun, and also in the darkness of the night. They watch over us no matter what we are doing, they lift us up in their hands, lest at any time we should strike our feet against harmful stones. Unceasingly they minister to us who are the heirs of salvation, watching over us night and day as our guardians, for don't you know that, "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him" (Psalm 34:7).

Let us turn aside, having just thought of angels for a moment, to think of this song, rather than the angels themselves. Their song was brief, but as one has remarked, it was, "well worthy of angels expressing the greatest and most blessed truths, in so few words."--"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." We will, hoping to be assisted by the Holy Spirit, look at these words of the angels in four ways:

1. Instructive thoughts.
2. Emotional thoughts.
3. Prophetical thoughts.
4. Preceptive thoughts.

I. First then, in the words of our text. There are many **INSTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS**.

The angels sang something which men could understand--something which men ought to understand--something which will make men much better if they will understand it. The angels were singing about Jesus who was born in the manger. We must look upon their song as being built on this foundation. They sang of Christ, and the salvation which He came into this world to work out. And what they said of this salvation was this: they said, first, that it gave glory to God; secondly, that it gave peace to man; and thirdly, that it was a token of God's good will towards the human race.

1. First, they said that this salvation gave glory to God.

They had been present on many glorious occasions before, and they had joined in many a solemn chorus to the praise of their Almighty Creator. They were present at the creation: "The morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" (Job 38:7) They had seen many planets formed between the palms of the LORD, and spun by His eternal hands through the infinite space. They had sung solemn songs over the many worlds which the Great One had created. We don't doubt that they had often sang, "Blessing and honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might, be to Him that sits on the throne," manifesting Himself in the work of creation.

I also don't doubt that their songs had gathered force through the ages. When the angels were first created their very first breath was a song, so when they saw God create new worlds then their songs received another note; they rose a little higher in the scale of adoration. But this time, when they saw God stoop from His throne, and become a baby, nursing on a woman's breast, they lifted their notes still higher; and reaching to the uttermost stretch of angelic music, they gained the highest notes of the divine scale of praise, and they sang, "Glory to God in the highest" for they felt that God's goodness could not go any higher. Thus they gave to Him their highest praise for the highest act of His divinity.

If it is true that there is a hierarchy of angels, rising tier upon tier in magnificence and dignity--if the apostle teaches us that there are "angels, and authorities, and powers, and thrones, and rulers," among these blessed inhabitants of the heavenly world--I can suppose that when the news was first communicated to those angels that are to be found in the outskirts of the heavenly realms, when they looked down from heaven and saw the newborn baby, they sent the news backward to the place where the miracle first proceeded, singing

"Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your downward flight to earth,

You who sing creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth;

Come and worship,

Worship Christ, the newborn King."

And as the message ran from rank to rank, at last the angels in God's presence, those four cherubim that perpetually watch around the throne of God--those wheels with eyes--took up the chorus, and gathering up the song of all the lesser ranks of angels, surmounted the divine pinnacle of harmony with their own solemn chorus of adoration, upon which the entire host of angels shouted, "The highest angels praise You"--"Glory to God in the Highest." Yes, there is no mortal that can ever dream how magnificent that song was. Then, note, if angels shouted with joy before and when the world was made, their hallelujahs were now more full, more strong, more magnificent, if not more hearty, when they saw Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary to be man's redeemer--"Glory to God in the highest."

What is the lesson to be learned from this first part of the angel's song? It is that salvation is God's highest glory. He is glorified in every dew drop that twinkles in the morning sun. He is magnified in every flower that blooms in the deep forest, although no one sees its beauty, and its sweetness is wasted in the forest air. God is glorified in every bird that chirps on the branch; in every lamb that skips in the meadow. Don't the fishes in the sea praise Him? From the tiny minnow to the huge sea mammal, don't all creatures that swim the water bless and praise His name? Don't all created things extol Him? Is there any beneath the sky, except man, that does not glorify God? Don't the stars exalt him, when they write His name upon the blue sky of heaven in their golden letters? Don't the lightnings adore Him when they flash His brightness in arrows of light piercing the midnight darkness? Don't thunders extol Him when they roll like drums in the march of the God of armies? Don't all things extol Him, from the least to the greatest? But sing, sing, oh universe, till you have exhausted yourself and still you cannot produce a song so sweet as the song of Incarnation. Though creation may be a majestic organ of praise, it cannot reach the range of the golden hymn--Incarnation! There is more in that than in creation, more melody in Jesus in the manger, than there is in words on worlds spinning their grandeur around the throne of the Most High.

Stop Christian, and consider this a minute. See how every attribute is

here magnified. Look! what wisdom is here. God becomes man that God may be just, and the justifier of the ungodly. Look! what power, for where is power so great as when it conceals power? What power, that a member of the Godhead--God Himself, should unrobe Himself and become a man! Look, what love is revealed to us when Jesus becomes a man. See what faithfulness! How many promises are kept on this glorious day? How many solemn commitments are fulfilled at this very moment? Tell me one attribute of God that is not manifest in Jesus; and your ignorance will be the reason why you have not seen it. The whole of God is glorified in Christ; and though some part of the name of God is written throughout the universe, it is here best read--in Him who was the Son of Man, and yet, the Son of God.

But, let me say one word here before I leave this point. We must learn from this, that if salvation glorifies God, glorifies Him in the highest degree, and makes the highest creatures praise Him, this one reflection must be added--then, that any doctrine, which glorifies man in salvation cannot be the gospel. For salvation glorifies God. The angels were not Arminians [believing that "man" decides whether he will accept the Gospel or not with "his own free will"], they sang, "Glory to God in the highest." They believe in no doctrine which uncrowns Christ, and puts the crown upon the heads of mortals. They believe in no system of faith which makes salvation dependent upon the creature, and, which really gives the creature the praise, for if the whole dependence of salvation rests upon his own free will, then a man really saves himself! No, my brothers; there may be some preachers, that delight to preach a doctrine that magnifies man; but in their gospel the angels take no delight. The only glad tidings that make angels sing, are those that put God first, God last, God middle, and God without end, in the salvation of His creatures, and put the crown wholly and alone upon the head of Him that saves without a helper. "Glory to God in the highest," is the angels' song.

2. When they had sung this, they sang what they had never sung before.

"Glory to God in the highest," was an old, old song: they had sung that from before the foundations of the world. But now, they sang as it were a new song before the throne of God: for they added this stanza--"on earth, peace." They did not sing that in the garden. There was peace there, but it

seemed a natural thing and not something worth singing about. There was more than peace there; for there was glory to God there. But, now, man had fallen, and since the day when cherubim with fiery swords drove out the man, there had been no peace on earth, except in the hearts of some believers, who had obtained peace from the living fountain of this incarnation of Christ.

Wars had raged from the ends of the world; men had slaughtered one another, heaps and heaps of dead humans. There had been wars within man as well as wars around him. Conscience had fought with man; Satan had tormented man with thoughts of sin. There had been no peace on earth since Adam fell. But, now, when the newborn King made His appearance, the cloth that wrapped up the baby was the white flag of peace. That manger was the place where the treaty was signed, whereby warfare should cease between man's conscience and himself, man's conscience and his God. It was then, that day, the trumpet blew--"Put away the sword, oh man, put away the sword, oh conscience, for God is now at peace with man, and man is at peace with God."

Don't you feel my brethren, that the gospel of God is peace to man? Where else can peace be found, but in the message of Jesus? Go legalist, work for peace with toil and pain, and you will never find it. Go, you who trusts in the law: go to Sinai; look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair; for peace is nowhere to be found, but to Him, of whom it is said, "This man will be peace." And what a peace it is, beloved! It is peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea. It is the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, which will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. This sacred peace between the pardoned soul and God the One who pardons; this marvelous atonement made between the sinner and the judge, this was it that the angels sung when they said, "peace on earth."

3. And, then, they wisely ended their song with a third note.

They said, "Good will to man." Philosophers have said that God has a good will toward man; but I never knew any man who derived much comfort from their philosophical assertion. Wise men have thought from what we have seen in creation that God had considerable good will

toward man, or else His works would never have been so constructed for their comfort; but I never heard of any man who would risk his soul's peace on such a faint hope as that.

But I have not only heard of thousands, but I know them, who are quite sure God has good will towards men; and if you ask their reason, they will give a full and perfect answer. They say, He has good will towards man because He gave His Son. No greater proof of kindness between the Creator and His subjects can possibly be afforded than when the Creator gives His one and only and beloved Son to die.

Though the first part of the carol is God-like ["Glory to God in the highest"], and though the second part is peaceful ["and on earth peace"], this third part ["good will towards men"] melts my heart the most. Some think of God as if He were a ill-natured being who hated all of mankind. Some picture Him as if He were some abstract essence taking no interest in our affairs. Listen, God has "good will toward men."

You know what "good will" means. Well, all that it means, and more, God has towards you, you sons and daughters of Adam. You who swear, you who have cursed God; yet He has not executed His curse on you; He has good will towards you, though you have no good will towards Him. Unbeliever, you have sinned greatly and your sin has been unrelenting against the Most High; He has said no unmerciful things against you, for He has good will towards men. Poor sinner, you have broken His laws; you are half afraid to come to the throne of His mercy for fear that He would reject you; hear this, and be comforted--God has good will towards men, so "good" a will that He has said, and said it with an oath too, "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die?" (Ezekiel 33:11). Moreover, so "good" a will that He has even condescended to say, "Come now, let us reason together. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18). And if you say, "Lord, how will I know that You have this good will towards me," He points to the distant manger, and says, "Sinner, if I did not have a good will towards you, would I have parted with my Son? If I did not have a good will towards the human race, would

I have given up my Son to become one of that race that He might by so doing redeem them from death?" You that doubt the Master's love, you look to that circle of angels; see their blaze of glory; hear their song, and let your doubts die away in that sweet music and be buried in a veil of harmony. He has good will towards men; He is willing to pardon; He passes by evil, misbehavior, and sin.

And mark this, if Satan will then add, "But though God has good will, yet He cannot violate His justice, therefore His mercy will be ineffective, and you will die;" then listen to that first note of the song, "Glory to God in the highest," and reply to Satan and all his temptations, that when God shows good will to a repentant sinner, there is not only peace in the sinner's heart, but it brings glory to every attribute of God, and so He can be just, and yet justify the sinner, and glorify Himself.

I do not pretend to say that I have uncovered all the teachings contained in these three sentences, but may I perhaps direct you into a train of thought that may serve you for a week. I hope that through the week you will have a truly merry Christmas by feeling the power of these words, and knowing the comfort of them. "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

II. Next, I have to present to you some EMOTIONAL THOUGHTS.

Friends, doesn't this verse, this song of angels, stir your hearts with happiness? When I read that, and found the angels singing it, I thought to myself, "Then if the angels ushered in the gospel's great Savior with singing, shouldn't I preach with singing? And shouldn't my hearers live their lives with singing? Shouldn't their hearts be glad and their spirits rejoice?" Well, I thought, there are some gloomy "religious" people who were born on a dark night in December, that think a smile on the face is wicked, and believe that for a Christian to be glad and rejoice is to be inconsistent. I wish these gentlemen had seen the angels when they sang about Christ; for if the angels sang about His birth, though it was no concern of theirs, certainly men ought to sing about it as long as they live, sing about it when they die, and sing about it when they live in heaven forever. I long to see in our churches more of a singing Christianity. The last few years have been breeding in our midst a groaning and

unbelieving Christianity. Now, I don't doubt its sincerity, but I do doubt its healthy character. I say it may be true and real enough; God forbid I should say a word against the sincerity of those who practice it; but it is a sickly religion. It has been well said,

"Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less."

It is designed to do away with some of our pleasures, but it gives us many more, to make up for what it takes away; so it does not make them less. O you that see in Christ nothing but a subject to stimulate your doubts and make the tears run down your cheeks; O you that always say,

"Lord, what a wretched land this is,
That yields us no supplies,"

Come here and see the angels. Do they tell their story with groans, and sobs, and sighs? No; they shout out loud, "Glory to God in the highest." Now, imitate them my dear brethren. If you are professors of Christianity, always try to have a cheerful manner. Let others mourn; but

"Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?"

Fix your hair and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. Especially this week do not be ashamed to be glad. You need not think it a wicked thing to be happy. Doing penance and whipping oneself, and other terrible things those in false religions do, are not virtuous things. The damned are miserable; let the saved be happy. Why should you hold fellowship with the lost by feelings of perpetual mourning? Rather, why not anticipate the joys of heaven, and begin to sing on earth that song which you will never need to end? The first emotion then that we ought to cherish in our hearts is the emotion of "joy and gladness."

Well, what next? Another emotion is that of "confidence." I am not sure that I am right in calling that an emotion, but in me, it is so much like it, that I will venture to be wrong if I am. Now, if when Christ came on this

earth God had sent some black creature down from heaven (if there be such creatures there) to tell us, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," and if with a frowning brow and a stammering tongue he delivered his message, if I had been there and heard it, I would have been reluctant to believe him, for I would have said, "You don't look like a messenger that God would send--stammering fellow as you are--with such glad news as this."

But when the angels came there was no doubting the truth of what they said, because it was quite certain that the angels believed it; they told it as if they did, for they told it with singing, with joy and gladness. If some friend, having heard that an inheritance was left to you, came to you with a serious face, as if he just returned from a funeral, saying, "Do you know so-and-so has left you \$1,000,000?" Why, you would say, "Yes, I dare say," and laugh in his face. But if your brother should suddenly burst into your room, and exclaim, "I have the most unbelievable good news! You are a rich man; So-and-so has left you \$1,000,000!" Why you would say, "I think it is very likely true, for he is so happy about it."

Well, when these angels came from heaven they told the news just as if they believed it; and though I have often wickedly doubted my Lord's good will, I think I never could have doubted it when I heard those angels singing. No, I would say, "The messengers themselves are proof of the truth, for it seems they have heard it from God's lips; they have no doubt about it, for see how joyously they tell the news." Now, poor soul, you that are afraid that God would destroy you, and you that think that God will never have mercy on you, look at the singing angels and doubt if you dare. Do not go to the church of long-faced hypocrites to hear the minister who preaches with a nasal twang, with misery in his face, while he tells you that God has goodwill towards men; I know you won't believe what he says, for he does not preach with joy in his face; he is telling you good news with a grunt, and you are not likely to receive it. But make a beeline to the plain where Bethlehem shepherds sat by night, and when you hear the angels singing out the gospel, by the grace of God on you, you cannot help believing that they feel the preciousness of telling the Good News. Blessed Christmas, that brings such creatures as angels to confirm our faith in God's goodwill to men!

III. I must bring before you the third point. There are some PROPHETIC UTTERANCES contained in these words.

The angels sang "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." But I look around, and what do I see in the wide, wide world? I do not see God honored. I see the heathen bowing down before their idols; I note the Roman Catholic bowing before the rotten rags of his relics, and the ugly figures of his images. I look all about me and I see tyranny lording it over the bodies and souls of men; I see God forgotten; I see a worldly race of mankind pursuing money; I see a bloody race pursuing false gods; I see ambition riding like Nimrod over the land, God forgotten, His name dishonored. And was this what the angels sang about? Is this all that made them sing "Glory to God in the highest?" No! There are brighter days approaching. They sang, "Peace on earth." But I still hear the clear trumpet sound of war; and the cannon's horrid roar: they have not yet turned the sword into a plow, and the spear into a pruning-hook! War still reigns. Is this all that the angels sang about? And while I see wars to the ends of the earth, am I still to believe that this was all the angels expected? No, brethren; the angel's song is loaded with prophecy; it labors in birth with glories. A few more years, and he that lives them out will see why angels sang; a few more years, and He that will come, shall come, and will not delay.

Christ the Lord will come again, and when He comes He will throw the idols from their thrones; He will strike down every kind of heresy and every form of idolatry; He will reign over the whole earth with unlimited authority: He will reign, when the blue heavens have been rolled away. No strife will disturb Messiah's reign, no blood will be shed; they'll destroy the useless weapons of war, and study war no more. The hour is approaching when the temples of the false gods will be shut forever and all the false religions utterly destroyed. The day is coming when the wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; the infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child will put his hand into the viper's nest. The hour approaches; the first streaks of the sunlight have brought hope and some joy into the age in which we live. Look! He comes, with trumpets and with clouds of

glory; He will come for those who are waiting for Him with joyous expectation, whose coming will be glory to His redeemed, and confusion to his enemies. Yes! brethren, when the angels sang this there was an echo through the long aisles of a glorious future. The echo was--

"Hallelujah! Christ the Lord
God Omnipotent will reign."

Yes, and doubtless the angels heard by faith the fullness of the song,

"Hark! the song of jubilee
Loud as mighty thunders' roar,

Or the fullness of the sea,
When it breaks upon the shore."

"Christ the Lord Omnipotent reigns."

IV. Now, I have one more lesson for you, and I will be done. That lesson is PERCEPTIVE.

I wish everybody that celebrates Christmas this year, would keep it as the angels kept it. There are many persons who, when they talk about celebrating Christmas, mean by that, that they would never forget to go to church on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning, yet their way of celebrating the rest of the day is very remarkable; for it would be with gluttony and drunkenness. There are many who think Christmas cannot be celebrated, except with a lot of merriment and festivity in the house, and added to that the noisiness of sin. Now, my brethren, we being true followers of Christ, will not keep the day in any "religious" sense whatever, attaching nothing more to it than to any other day: believing that every day is a Christmas day in the sense that true believers continually celebrate the Incarnation of Christ; yet we must try to set an example for others, showing them how to behave on that day; and especially since the angels give glory to God: let us do the same.

Once more the angels said, "Peace to men," therefore, let us strive if we can to make peace this coming Christmas day. Now, you parents who may

have wayward children--you may not have welcomed them into your homes because they have offended you. Go after them this Christmas. "Peace on earth;" you know: that is a Christmas Carol. Make peace in your family. Now, brother, you have made a vow that you will never speak to your brother again. Go after him and say, "Oh, my dear friend, let us not let the sun go down on our anger." Go after him and give him your hand of fellowship. Now, Mr. Tradesman, you have a rival in your trade, and you have said some very harsh words about him lately. If you don't make the matter right today, or tomorrow, or as soon as you can, then do it for sure on Christmas day. That is the way to truly celebrate Christmas, peace on earth and glory to God. And oh, if you have anything on your conscience, anything that prevents you having peace of mind, then celebrate your Christmas in your closet, praying to God to give you peace; peace on earth, peace in yourself, peace with your fellow men, and peace with your God. And don't think you have properly celebrated that day until you can say,

"O God, With the world, myself, and You
I dare not sleep till peace is made through and through."

And when the Lord Jesus has become your peace, remember, there is another thing, "good will" towards men. Do not try to celebrate Christmas without keeping good will towards men. You are a gentleman, and may even have servants. Well, try and warm their homes and hearts with a large portion of festive food just for them, and if you are men of wealth, remember you have poor people in your neighborhood--clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, and make glad those who mourn. Remember, it is good will towards men. Try if you can, to show them goodwill at this special season; and if you will do that, the poor will say with me, that indeed they wish there were six Christmases in the year.

Let each one of us go from this place determined, that if we have been angry all year long, this Christmas week will be an exception; that if we have complained at everybody last year, this Christmas time we will strive to be kind and affectionate to others; and if we have lived all this year at enmity with God, I pray that by His Spirit He may this Christmas give us peace with Him; and then, indeed, my brother, it will be the merriest Christmas we ever had in all of our lives. Young people, you who are

going home to your father and mother; others of you who are going from your workplaces to your homes--remember what I preached last Christmas season. Go home to your friends, and tell them what the Lord has done for your soul, and that will make a blessed round of stories at the Christmas fire.

If each one of you will tell your parents how the Lord met with you in the quietness of prayer; how, when you left home, you were a lighthearted, wild spirit, but now have come back to love your mother's God, and read your father's Bible. Oh, what a happy Christmas that will make! What more shall I say? May God give you peace with yourselves; may He give you good will towards all your friends, your enemies, and your neighbors; and may he give you grace to give glory to God in the highest. I will say no more, except at the close of this sermon to wish every one of you, the happiest Christmas you ever had in your lives.

"Now with angels around the throne,
Cherubim and seraphim,

And the church, which is one,
Let us expand the solemn hymn;

Glory to the great I AM!
Glory to the Sacrificial Lamb.

Blessing, honor, glory, might,
And dominion infinite,

To the Father of our Lord,
To the Spirit and the Word;

As it was from time before,
Is, and will be evermore."

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A Christmas Question

"To us a child is born, to us a Son is given." Isaiah 9:6

Upon other occasions I have explained the main part of this verse--"the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." But this morning the portion which we will focus our attention on is this, "To us a child is born, to us a Son is given." This is a double sentence, but it has no redundancy. The careful reader will soon discover a distinction; and it is not a distinction without a difference. "To us a child is born, to us a Son is given." Jesus Christ was a child in His human nature--He was born, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. He was truly born, and was certainly a real child, as real as any other child that has ever lived on the face of the earth. Thus, in His humanity He was born a child. But as God's Son, Jesus Christ was never born, for He has eternally existed, He is simply a gift of the Father, given before the beginning of the world, given--not made, being of the same essence as the Father.

The doctrine of the eternal union of Christ in the Trinity must be received as an undoubted truth of our holy Christianity. No one should even try to explain it, for it remains among the deep things of God--one of those solemn mysteries into which the angels dare not look, nor do they desire to pry into it--a mystery which we must not attempt to fathom, for it is utterly beyond the grasp of any finite being. It would be like a gnat trying to drink the ocean, as a finite creature trying to comprehend the Eternal God. A God whom we could fully understand would be no God. If we could grasp Him then He could not be infinite: if we could understand Him, then He would not be divine. Jesus Christ then, is not born to us, but given to us. He is a blessing bestowed on us, "God so loved the world that He 'gave' His one and only 'Son,'" to the world. He was not born into this world as God's Son, but He was "sent," or was given, so that we could clearly perceive the distinction--"To us a child is born, to us a Son is given."

This morning, however, the principal object of my discourse, and indeed, the sole purpose, is to bring out the force of those two little words, "to

us." For you will perceive that here the full force of the passage lies. "To us a child is born, to us a Son is given." The divisions of my sermon are very simple ones:

I. "Is it true?"

II. "If it is true, what then?"

III "If it is not true, what then?"

I. "Is it true?"

Is it true that "to us" a child is born, "to us" a Son is given? It is a fact that a child is born. Upon that I have no argument. We receive it as a fact, more fully established than any other fact in history, that the Son of God became man, was born in Bethlehem, wrapped in cloths, and laid in a manger. It is also a fact, that a Son is given. About that we have no question. The atheist may dispute, but we, professing to be believers in the Scripture, receive it as an undeniable truth, that God has given His one and only Son to be the Savior of men. But the question is this. Is this child born to us? Is He given to us? This is the most important question.

Have we a personal interest in the child that was born at Bethlehem? Do we know that He is our Savior? That He has brought good news to us? That He belongs to us? And that we belong to Him? I declare that this is a matter that requires very serious and intense investigation. It is a very obvious fact, that the very best of Christians are sometimes troubled with questions with regard to their own relationship with Christ, while those who are never troubled at all about the matter are very often simply arrogant deceivers, who have never known Christ nor His salvation. I have often observed that some of the people about whom I felt the most sure of their salvation, were the very persons who were the least sure themselves.

It reminds me of the story of a godly man named Simon Brown, a minister in the olden days in the City of London. He became extremely

sad in his heart, so depressed in his spirit, that at last he conceived the idea that his soul was destroyed. It was all in vain to talk to the good man, you could not persuade him that he had a soul; but all the while he was preaching, and praying, and working, more like a man that had two souls than none. When he preached, his eyes poured forth floods of tears, and when he prayed, there was a divine fervor and heavenly power in every petition. Now it is the same with many Christians. They seem to be the very picture of godliness; their life is praiseworthy, and their conversation heavenly, yet they are always crying--

"This is a point I long to know,
Often it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His or am I not?"

So it does happen, that the best of men will question while the worst of men will presume. Yes, I have seen persons about whose eternal destiny I had serious doubts, whose inconsistencies in life were evident and glaring, yet who talked with assurance of their infallible hope in Christ, as though they believed others were as easily duped as they were. Now, what reason will we give for such foolishness? Learn it from this illustration: You see a number of men riding horses along a narrow road, on the very edge of cliffs overlooking the sea. It is a very dangerous path, for the way is rugged and a tremendous cliff borders the road on the left. But just let the horse's foot slip once and they drop downwards to their death. Notice how cautiously the riders travel, how carefully the horses place their feet. But do you notice in the distance another rider, and at what speed he races along at, as if he were riding in race with Satan? You hold up your hand in an agony of fear, trembling for at any moment his horse's foot may slip, and he would plunge down the side of the cliff; and you say, why is he such a careless rider?

The answer is simple--the man is a blind rider on a blind horse. They cannot see where they are. He thinks he is on a safe road, and therefore that is why he rides so fast. Or to vary the picture; sometimes when persons are asleep, they begin "sleep-walking," and they will climb where others would not think of venturing. Dizzy heights that would cause us to faint seem safe enough to them. In the same way, there are many spiritual

sleep-walkers in our midst, who think that they are awake, but they are not. Their very presumption in venturing to the high places with self-confidence, proves that they are not awake but men who walk and talk in their sleep. It is, then really a serious matter to carefully answer the question whether this child is really born to us, and this Son really given to us?

I will now help you to answer the question.

1. If this child who now lies before the eyes of your faith, wrapped in cloths in Bethlehem's manger, is born "to you," then "you are born again!" For this child is not born to you unless you are born to this child. All who belong to Christ are, in the day of God's favor--the day of His salvation--converted by grace, aroused in their spirit, and made new creatures. All the redeemed [elect] are not yet converted, but they will be. Before the hour of death arrives their nature will be changed, their sins washed away, and they will pass from death to life. If any man tells me that Christ is his redeemer, although he has never experienced regeneration, that man does not know what he is talking about; his Christianity is useless, and his hope a delusion. Only those who are born again can claim the baby in Bethlehem as being theirs.

"But," one says, "how do I know whether I am born again or not?" The answer to this question is a series of questions:

-- Has there been a change in your life by the divine grace "within you?"

-- Are the things that you love in life the very opposite of what they were?

-- Do you now hate the vain things you once admired, and do you seek after that precious pearl which once you despised?

-- Is your heart thoroughly changed within?

-- Can you say that the bent of your desire is changed?

-- Is your face heavenward, and your feet set upon the path of grace?

-- Does your heart that once longed for deep dosages of sin, now long to be holy?

-- Have the pleasures of the world, that you once loved, become as debris and waste to you?

-- Do you only love the pleasures of heavenly things and are you longing to enjoy more of them on earth, that you may be prepared to enjoy the fullness of them in heaven?

-- Are you renewed within?

Mark this, my hearers, the new birth does not consist in washing the outside of the cup, but in cleansing the inner man. It is all in vain to wash the outside of a sepulcher [vault, mausoleum], to make it pure white, and garnish it with fresh flowers; the sepulcher itself must be cleansed. The dead man's bones that lie within that vault of the human heart must be cleansed away. No, they must be made alive. The heart must no longer be a tomb of death, but a temple of life. Is it so with you, my friend? For remember, you may be very different on the outside, but if you are not changed on the inside, this child is not born to you.

But I state another question. Although the main matter of regeneration lies within, yet it manifests itself on the outside. I say, then, has there been a change in you on the exterior? Do you think that others who look at you would be compelled to say, this person is not what he used to be? Do you friends see a change in you? Have they laughed at you for what they think is your fanaticism, your strictness, and your firmness? Do you think that if an angel should follow you into your secret life, into your place of seclusion and see you on your knees, that he would detect something in you which he could never have seen before? For, mark this, my dear friend, there must be a change in the outward life, or else there is no change within.

The proof of the Christian is in the living. To other men, the proof of our conversion is not what we feel, but what we do. To you your feelings may be good enough evidence, but to the minister and others who judge you, the outward walk is the main proof. At the same time, let me observe that a man's outward life may be very much like that of a Christian, and yet there may be no Christianity in him at all. Have you ever seen two

jugglers in the street with swords pretending to fight with one another. See how they cut, and slash, and hack at one another, till you are half afraid there will soon be a murder executed. They seem to be so serious and real in their actions that you are about ready to call the police to the scene. See with what fury that one has aimed a terrific blow at the other one's head, which his comrade expertly warded off by keeping a well-timed guard. Just watch them a minute, and you will see that all these cuts and thrusts come in a prearranged order. There is no heart in the fighting after all. They do not fight so roughly as they would if they were real enemies.

In the same way, I have seen a man pretending to be very angry at sin. But watch him a little while, and you will see it is only a fencer's trick. He does not give his cuts out of order, there is no earnestness in his blows; it is all pretense, it is only a mimic stage-play. The fencers, after they have ended their performance, shake hands with one another, and divide the money which the gapping throng have given them: and this man does the same thing, he shakes his hands with the devil in private, and the two deceivers share the plunder. The hypocrite and the devil are very good friends after all, and they mutually rejoice over their profits: the devil leering because he has won the soul of the one who professed to be a Christian, and the hypocrite laughs because he has made his gain. Be careful then, that your outward life is not a mere stage-play, but that your hatred of sin is real and intense; and that you strike right and left, as though you meant to kill the monster, and toss its limbs to the winds of heaven.

I will just ask one more question. If you have been born again, there is another way to test your salvation. Not only is your inward self altered, and your outward self too, but the very root and principle of your life must become totally new. When we are in sin we live to please ourselves, but when we are made new through Christ we live to please God. While we are unregenerate, our principle is to seek our own pleasure, our own advancement; but that man is not truly born again who does not live with a far different aim from this. Change a man's principles, and you will change his feelings, and you will change his actions. Now, grace changes the principles of a man. It lays the ax at the root of the tree. It does not

saw away at some big limb, it does not try to change the sap; but it gives it a new root, and plants us in fresh soil. The man's inmost self, the deep rocks of his principles on which the topsoil of his actions rest, the soul of his manhood [or her womanhood] is thoroughly changed, and he is a new creature in Christ.

"But," someone says, "I see no reason why I must be born again." Oh, poor creature, it is because you have never really seen yourself. Did you ever see a man in the mirror of the Word of God--what a strange monster he is. Do you know, a man by nature has his heart where his feet ought to be--that is to say, his heart is set on the earth, and stranger mystery still, his heels are where his heart should be--that is to say, he is kicking against the God of heaven when he ought to be setting his affections on things above. Man by nature when he sees clearest, only looks down, can only see what is beneath him, he cannot see the things which are above; and strange to say the sunlight of heaven blinds him; he does not look for light from heaven. The earth is to him his heaven, and he sees suns in its muddy pools and stars in its filth. He is, in fact, a man turned upside down. The fall has so ruined our nature, that the most monstrous thing on the face of the earth is a fallen man. The peoples of long ago used to paint monsters, dragons, ghosts, and all kinds of hideous things; but if a skillful hand could paint man accurately, none of us would look at the picture, for it is a sight that none ever saw except the lost in hell; and that is one part of their intolerable pain, that they are compelled always to look at themselves. Now, don't you see that you must be born again, and unless you are, this child is not born "to you."

2. But I go forward. If this child is born to you, you are a "child," and the question arises, are you one? Man grows from childhood up to manhood naturally; in grace men grow from manhood down to childhood; and the nearer we come to true childhood, the nearer we come to the image of Christ. Brothers and sisters, can you say that you have been made into children? Do you take God's Word just as it stands, simply because your heavenly Father says so? Are you content to believe mysteries without demanding to have them explained? Are you ready to sit in the infant class, and be a little one? Are you willing to hang upon the breast of the church, and suck in the unadulterated milk of the Word--never

questioning for a moment what your divine Lord reveals, but believing it on His own authority, whether it seemed to be above reason, or beneath reason, or even contrary to reason?

Now, "unless you change and become like little children," this child is not born to you; unless you are humble like a little child, teachable, obedient, pleased with your Father's will and willing to devote everything to Him, there is serious doubt whether this child is born "to you." But what a pleasing sight it is to see a man converted and made into a little child. Many times my heart has leaped for joy, when I have seen a giant agnostic who used to reason against Christ, who used to speak the most evil words against Christ's people, then come by divine grace to believe the gospel. That man sits down and weeps, feels the full power of salvation, and from that time forward drops all his questionings, and becomes the very opposite of what he was. He thinks of himself as the lowest of the lowest believer. He is content to do the lowliest work for the church of Christ, and takes his place--not with the great godly men, as a mighty Christian thinker--but with Mary as a simple learner, sitting at Jesus' feet, to hear and learn of Him. If you are not children, then this child is not born to you.

3. And now let us take the second sentence and ask a question or two. Is this Son given to us? I pause a minute to beg your personal attention. I am trying, if I may, so to preach that I may make you all question yourselves. I pray that you none of you exempt yourselves from the ordeal, but let each one ask himself, is it true that "to me a Son is given?" Now, if this Son is given "to you, you are a son yourself." "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." "Christ became a Son so that in all things He might be made like His brethren." The Son of God is not mine to enjoy, to love, to delight in, unless I am a son of God too. Now, my friend, do you have a "fear" of God--a respectful fear, a fear which a child has or else it would grieve its parent? Do you have a child's "love" of God? Do you "trust" Him as your father, your provider, and your friend? Do you have in your heart "The Spirit of sonship. And by Him do you cry, Abba, Father?" Are there times when you are on your knees that you can say, "My Father and my God." Does the Spirit bear witness with your spirit

that you are born of God? And while this witness is being confirmed in your heart, does your heart fly up to your Father and to your God, in ecstasy of delight to embrace Him who long ago has embraced you in the covenant of His love, in the arms of His wonderful grace? Now, listen, if you do not sometimes enjoy the spirit of sonship, if you are not a son or daughter of God, then don't deceive yourself, the Son is not given to you.

4. And, then, to put it another way, if to us a Son is given, then "we are given to the Son." Now what do you have to say to this question? Are you given completely given to Christ? Do you feel that you have nothing on earth to live for except to glorify Him? Can you say in your heart, "Great God in heaven, if I am not deceived then I am wholly Yours." Are you ready today to renew your vow of commitment to Christ? Can you say, "Take me! All that I am and all that I have, will be forever yours. I give up all my possessions, all my powers, all my time, and all my hours; and I will be Yours--absolutely and unconditionally Yours." "You are not your own; you were bought at a price." And if this Son of God is given to you, you will have consecrated yourself wholly to Him; and you will feel that His honor is your life's goal, that His glory is the one great desire of your panting spirit. Now is it true, my friend? I pray that you would ask yourself the question, and do not deceive yourself with the answer. I will repeat the four different proofs again:

-- If to me a child is born, then I have been born again.

-- As a result of my new birth I am now a child.

-- If a Son has been given to me, then I am a son.

-- I am given to that Son who is given to me.

I have tried to put these tests in the way that the text would suggest them. I pray that you carry them home with you. If you do not remember the words, yet please remember to examine your heart, and see whether you can say, "To me a Son is given." For indeed, if Christ is not my Christ, He is of little worth to me. If I cannot say He loved me and gave Himself "for me," then what use is the value of His righteousness, or all the fullness of His atonement [redemption] on the Cross? To have food at the store does

me no good if I am hungry and can't get it, I will starve although the stores are full of food. It is good that the rivers are overflowing with clear water, but if I am in a desert and can't reach the stream, if I can hear it in the distance and am lying down dying of thirst, the rippling of the brook only helps to tantalize me while I die in dark despair.

It would be better for you, my hearers, to have perished as pagans, to have gone to your graves in some far off godless land, than to live where the name of Christ is continuously sung in the churches, and where His glory is exalted, and yet to go down to your tombs without any interest in Him, unblessed by His gospel, unwashed by His blood, unclothed with His robe of righteousness. God help you, that you may be blessed in Him, and may sing sweetly, "To us a child is born, to us a Son is given."

II. "If it is true, what then?"

This brings me to my second principal, upon which I will be brief. Is it true? If it is true, what then? If it is true, why am I doubtful today? Why is my spirit questioning? Why don't I realize the fact? My friend, if the Son is given to you, how is it that you are today asking whether you are Christ's or not? Why do you labor to make your calling and election sure? Why do you remain in the plains of doubt? Get up, get up to the high mountains of confidence, and never rest till you can say without a fear that you are mistaken, "I know that my Redeemer lives. I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him." I may have a large number of persons here today that are uncertain as to whether Christ is theirs or not. Oh my dear hearers, do not rest unless you know positively that Christ is yours, and that you are Christ's.

Suppose you should see in tomorrow's (Christmas day) newspaper a notice that some rich man had left you an immense estate. Suppose, as you read it, you were well aware that the person mentioned was a relative of yours, and that it likely was true. It may be you have planned for Christmas day to be a family gathering, and you are expecting your brother John and his wife Mary and their little ones to dine with you. But I would guess that you would rather miss the Christmas dinner in order to go and determine whether the fact were really true. "Oh," you would say to John and Mary, "I am sure that I would enjoy my Christmas dinner

better if I were quite sure about this matter of the inheritance;" and all day, if you did not go, you would be on pins and needles until you knew whether it was a true fact or not.

Now there is a announcement made today, and it is absolutely true, that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners. The question for you is whether He has saved you, and whether you are entitled to share in His offer of salvation. I beg you, not to allow yourself to rest until you have read the proclamation of salvation to see if you have been given clear title to a permanent home in heaven. Will you allow your eternal destiny to be a matter of uncertainty to you? Is heaven or hell involved in this matter, and will you rest until you know which of these will be your everlasting destiny? Are you content while there is a question whether God loves you, or whether He is angry with you? Can you be at ease while you remain in doubt as to whether you are condemned to sin, or justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus?

Get up, I beg you by the living God, and for your own soul's safety, get up and read the records. Search and look, and try and test yourself, to see whether it is true or not. For if it is true, why wouldn't we know it? If the Son is given to me, why wouldn't I be sure of it? If the child is born to me, why wouldn't I know it for certain, that I may even now live in the enjoyment of my privilege--the value of which I will never know completely, until I arrive in glory?

Again, if it is true, let me ask another question. "Why are we sad?" I am looking on faces right now that appear to be full of smiles, but perhaps the smile covers an aching heart. Brother and sister, why are we sad this morning, if to us a child is born, if to us a Son is given? Listen, listen to the cry! It is, "It is harvest time! It is harvest time!" See the young maidens dance, and the young men rejoicing. And why all this celebration? Because they are storing up the precious harvest of the earth, they are gathering into their barns wheat which will soon be consumed. And what about us, brothers and sisters, we have the bread which gives us eternal life and are we still unhappy? Doesn't the world rejoice when it has harvested its corn, then why don't we rejoice when, "To us a child is born, and to us a Son is given?"

Listen, to the distant sounds. Why all this ringing of the bells in the church steeples? There is a prince born; therefore there is this salute, and therefore the bells are ringing. Yes, Christians, ring the bells of your hearts, fire the salute of your most joyous songs, "To us a child is born, to us a Son is given." Dance, O my heart, and ring out peals of gladness! You drops of blood within my veins, dance every one of you! Oh! All my nerves become harp strings, and let gratitude touch you with angelic fingers! And you, my tongue, shout--shout to His praise, who has said to you--"To us a child is born, to you a Son is given." Wipe that tear away! Come, stop that sighing! Hush your murmuring. What does it matter that you are poor? "To you a child is born." What does it matter that you are sick? "To you a Son is given." What does it matter that you are a sinner? For this child will take the sin away, and this Son will wash and make you fit for heaven. I say, it is true,

"Lift up your heart, lift up your voice,
Rejoice aloud! You saints rejoice!"

But, once more, if it is true, what then? "Why are our hearts so cold?" And why is it that we do so little for Him who has done so much for us? Jesus, are You mine? Am I saved? How is it that I love you so little? Why is it that when I preach I am not more passionate, and when I pray why am I not more fervent? How is it that we give so little to Christ who gave Himself for us? How is it that we serve Him in such a mediocre way, when He serves us so perfectly? He consecrated Himself wholly; why is it that our consecration is imperfect and incomplete? We are continually honoring ourselves and not Him?

O beloved brethren, yield yourselves up this morning. What have you got in this world? "Oh," says one, "I have nothing; I am poor and penniless." Give yourself to Christ. You have heard the story of the pupils of a Greek philosopher. On a certain day it was the custom to give to the philosopher a present. One came and gave him gold. Another could not bring him gold but brought him silver. One brought him a robe, and another some delicacy of food. But one of them came up, and said, "Oh, sir, I am poor, I have nothing to give to you, but yet I will give you something better than all these have given; I give you myself." Now, if you have gold and silver, if you have plenty of the world's wealth, then give to Christ in proportion

as you have received; but take care, above all, that you give yourself to Him, and let your cry be from this day forth,

"Do I not love you dearest Lord?
Oh search my heart and see,
And turn each cursed idol out
That dares to rival Thee."

III. "If it is not true, what then?"

Well, now I am almost done, but please give me your solemn, very solemn attention, while I make my last point--If Christ is not yours, what then? Dear hearer, I cannot tell where you are--but wherever you may be in this building, the eyes of my heart are looking for you, that when they have seen you, they may weep over you--miserable wretch, without a hope, without Christ, without God. To you there is no Christmas joy; for you no child is born; to you no Son is given. It is a sad story of the poor men and women, who the week before last, fell down dead in our streets because of the cruel hunger and bitter cold. But far more tragic is your fate, far more terrible will be your condition in the day when you will cry for a drop of water to cool your burning tongue, and it will be denied you; when you will seek for death, for the cold grim death--seek for him as for a friend, and yet you will not find him. For the fire of hell will not consume you, nor its terrors devour you. You will long to die, yet you will linger in eternal death--dying every hour, yet never receiving the much coveted release from your suffering.

What will I say to you this morning? Oh! Master, help me to speak the right words for this occasion. I beg you my friends, if Christ is not yours this morning, may God the Spirit help you to do what I now command you to do. First of all, confess you sins; not in my ear, nor into the ear of any living man. Go to your bedroom and confess that you are a vile person. Tell Jesus you are a condemned sinner without His sovereign grace. But don't think there is any merit in confession. There is none. All your confessions can't earn forgiveness, though God has promised to forgive the person who confesses his sin and abandons it [turns away from it].

Imagine that some creditor had a debtor who owed him five hundred thousand dollars. He calls on him and says, "I demand my money." But the debtor says, "I owe you nothing." That man will be arrested and thrown into prison. However, his creditor says, "I wish to be merciful to you; make a frank confession, and I will forgive you all the debt." "Well," says the man, "I do acknowledge that I owe you two hundred dollars." "No," he says, "that will not do." "Well, sir, I confess I owe you two hundred thousand dollars;" and by degrees he comes to confess that he owes the five hundred thousand. Is there any merit in that confession? No; but yet you could see that no creditor would think of forgiving a debt which was not acknowledged.

It is the least that you can do, to acknowledge your sin; and though there is no merit in the confession, yet true to His promise, God will give you forgiveness through Christ. That is one piece of advice. I pray that you take it. Do not throw it to the winds; do not leave it as soon as you leave this place. Take it with you, and may this day become a confession-day to many of you. But next, when you have made a confession, I beg that you renounce yourself. Perhaps you have been resting in some hope, that you would make yourself better, and so save yourself. Give up that mistaken fantasy. You have seen the silkworm: it will spin, and spin, and spin, and then it will die where it has spun itself a shroud. And all your good works are but a spinning for yourself a robe for your dead soul. You can do nothing by your finest prayers, your finest tears, or your finest works, to merit eternal life.

The Christian who is truly converted to God, will tell you that he cannot live a holy life by himself. If the ship in the sea can't steer itself, do you think the wood in the carpenter's shop can put itself together, and make itself into a ship, and then go out to sea and sail across the ocean? Yet this is just what you imagine. The Christian who is God's workmanship can do nothing, and yet you think that you can do something. Now, give up "self." God help you to strike a black mark through every idea of what you can do.

Lastly, then, I pray God help you hear, my dear friends, when you have confessed your sin and given up all hope of salvation, go to the place where Jesus died in agony. Go then in meditation to Calvary. There He

hangs. It is the middle cross of the three. I think that I see Him now. I see His poor face gaunt, and His face more marred than that of any other man. I see the drops of blood still standing around His pierced temples--marks of that rugged crown of thorns. Yes, I see His naked body--naked to His shame. We can count all of His bones. See His hands ripped open with the rough iron, and His feet torn with the nails. The nails have ripped through His flesh. There is now not only the holes through which the nails were driven, but the weight of His body has fallen on his feet, and see the iron is tearing through His flesh. And now the weight of His body hangs on His arms, and the nails there are severing through the tender nerves.

Listen! The earth is startled! He cries out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Oh, sinner, was there ever a shriek like that before? God had forsaken Him. His God had ceased to be gracious to Him. His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. But listen, again He cries, "I am thirsty." Give Him water! Give Him water! You holy women let Him drink. But no, His murderers torture Him. They thrust into His mouth the vinegar mixed with gall--the bitter with the sharp, the vinegar and the gall. At last, hear Him, sinner, for here is your hope. I see Him bow His injured head that drips with blood. The King of heaven dies. The God who made the earth has become a man, and the man is about to die. Listen to Him! He cries, "It is finished!" And He gives up His spirit. The atonement is finished, the price is paid, the bloody ransom acknowledged, the sacrifice is accepted. "It is finished!"

Sinner, believe in Christ. Throw yourself at His feet. Take Him to be your all in all--submit your will to His--He is your King! Throw your trembling arms around that bleeding body. Now sit at the foot of that cross, and feel the dropping of the precious blood. And as each one of you go out of this place today, say in your hearts,

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall,
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all."

God grant you grace to do so for Jesus Christ's sake. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

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No Room for Christ in the Inn

"She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."
Luke 2:7

It was necessary that Our Lord Jesus Christ would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, which is located in the land of Judah, for this was in accordance to the Word of the Lord which was spoken by His servant Micah, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me One who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (Micah 5:2). But how could one bring about public recognition of the ancestry of an obscure carpenter and an unknown maiden? How would the local innkeepers know anything about these two humble persons?

The second fact is that Mary lived in Nazareth, which is in Galilee, and there seemed to be every probability that the birth would take place there; indeed, the time of her delivery was so near that, unless absolutely compelled, she would not likely undertake such a long and tedious journey to the southern province of Judea. How are these two realities to be harmonized? How do you get this obscure couple living in Nazareth to make the hard journey to Bethlehem when Mary is about to give birth? How do you get the official stamp of the Roman empire to be affixed to the pedigree of the coming Son of David, and to make Bethlehem the place of the nativity?

A little tyrant, Herod, in a show of independent spirit, offends the greater tyrant, Augustus. Augustus informs him that he will no longer treat him

as a friend, but as a slave; and although Herod makes the most humiliating submission, and his friends at the Roman court intercede for him, yet Augustus, to show his displeasure, orders a census to be taken of all the Jewish people, in order to make preparations for a contemplated taxation, which was not carried out till some ten years later. Even the winds and the waves are not more fickle than a tyrant's will; but the Ruler of the wind and the waves knows how to rule the perverse spirits of princes. The Lord our God has a bridle for the wildest war horse, and a hook for the most terrible sea monster.

Dictatorial Caesars are but puppets moved with invisible strings, mere slaves to the King of kings. Augustus must become offended with Herod; he is compelled to tax the people; it is imperative that a census be taken; no, it is necessary that inconvenient, harsh, and tyrannical regulations would be published, and every person must return to the town to which he was reputed to belong; thus Mary is brought to Bethlehem, Jesus Christ is born as prophesied, and, moreover, He is recognized officially as being descended from David by the fact that his mother came to Bethlehem as being of that lineage, remained there, and returned to Galilee without having her claims questioned, although the jealousy of all the women of the clan would have been aroused had an intruder ventured to claim a place among the few females to whom the birth of the Messiah had been prophesied to occur. Note the wisdom by the God of providence in the way everything here was so well orchestrated.

When all the people of the house of David were thus compelled to go to Bethlehem, the sparse accommodations of the little town was soon exhausted. Doubtless friends and relatives took in their out-of-town guests until their houses were full, but Joseph had no such willing relatives in the town. There was the "caravansary," which was provided in every village, where free accommodations were given to travelers; this too was full, for coming from a distance, and compelled to travel slowly because of Mary's condition, the humble couple arrived late in the day. The rooms within the great brick square (caravansary) were already occupied with families; there remained no better lodging, even for a woman experiencing birth pains, than one of the crude and rough places appropriate for animals. The stall of the donkey was the only place where

the child could be born. By hanging a curtain at its front, and perhaps tying up the animal on the outside to block the passage, the needed seclusion could be obtained, and here, in the stable, was the King of Glory born, and He was laid in the manger.

My business this morning is to lead your meditations to the stable at Bethlehem, that you may see this great sight--the Savior in the manger, and think over the reason for this lowly place of birth--"because there was no room for them in the inn."

I. I will begin by remarking that "There were other reasons why Christ should be laid in a manger."

1. I think it was intended "to clearly show His humiliation."

He came, according to prophecy, to be "despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering." He was to be without "beauty or majesty," "like a root out of dry ground." Would it had been fitting that a man who was to die naked on the cross should be robed in purple, as a King, at his birth? Wouldn't it have been inappropriate that the Redeemer who was to be buried in a borrowed tomb would be born anywhere but in the humblest shed, and housed anywhere but in the most lowly manner? The manger and the cross standing at the two extremes of the Savior's earthly life seem most fit and appropriate to each other. He is to wear through life the clothes of a peasant; He is to associate with fishermen; the meek are to be His disciples; the cold mountains are often to be His only bed; He is to say, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head;" nothing, therefore, could be more fitting than that in His time of humiliation, when He laid aside His glory, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He should be laid in a manger.

2. By being in a manger "He was declared to be the king of the poor."

Without a doubt, the poor were immediately able to recognize His relationship to them, from the position in which they found Him. I believe it excited feelings of the tenderest brotherly kindness in the minds of the shepherds, when the angel said, "This will be a sign to you: You will

find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." In the eyes of the poor, royal robes do not excite affection, but a man in their own garb attracts their confidence. Workingmen will, with strong resolution cleave to a leader of their own class in life, believing in Him because He knows their labors, sympathizes with their sorrows, and feels an interest in all their concerns. Great commanders have easily won the hearts of their soldiers by sharing their hardships and roughing it as if they belonged to the ranks.

The King of Men who was born in Bethlehem, was not exempted in His infancy from the common calamities of the poor, no, His circumstance was even worse than theirs. I think I hear the shepherds comment on the manger-birth, "Ah!" said one to his fellow, "then He will not be like Herod the tyrant; He will remember the manger and feel for the poor; poor helpless infant, I feel a love for Him even now, what miserable accommodation this cold world yields to its Savior. It is not a Caesar that is born today; He will never trample down our fields with his armies, or slaughter our flocks for his countries, He will be the poor man's friend, the people's monarch; according to the words of our shepherd-king [David], 'He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy.'" Surely the shepherds, the poor of the earth, perceived at once that here was the common king; noble in descent, but still as the Word has referred to Him, "a young man from among the people" (Psalm 89:19).

Great Prince of Peace! The manger was Your royal cradle! There you were presented to all nations as prince of our race, before whose presence there is neither Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, savage, slave or free; but You are Lord of all. Kings, your gold and silver would have been lavished on Him if you would had known that He was the Lord of Glory.

3. Further, being laid in a manger, He did, "give an invitation to the most humble to come to Him."

We might tremble to approach a throne, be we cannot fear to approach a manger. Had we first seen the Master riding in a stately manner through the streets of Jerusalem with garments laid in His path, and the palm-

branches strewed, and people crying "Hosanna!" we might have thought, though even the thought would have been wrong, that He was unapproachable. Even there, riding on a donkey, He was so meek and lowly, that the young children clustered around Him with their boyish "Hosanna!" Never could there be a being more approachable than Christ. No rough guards pushed poor people away; no array of arrogant friends were allowed to keep away the persistent widow of the man who came shouting and begging that his son might be made well; the hem of His garment was always trailing where sick folk could reach it, and he Himself had a hand always ready to touch the disease, an ear to catch the faintest sounds of misery, a soul going out everywhere in rays of mercy, even as the light of the sun streams out everywhere beyond itself.

By being laid in a manger He proved Himself a priest taken from among men, one who has suffered like His brethren, and therefore can understand our weaknesses. It was said of Him, "He eats with tax collectors and 'sinners'" Even as an infant, by being laid in a manger, He was shown as the sinner's friend. Come to Him, all you who are weary and burdened! Come to Him all you who are broken in spirit, you who are humble in soul! Come to Him, all you who despise yourselves and are hated by others! Come to Him, traitor and prostitute! Come to Him, thief and drunkard! In the manger there He lies, unguarded from your touch and unshielded from your gaze. Bow the knee, kiss the Son of God; accept Him as your Savior, for He puts Himself into that manger that you may approach Him. The throne of Solomon might awe you, but the manger of the Son of David invites you to come.

4. I think there is yet another mystery. Remember, brethren, that this place was "free to everyone;" it was an inn, and please remember the inn in this case was not like our hotels, where accommodation and provision must be paid for. In the early and simple ages of the world every man considered it an honor to entertain a stranger; later, as traveling became more common, many desired to share the honor and pleasure with their neighbors; wherefore they could continue the dignity of hospitality? As time moved on, one person was appointed in each town and village, and was expected to entertain strangers in the name of the rest of the town. But as the ages grew less simple, and the pure glow of brotherly love

cooled down, the only provision made was the erection of a huge square block, in the town (caravansary), arranged into rooms for the travelers, the guests were on the second floor and the bottom floor was reserved for the animals, and here, with a certain provision of water and in some cases chopped straw for the animals, the traveler would make himself as comfortable as he could. He did not have to purchase admittance to the caravansary, for it was free to all, and the stable especially so. Now, beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the stable of the inn to show how free He is to all who come to Him. The Gospel is preached to every creature and no one is shut out. We may say of the of the invitations of Holy Scripture,

"None are excluded but those
Who exclude themselves;
Welcome to the educated and polite,
The ignorant and the rude.

Though Jesus' grace can save the prince,
The poor may take their share;
No mortal has a excuse
To perish in despair."

Exclusions of certain classes are unknown here, and the prerogatives of social class are not acknowledged. No forms of etiquette are required in entering a stable; it cannot be an offense to enter the stable of a public caravansary. So, if you desire to come to Christ you may come to Him just as you are; you may come "now." Whoever among you has the desire in his heart to trust Christ is free to do it. Jesus is free to you; He will receive you; He will welcome you with gladness, and to show this, I think the young child was cradled in a manger. We know that sinners often imagine that they are shut out. Oftentimes the convicted conscience will write bitter things against itself and deny its part and allotment in the mercy that is available. Brother, if "God" has not shut you out, do not shut yourself out. Until you can find it written in the Bible that you may not trust Christ; till you can quote a passage in which it is written that He is not able to save you, I pray you listen to the passages where it is written, "He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him." Presume on that promise: come to Christ in the strength and faith of it,

and you will find Him free to all who come.

5. We have not yet exhausted the reasons why the Son of Man was laid in a manger. It was at the manger that "the animals were fed."

Is there a mystery here in that the Savior is laid where weary animals receive their food? Yes, there are some men who have become so brutal through sin, so utterly depraved by their lusts, that to their own consciences everything human like has departed, but even to such the remedies of Jesus, the Great Physician, will apply. We are constantly reading in our papers of men who are called hardened and hopeless, and it is fashionable now to demand that these men should be treated with the utmost severity. Some few years ago all the world went crazy with a counterfeit compassion, crying out that gentleness would reform the brutal thief; now the tide has shifted, and everybody is demanding the abandonment of the present system of compassion. I am no advocate for treating criminals lightly; let their sin bring them a fair share of pain; but if by any means they can be reformed, I pray that we will try. Beware, fellow-citizens, beware of restoring the old idea that men can sin beyond hope of reformation, or you will generate criminals worse than those which now trouble us.

I believe our Lord was laid in the manger where the beasts were fed, to show "that even beast-like men may come to him and live." No creature can be so degraded that Christ cannot lift it up. It may fall, and seem to most certainly fall to hell, but the long and strong arm of Christ can reach it even in its most desperate degradation; He can bring it up from apparently hopeless ruin. If there is one who has strolled in here this morning whom society abhors, and who abhors himself, my Master in the stable with the beasts presents Himself as able to save the vilest of the vile, and to accept the worst of the worst even now. Believe in Him and He will make you a new creature.

6. But as Christ was laid where animals were fed, you will remember that after He was gone "animals fed there again." It was only His presence which could glorify the manger, and here we learn that if Christ were taken away "the world would go back to its former heathen darkness."

Civilization itself would die out, at least that part of it which really civilizes man, if the religion of Jesus could be extinguished. If Christ were taken away from the human heart, the most holy person would become debased again, and those who claim kinship with angels would soon prove that they have relationships to devils. The manger would still be a manger for animals, if the Lord of Glory were withdrawn, and we should go back to our sins and our lusts if Christ should once take away His grace and leave us to ourselves. For these reasons which I have mentioned, I think, Christ was laid in a manger.

II. But still the text says that He was laid in a manger because there was no room for Him in the inn, and this leads us to the second point, "That there were other places besides the inn which had no room for Christ."

"The palaces of emperors and the halls of Kings afforded the royal stranger no refuge?" Yes! My brethren, seldom is there room for Christ in palaces! How could the kings of the earth receive the Lord? He is the Prince of Peace, and they delight in war! He breaks their bows and cuts their spears in half; He burns their war-chariots in the fire. How could kings accept the humble Savior? They love grandeur and pomp, and He is all simplicity and meekness. He is a carpenter's son, and the fisherman's companion. How can princes find room for the newborn monarch? Why He teaches us to do to others as we would have them do to us, and this is a thing which kings would find very hard to reconcile with the dishonest tricks of politics and the greedy plans of ambition. O great ones of the earth, I am a little astonished that amid your glories, and pleasures, and wars, and councils, you forget the Anointed, and throw out the Lord of All. There is no room for Christ with the kings. Look throughout the kingdoms of the earth now, and with only a few exceptions it is still true, "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against His Anointed One." In heaven we will see here and there a redeemed king from the earth; but oh, how few, for it is written to Christians, "Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth." State-rooms, cabinets, throne-rooms, and royal palaces, are frequented by Christ about as often as the deadly jungles and swamps by the cautious traveler. He frequents humble homes far more often than regal residences, for there is

no room for Jesus Christ in regal halls.

"When the Eternal leaves the skies
To visit earthly things,
With divine scorn He turns His eyes
From towers of arrogant kings.

He bids His awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul
With pleasure in His eyes."

But there were "senators, there were forums of political discussion, there were the places where the representatives of the people make the laws," was there no room for Christ there? Yes! My brethren, none, and to this day there is very little room for Christ in government. How seldom is Christianity recognized by politicians! Of course a State-religion, if it will consent to be a weak, submissive, powerless thing, a lion with its teeth all pulled, its mane shaven completely off, and its claws all removed--yes, that may be recognized; but the true Christ and they that follow Him and dare to obey His laws in an evil generation, what room is there for such a people? Christ and His gospel--is not given a second glance. Who pleads for Jesus in the Senate? Who quotes His golden rule as a direction for government leaders, or preaches Christ-like forgiveness as a rule for national policy? One or two will give Him a good word, but if it be put to the vote whether the Lord Jesus should be obeyed or not, it will surely be defeated. Parties, politics, status-seekers, and pleasure-seekers exclude the Representative of Heaven from a place among representatives of Earth.

Might there be found some room for Christ "in what is called high society?" Wasn't there any in Bethlehem that were very respectable, who kept themselves from the common multitude; persons of reputation and standing--couldn't they find room for Christ? Dear friends, almost without exception there is no room for Him in what is called high society. There is room for all the silly little forms by which men and women choose to distinguish themselves as "upper class;" room for the vain niceties of etiquette; room for frivolous conversation; room for the

adoration of the body; there is room for the setting up of this and that as the idol of the hour, but there is too little room for Christ, and it is far from fashionable to follow the Lord fully. The Coming of Christ would be the last thing which high society would desire; the very mention of His name in a loving manner would cause a strange sensation. Should you begin to talk about the things of Christ in many a circle, you would be tabooed at once. "I will never ask that man to my house again," so-and-so would say, "if he must bring his religion with him." Folly, and finery, rank and honor, jewels and glitter, frivolity and fashion, all report that there is no room for Jesus.

But is there room for Him "in the business world?" Can't He be taken to the places of commerce? Here are the store owners of a nation of stores--isn't there room for Christ here? Dear friends, how little of the spirit, and life, and doctrine of Christ can be found here! The trader finds it inconvenient to be too scrupulous; the merchant often discovers that if he is to make a fortune he must violate his conscience. How many are there--well, I will not say that they tell lies directly, but still, still--I had better say it plainly--they do lie indirectly with a vengeance. Who doesn't know as he shops in the city that there are many liars around? For almost everywhere products are advertised as "The cheapest anywhere," which can hardly be; for surely they cannot all be the cheapest! What deceptive practices some indulge in! What false advertising! What cunning and sleight of hand! What woes would my Master pronounce on some of you if He looked into your store-windows, or stood behind your counters. Bankruptcies, swindlings, frauds are so abundant that in many cases there is no room for Jesus in the mart or the shop.

Then there are "the colleges and the universities," surely they will receive Him. The wise men will find in Him incarnate wisdom; He, who as a youth is to become the teacher of scholars, who will sit down and ask them questions and receive their answers, surely He will find room at once among such educated men--men of sense and intellect will surely honor Him. "Room for Him, along with Socrates and Plato!" No, dear friends, it is not so; there is very little room for Christ in colleges and universities, very little room for Him in the seats of learning. How often learning helps men to raise objections to Christ! Too often learning is the

forge where the nails are made for Christ's crucifixion; too often human intelligence has become the craftsman who has made the spear and shaft with which His heart would be pierced. We must say it, that philosophy, has done much harm to Christ, and seldom has ever served His cause. A few with splendid talents, a few of the erudite and profound have bowed like children at the feet of the Babe of Bethlehem, and have been honored in bowing there, but too many, conscious of their knowledge, stiff and stern in their conceit of wisdom, have said, "Who is Christ that we should acknowledge Him?" They found no room for Him in the schools.

But there was surely one place where He could go--it was "the Sanhedrin," where the religious elders sit. Or could He not find a place of welcome in the priestly chamber where the priests assemble with the Levites? Wasn't there room for Him in the temple or the synagogue? No, He found no shelter there; it was there, His whole life long, that He found His most ferocious enemies. Not the common multitude, but the priests were the instigators of His death; the priests moved the people to say, "Not this man, but Barabbas." The priests paid out their shekels to bribe the popular voice, and then Christ was hounded to His death. Surely there ought to have been room for Him in the Church of His own people; but there was not.

Too often in the priestly church, when once it becomes recognized and achieves dignity, there is no room for Christ. I don't allude to any one denomination, but take the whole sweep of Christendom, and it is strange that when the Lord comes to His own--they will not receive Him. The most accursed enemies of true Christianity have been the men who pretend to be it advocates. It is often the bishops who undermine faith in God's Word. Who burned the martyrs, and made fields of blood, a burning fiery furnace, a great altar for the Most High God? Why, those who professed to be anointed of the Lord, who had received Episcopal blessing. Who put John Bunyan in prison? Who chased such men as Owen and the Puritans from their pulpits? Who, but the professed messengers of heaven and the priests of God? Who have hunted the baptized saints in every land, and hunt them still today in many countries? The priests, the priests, there is no room for Christ with the prophets of Baal, the servants of Babylon. The false laborers that are not

Christ's shepherds, and do not love His sheep, have always been the most ferocious enemies of our God and of His Christ. There is no room for Him where His name is chanted in solemn hymns and His image lifted up amid smoke of incense. Go wherever you will, and there is no space for the Prince of Peace but with the humble and repentant spirits which by grace He prepares to yield Him shelter.

III. But now for our third point, "The inn itself had no room for him;" and this was the main reason why He must be laid in a manger.

What can we find in modern times which stands in the place of the inn? Well, there is "public sentiment free to all" In this free land, men speak what they like, and there is a public opinion on every subject; and you know there is free toleration in this country to everything--permit me to say, toleration to everything but Christ. You will discover that the persecuting-spirit is alive and well. There are still men at whom it is most fashionable to scoff at. We never scoff at Christians nowadays; we do not sneer at that respectable title, lest we would lose our own honor; we don't nowadays talk against the followers of Jesus under that name. No; but we have found out a way of doing it more safely. There is a pretty word of modern invention--a very pretty word--the word "Sectarian." Do you know what it means?

A sectarian means a true Christian; a man who can afford to keep a conscience, and does not mind suffering for it; a man who, whatever he finds to be in the Bible, believes it, and acts upon it, and is zealous for it. I believe that the men aimed at under the term, "sectarian," are the true followers of Christ, and that the sneers and jeers, and all the nonsense that you are always reading and hearing about, is really aimed at the Christian, the true Christian, only he is disguised and nick-named by the word sectarian. I wouldn't give you a penny for your Christianity, no, not even a rusty nail, unless you will sometimes win that title. If God's Word be true, every bit of it, then we should act on it; and whatever the Lord commands, we should diligently keep and obey, remembering that our Master tells us if we break one of the least of His commandments, and teach men to do so, then we will be least in His kingdom. We ought to be very watchful, very anxious, that we obey even in the minute details of our Savior's laws, having our eyes focused on Him. But if you do this, you

will find you are not tolerated, and you will get the cold shoulder in society. A zealous Christian will find a real cross to carry nowadays, as in the days of Simon of Cyrene.

If you will hold your tongue, if you will let sinners perish, if you will never endeavor to spread your faith, if you will silence all witnessing for truth, if, in fact, you will renounce all the attributes of a Christian, if you will cease to be what a Christian must be, then the world will say, "Ah! That's right; this is the religion we like." But if you will believe, believe firmly, and if you let your belief actuate your life, and if your belief is so precious that you feel compelled to spread it, then you will surely find that there is no room for Christ even in the inn of public sentiment, where everything else is received. Be an atheist, a skeptic, or an agnostic and no one will treat you with contempt; but be a Christian, and many will despise you. There was no room for Him in the inn.

How little room there is for Christ, "in general conversation," which is also like an inn. We talk about many things; a man may nowadays talk of any subject he pleases; no one can stop him and say, "There is a spy listening to your words; he will report you to some central authority." Speech is very free in this land; but, oh, how little room there is for Christ in our conversations! Even on Sunday afternoon how little room there is for Christ in some professing Christian homes. They will talk about ministers, tell stories about them--perhaps even invent a few, or, at least, garnish the old ones, and add to them. They will talk about the Sunday school, or the various agencies in connection with the Church, but how little they say about Christ! And if some one should, in conversation, make this remark, "Could we talk about the Trinity, or the finished work and righteousness of Christ, or the ascension of our Lord, or the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," why we would see many, who even profess to be followers of Christ, who would hold up their heads and say, "Why, that man is quite a fanatic, or else he would not think of introducing such a subject as that into general conversation." No there is no room for Him at the inn.

I address many who are working-men. You are employed among a great many different companies day after day; do you not find, brethren--I know you do--that there is very little room for Christ "in the workplace?"

There is room for talk of sports; there is room for lewd conversation, there is room for politics, slanders, or lying talk; but there is no room for Christ. Too many of our working men think Christianity would be an encumbrance, a chain, a prison to them. They can frequent the theater, or listen to some conference speaker, but the Church is too dreary for them. I wish I were not compelled to say so, but truly in our factories, workshops, and other businesses, there is no room for Christ. The world is elbowing and pushing for more room, until there is scarce a corner left where the babe of Bethlehem can be laid.

As "for the inns of modern times"--who would think of finding Christ there? Our inns today have as part of their establishment the attached taverns. What wider gates of hell can be built? Who would ever resort to going to our inns today and ever expect to find Christ there? We might as well to find Him in the bottomless pit! We should be just as likely to look for angels in hell, as seek to look for Christ in a whisky palace! He who is separate from sinners, finds no fit society in the reeking temple of Bacchus. There is no room for Jesus in the inn. I think I would rather rot or feed the crows, than earn my daily bread by the wages of fools, the hard earned money of the poor man, stolen from his ragged children, and his haggard wife. What do many tavern owners fatten themselves on the flesh, and bones, and blood, and souls of men. He who grows rich on the fruits of vice is a beast preparing itself for the slaughter. Truly, there is no room for Christ, among those who are drunk. Those who have anything to do with Christ can hear Him say, "Come out from them and be separate. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters." There is no room for Christ nowadays even in the places of public lodging.

IV. This brings me to my fourth point, which is the most pertinent and the most essential one to dwell on for a moment. "Have you room for Christ?" "Have you any room for Christ?"

As the palace and the inn have no room for Christ, and as the places of public resort have none, have "you" room for Christ? "Well," one says, "I have room for Him, but I am not worthy that He should come to me." Ah! I did not ask about worthiness; have you room for Him? "Oh," one says, "I have an empty void the world can never fill!" Ah! I see you have room

for Him. "Oh! But the room I have in my heart is so wretched! So was the manger. "But it is so despicable!" The manger was also a thing to be despised. "Ah! But my heart is so foul!" So, perhaps, the manger may also have been. "Oh! But I feel it is a place not at all fit for Christ!" Nor was the manger a place fit for Him, and yet there He was laid. "Oh! But I have been such a sinner; I feel as if my heart has been a den of beasts and devils!" Well, the manger had been a place where beasts had fed. Have you room for Him? Never mind what the past has been; He can forgive and forget. It does not matter what even the present state may be if you mourn over it. If you have room for Christ He will come and be your guest. Don't say, "I hope I 'will have' room for Him;" the time is come that He will be born; Mary cannot wait months and years.

Oh! Sinner, if you have room for Him let Him be born in your soul today. "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." "Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." Room for Jesus! Room for Jesus now! "Oh!" one says, "I have room for Him, but will He come?" Will He come--most certainly! Just open the door of your heart, and say, "Jesus, Master, all unworthy and unclean I look to you; come, lodge within my heart," and He will come to you, and He will cleanse the manger of your heart; He will transform it into a golden throne, and there He will sit and reign forever and forever. Oh! I have such a free Christ to preach this morning! I wish I could preach Him better. I have such a precious loving Jesus to preach, He is willing to find a home in humble hearts. What! Are there no hearts here this morning that will take Him in?

Must my eye glance around these galleries and look at many of you who are still without Him, and are there none who will say, "Come in, come in?" Oh! It will be a happy day for you if you will be enabled to take Him in your arms and receive Him as the your Savior and Lord! You may then look forward even to death with joy, and say with Simeon--"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation." My master wants room! Room for Him! Room for Him! I, His herald, cry aloud, Room for the Savior! Room! Here is my royal Master--have you room for Him? Here is the Son of God made flesh--have you room for Him? Here is He who can lift you

up out of the slimy pit and out of the miry clay--have you room for Him? Here He is who when He comes in will never go out again, but abide with you forever to make your heart a heaven of joy and bliss for you--have you room for Him? This is all I ask. Your emptiness, your nothingness, your lack of feeling, your lack of goodness, your lack of grace--all these will be but room for Him. Have you room for Him? Oh! Spirit of God, lead many to say, "Yes, my heart is ready." Ah! Then He will come and dwell with you.

"Joy to the world the Savior comes,
the Savior promised long;
Let every heart prepare a throne
And every voice a song."

V. I conclude with this point, that if you "have room" for Christ, then from this day forward remember, "The world has no room for you;" for the text says not only that there was no room for Him, but look--"There was no room 'for them,'"--no room for Joseph, nor for Mary, any more than for the babe. Who are His mother, brother, and sister, but those who do the will of His Father in heaven. So, as there was no room for the blessed Virgin, nor for the reputed father, remember from this time on there is no room in this world for any true follower of Christ.

There is no room for you to take it "easy," no, you are to be a soldier of the cross. There is no room for you to sit down "content with all your achievements," for you are a traveler, and you are to forget the things that are behind, and press forward to that which is ahead; no room for you "to hide your treasure" in, for here the moth and rust destroys; no room for you "to put your confidence," for "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength." From this day there will be no room for you in "the good opinion of the world." They will count you to be rubbish; no room for you in the world's "polite society"--you must go on without the sophisticated, bearing His reproach. From this time forward, if you have room for Christ, the world will hardly find room for "tolerance" of you; you must expect now to be laughed at; now you must wear the fool's cap in men's esteem. The song that you must sing will be at the very beginning of your pilgrimage:

"Jesus, I Your cross have taken,
All to leave and follow You;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
You from now on my all will be."

There is no room for you in the world's love. If you expect that everybody will praise you, and that your good actions will all be applauded, you will be quite mistaken. The world has no room for the man who has room for Christ. "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Woe to you when all men speak well of you." You are not of the world, even as Christ is not of it. Thank God, you need not ask for the world's hospitality. If it will give you a stage for action, and lend you for a short time a grave to sleep in, it is all you need; you will require no permanent dwelling-place here, since you seek a city that is to come, which has foundations; whose builder and maker is God. You are hurrying through this world as a stranger through a foreign land, and you rejoice to know that though you are an alien and a foreigner here, yet you are a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household to God.

What do you say, young soldier, will you enlist on such terms as these? Will you give room for Christ when there is to be from this time on no room for you--when you are to be separated forever, cut off from among the world's relatives--cut off from fleshly confidence forever? Are you willing, nevertheless to receive the Babe of Bethlehem in? The Lord help you to do so, and to Him will be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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Holy Work for Christmas

"When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and

pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told." (Luke 2:17-20)

Every season has its own proper fruit: apples for autumn, holly berries for Christmas. The earth brings forth according to the period of the year, and with man there is a time for every purpose under heaven. At this season, the world is engaged in congratulating itself and in expressing its complimentary wishes for the good of its citizens; let me suggest extra and more solid work for Christians. As we think today of the birth of the Savior, let us aspire after a fresh birth of the Savior in our hearts; that as He is already created in us, "the hope of glory," we may be "made new in the attitude of our minds;" that we may go again to the Bethlehem of our spiritual nativity and do our first works, enjoy our first loves, and feast with Jesus as we did in the holy, happy, heavenly days of our initial walk with Jesus. Let us go to Jesus with something of that youthful freshness and excessive delight which was so manifest in us when we looked to Him at the first; let Him be crowned anew by us, for He is still adorned with the dew of His youth, and remains "the same yesterday, today and forever."

The citizens of Durham, though they dwell not far from the Scotch border, and consequently in the olden days were frequently liable to be attacked, were exempted from the agony of war because there was a cathedral within their walls, and they were set aside to the Church's service, being called in the olden times by the name of "holy work-folk." Now, we citizens of the New Jerusalem, having the Lord Jesus in our midst, may well excuse ourselves from the ordinary ways of celebrating this season; and consider ourselves to be "holy work-folk," we may keep it in a different way than other men, in holy contemplation and in blessed service of that gracious God whose unspeakable gift the newborn King is to us.

I selected this text this morning because it seemed to indicate to me four ways of serving God, four methods of executing holy work and exercising Christian thought. Each of these verses sets before us a different way of sacred service:

1. Spreading the word widely by telling others what we have seen and heard.
2. Holy amazement and astonishment.
3. Treasuring and pondering.
4. Glorifying and giving God praise.

I do not know which of these four responses accomplishes the best service for Christ, but I think that if we could combine all these mental emotions and outward exercises, then we would be sure to praise God in a most godly and acceptable fashion.

I. To begin then, in the first place, we find that some celebrated the Savior's birth by "Spreading the word" by telling others what they heard and seen; and truly we may say of them that; "they had something" to say in men's ears that was well worth the hearing.

That for which prophets and kings had waited long, had at last arrived to them. They had found out the answer to the perpetual question. They could have run through the streets with the ancient philosopher, crying, "Eureka! Eureka!" for their discovery was far superior to his. They hadn't discovered a solution to a mechanical problem or a metaphysical dilemma, but their discovery was second to none ever made by men of real value, since it has been like the Tree of Life to heal the nations, and a River of Water of Life to make the City of God glad.

They had seen more than angels--they had beheld the angel's King, the Angel of the Covenant whom we delight in. They had heard the music of heaven, and when they came near the manger, the ear of their faith had heard the music of earth's hope, a mystic harmony which would ring through all the ages--the grave sweet melody of hearts attuned to praise the Lord, and the glorious swell of the holy joy of God and man rejoicing in glad accord. They had seen God incarnate--such a sight that he who gazed on it must of been speechless in absolute astonishment. But could they remain silent when their eyes had seen such a vision? Impossible! To the first person they met outside that lowly stable door they began to

share their matchless account, crying, "Come and worship! Come and worship Christ, the newborn King!"

As for us, beloved, don't we have also have something to relate that demands proclamation? If we talk of Jesus, who can blame us? This, indeed, will make the tongue declare the mystery of God incarnate for our sake, bleeding and dying that we might neither bleed nor die, descending to the earth that we might ascend to heaven, and wrapped in human cloths that we might have the grave-clothes of corruption unwrapped from our bodies. Here is such a story, so profitable to everyone that he who spreads it the most often does best, and he who speaks the least has the most reason to accuse himself for sinful silence.

They had something to tell, and "that something had in it the perfect blending which is the secret sign and royal mark of Divine authorship; a unique joining of majesty and simplicity;" angels singing--singing to shepherds! Heaven bright with glory! Bright at midnight! God! A Baby!! The Infinite! An Infant from eternity past!! The Ancient of Days! Born of a woman!! What could be more simple than the inn, the manger, a carpenter, a carpenter's wife, and a child? What could be more majestic than a "great company of the heavenly host" singing at midnight with their joyous chorus, and God Himself in human flesh being revealed. A child is an ordinary sight, but what a marvel to see "The Word" which was "with God in the beginning, make His dwelling among us so we could see His glory--the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." Brethren, we have a story to tell--simple and majestic. What could be simpler? "Believe and live." What could be more majestic? "God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them!" A system of salvation so wonderful that angelic minds cannot help but adore Him as they meditate on it; and yet so simple that the children on earth can rightly sing its virtues as they sing, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." What a splendid combining of the majestic and the simple have we in the great atonement offered by the incarnate Savior! Oh, make known to all men this saving truth!

The shepherds needed no excuse for making the announcement everywhere of the Savior's birth, "for what they shared, they had first

received from heaven." Their news was not muttered in their ears by well known philosophers, nor brought to light by profound study, not conceived in poetry, nor found as a treasure trove among the volumes of the ancient; but it was revealed to them by an angel who led the angelic host, and testified, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord." When heaven entrusts a man with a merciful revelation, he is bound to deliver the good tidings to others. What, keep an eternal proclamation of mercy a secret? Why were the angels sent, if not to spread the message to all the world? According to the teaching of our own beloved Lord we must not be silent, for He commands us, "What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs." Beloved, you have heard a voice from heaven--you are born again, given an eternal hope of heaven, you have heard the Spirit of God bearing witness of God's truth in you, and teaching you heavenly things. You then must celebrate this Christmas by telling your fellowmen what God the Holy Spirit has seen fit to reveal to you.

But though the shepherds told what they heard from heaven, remember that, "they spoke of what they had seen below." They had, by observation, believed deep in their hearts those truths which they heard spoken by the angels and what they saw with their eyes. No one can speak of the things of God with any success until the doctrine which he finds in the Bible he also believes in his heart. We must bring down the mystery and make it clear, by knowing, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, its practical power on the heart and conscience. My brethren, the gospel which we preach is most surely revealed to us by the Lord; but, moreover, our hearts have tried and proved, have grasped, have felt, have realized its truth and power. We may not have been able to understand its heights and depths, yet we have felt its mystic power upon our heart and spirit. It has revealed sin to us better; it has revealed to us our acquittal. It has killed the reigning power of sin, it has given us Christ to reign over us, the Holy Spirit to dwell within our bodies as in a temple. Now "we must" speak. I do not urge any of you to speak of Jesus who merely know the Word as you find it in the Bible, your teaching will have little power; but I do earnestly speak to you who know its mighty influence on the heart, who have not only heard of the babe but have seen Him in the manger, taken Him up in your own arms and received Him as being born to you, a

Savior to you, Christ, the anointed for you, Jesus the Savior from sin for you. Beloved, can you do otherwise than speak of the things which you have seen and heard. God has made you taste and handle this precious Word of Life, and you must not, you dare not hold your peace, but you "must" tell it to friends and neighbors--what you have felt within.

These were shepherds, "uneducated men." I will guarantee you that they couldn't read a book; there is every probability that they didn't even know a single letter of the alphabet. They were shepherds, but they preached good; and, my brethren, whatever some may think, preaching is not to be confined to those educated gentlemen who have degrees from a college or university. It is true that education is not an impediment to grace, and may be a fitting weapon in a gracious hand, but often the grace of God has glorified itself by the plain clear way in which uneducated men have understood the gospel and have proclaimed it. I would not mind asking the whole world to find a person with a Master's Degree who is now living that has brought more souls to Christ Jesus than Richard Weaver. If twenty educated religious leaders have done a tenth as much in the way of soul-winning as that one man, then I would be surprised. Let us give to our God all the glory, but still let us not deny the fact that Richard Weaver, a sinner saved, who speaks with a poor man's English, fresh from the coal pit, tells the story of the cross by God's grace in such a way that the most Reverend Preachers might humbly sit at his feet to learn the way to reach the heart and melt the stubborn soul. It is true an uneducated brother is not suited for every work--he has his own sphere--but he is quite able to tell of what he has seen and heard.

If you have seen Jesus and heard His saving voice, if you have received truth from the Lord, felt its tremendous power coming from God to you, and if you have experienced its mighty effect upon your own spirit, why you can surely speak out what God has written within you. If you cannot get beyond that into the deeper mysteries, into the more knotty points, well, well, there are some who can, and so you need not be uneasy; but you can at least reveal the first and foundational truths, and they are by far the most important. If you cannot speak in the pulpit, if you would blush, and your tongue would refuse to function in the presence of many, there are your children, you are not ashamed to speak before them; there

is the little cluster around the fireplace on Christmas eve, there are your fellow workers at your place of employment, there is a little audience somewhere to whom you could speak to about Jesus' love to lost ones. Do not go beyond what you know; do not plunge into what you have not experienced, for if you do you will be out of your depth, and then very soon you will be floundering and causing a lot of confusion. Go as far as you know; and since you do know yourself as a redeemed sinner and Jesus as a Savior, and a great one too, talk about those two matters, and good will come of it. Beloved, each one in his own position, tell what you have heard and seen; share that among the sons of men.

But "were they authorized?" It is a great thing to be authorized! Unauthorized ministers are shameful intruders! Unordained men entering the pulpit, who are not called by God to speak--very horrible! Very horrible indeed! The unsaved mind utterly fails to fathom the depth of horror which is contained in the idea of an unauthorized man preaching and daring to teach the way of salvation. To me this horror seems very much like a schoolboy's fright at a monster which his fears had conjured up. I think if I saw a man slip through the ice into a cold watery grave, and I could rescue him from drowning, it would not wrong for me to be the means of saving him, though I may not be one who has been certified as a Life Saver. I imagine if I saw a fire, and heard a poor woman scream at an upper window, and likely to be burned alive, if I should put a ladder up to the window, and preserve her life, it would not be wrong though I were not a member of the local Fire Department. If a company of brave volunteers should chase an enemy out of their own county, I do not know that it would be anything so shocking, although they were not members of the country's regular armed forces. But mark you, the ministers and others like them are called by God, and thus are authorized by divine ordinance, for every man who hears the gospel is authorized to tell it to others. Do you want authority? Here it is--confirmation from the Word of God, "Let him who hears say, 'Come!'--that is, let every man who truly hears the gospel invite others to come and drink of the water of life." This is all the warrant you require for preaching the gospel according to your ability.

Not every man has the ability to preach the Word, and we would not want

to hear every man preach in the great congregation, for if we all were mouths, what a great vacuum would exist in the Church; yet every Christian in some way should deliver the Good News. Our wise God is careful that the preaching of the Word will not be disorderly, for He does not give the pastoral and teaching gifts to very many; yet every man according to his gifts, let him minister. Every one of you though not in the pulpit, yet in the pew, in the shop, somewhere, anywhere, everywhere, make known Jesus Christ the Savior. Let this be your authority: "Let him who hears say, 'Come!'" I never thought of asking any authority for crying "Fire," when I saw a house burning; I never dreamed of seeking any authority for doing my best to rescue a poor perishing fellow-man, nor do I mean to seek it now! All the authority you need, any of you, is not the authority which can stream from popes decorated with elaborate religious clothing and trinkets, but the authority which comes direct from the great Head of the Church, who gives authority to every one who hears the gospel, to teach his neighbor, saying, "Know the Lord."

Here, dear brethren, is one way for you to keep a holy, and in some sense a merry Christmas. Imitate these humble men, of whom it is said, "When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child."

II. We set before you, now, another way of celebrating Christmas, by HOLY WONDER, ADMIRATION, AND ADORATION.

"All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them." We will have little to say of those persons who merely wondered, and did nothing more. Many are amazed by the Gospel. They are content to hear it, pleased to hear it; if not in itself something new, yet there are new ways of putting it, and they are glad to be refreshed with the variety. The preacher's voice is to them as the sound of one that makes pleasant music with an instrument. They are glad to listen. They are not skeptics, they do not criticize, they raise no objections; they just say to themselves, "It is an admirable gospel, it is a wonderful plan of salvation. Here is the most astonishing love, most extraordinary condescension." Sometimes they marvel that these things should be told to them by shepherds; they can hardly understand how uneducated and ignorant men could speak of these things and how the shepherds could ever have learned such things.

How is it that they seem so enthusiastic about them, what has happened to them that they are able to speak as they do. But after holding up their hands and opening their mouths for about nine days, the wonder subsides, and they go their way and think no more about it.

There are many of you who are amazed whenever you see God working in your neighborhood or workplace. You hear of somebody being converted who was a very wicked sinner and you say, "It is very amazing!" There is a revival; and you happen to be present at one of the meetings when the Spirit of God is working gloriously: you say, "Well, this is a very astonishing thing!" Even the newspapers can afford a corner at times for very great and extraordinary works of God the Holy Spirit, but there all the emotion ends; it is all amazement, and nothing more.

Now, I trust it is different with us; that we will not think of the Savior and of the doctrines of the gospel which He came to preach simply with amazement and astonishment, for this will do us no good. On the other hand, there is another form of amazement which is very much like adoration. I think it would be very difficult to draw a line between holy wonder and real worship, for when the soul is overwhelmed with the majesty of God's glory, though it may not express itself in song or even utter its voice with bowed head in humble prayer, yet it silently adores. I am inclined to think that the astonishment which sometimes seizes the human intellect at the remembrance of God's greatness and goodness is, perhaps, the purest form of adoration which ever rises from mortal men to the throne of the Most High. This kind of amazement I recommend to those of you who from the quietness and solitude of your lives are scarcely able to mimic the shepherds in telling the account to others: you can at least be like the circle of the worshipers before the throne by being amazed at what God has done.

Let me suggest to you that holy amazement at what God has done should be very natural to you. That God should reflect on His fallen creature man, and instead of sweeping him away with the broom of destruction would devise a wonderful plan for his redemption, and that He would Himself undertake to be man's Redeemer, and to pay his ransom price, is, indeed, marvelous! Probably it is most marvelous to you in its relation to yourself, that you should be redeemed by blood; that God would forsake

the thrones and royalties above to suffer disgrace on the earth for you. You know yourself that you can never see an adequate motive or reason in your own flesh for such a deed as this, you will say, "Why was such love given to me?" If David sitting in his house could only say, "Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?" What should you and I say? Had we been the most meritorious of individuals, and had unceasingly kept the Lord's commands, we could not have deserved such a priceless blessing as incarnation; but sinners, offenders, who revolted and turned away from God, further and further, what would we say of this incarnate God dying for us, but "This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." Let your soul lose itself in amazement, for amazement, dear friends, is in this way a very practical emotion. Holy amazement will lead you to grateful worship; being astonished at what God has done you will pour out your soul with astonishment at the foot of the golden throne with the song, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Filled with this amazement will cause you a godly watchfulness; you will be afraid to sin against such love as this. Feeling the presence of the mighty God in the gift of His dear Son, you will take off your shoes, because the place where you are standing is holy ground. You will be moved at the same time to a glorious hope. If Jesus has given Himself to you, if He has done this marvelous thing on your behalf, you will feel that heaven itself is not too great for your expectation, and that the rivers of pleasure at God's right hand are not too sweet or too deep for you to drink of. Who can be astonished at anything when he has once been astonished at the manger and the cross? What amazement is there left after one has seen the Savior. The seven wonders of the world! Why, you may put them all into a nutshell--technology and fine art can exceed them all; but this one wonder is not the wonder of earth only, but of heaven and earth, and even hell itself. It is not the wonder of the past, but the wonder of all time and the wonder of eternity. They who have seen human wonders a few times, at last cease to be astonished; the noblest structure that an architect ever raised, at last fails to impress the onlooker; but not so this marvelous temple of incarnate Deity; the more we look the more we are astonished, the more we become accustomed to it, the more have we a

sense of its surpassing splendor of love and grace. There is more of God, let us say, to be seen in the manger and the cross, than in the sparkling stars above, the rolling deep below, the towering mountain, the teeming valleys, the abodes of life, or the abyss of death. Let us then spend some choice hours of this festive season in holy amazement, such as will produce gratitude, worship, love, and confidence.

III. A third manner of holy work, namely, HER HEART TREASURING AND PONDERING, you will find in the next verse.

One at least, and let us hope there were others, or at any rate let us ourselves be others--one treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. She wondered: she did more--she pondered. You will observe there was an exercise on the part of this blessed woman of the three great parts of her being; her memory--she treasured all these things; her affections--she treasured them in her heart; her intellect--she pondered them, considered them, weighed them, turned them over; so that memory, affection, and understanding were all exercised about these things. We delight to see this in Mary, but we are not at all surprised when we remember that she was in some sense the most concerned of all on earth, for it was from her that Jesus Christ had been born. Those who come nearest to Jesus and enter most closely into fellowship with Him, will be sure to be the most engrossed with Him. Certain persons are best esteemed at a distance but not the Savior; when you have known Him completely, then you will love Him with the love which passes all understanding; you will comprehend the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of His love; and when you will do so, then your own love will swell beyond all length and breadth, all height and depth. The birth most concerned Mary, and therefore she was the most impressed with it. Note the way in which her concern was shown; she was a woman, and the grace which shines best in the female is not boldness--that belongs to the masculine mind; but affectionate modesty is a feminine beauty, and hence we do not read so much of her sharing the Good News to others as pondering within. No doubt she had her circle of friends, and she shared the joy of her heart; but for the most part she, like another Mary, sat still in the house. She worked, but her work was most directly for Him, her heart's joy and delight. Like other children, the holy child

needed care, which only a mother's hand and heart could exercise; she was therefore engrossed with Him. O blessed preoccupation! Sweet encounter! Do not count that to be unacceptable service which occupies itself rather with Jesus than with His disciples or His wandering sheep. That woman who broke the alabaster jar and poured the ointment upon our Jesus Himself was accused by Judas, and even the rest of the disciples thought that the poor had lost a benefit, but "She has done a beautiful thing to me," was the Savior's answer.

I desire to bring you to this thought, that if during this season you shy quiet ones cannot speak to others, or have no desirable opportunity or suitable gift for that work, you may sit still with Jesus and honor Him in peace. Mary took the Lord in her arms; oh that you may bear Him in yours! She performed works for His person directly; you can imitate her. You can love Him, bless Him, praise Him, study Him, treasure Him, ponder Him, comprehend His character, and imitate His life; and in this way; though your worship will not blaze forth among the sons of men, and scarcely benefit them as some other forms of work, yet it will both benefit you and be acceptable to your Lord. Beloved, remember what you have heard about Christ, and what He has done for you; make your heart the golden cup to hold the rich recollections of His past loving-kindness; make it a pot of manna to preserve the heavenly bread whereon saints have fed in days gone by. Let your memory treasure up everything about Christ which you have either heard, or felt, or known, and then let your fond affections hold Him close forevermore. Love him! Pour out that alabaster jar of your heart, and let all the precious ointment of your affection come streaming on His feet. If you cannot do it with joy do it sorrowfully, wash His feet with tears, wipe them with the hairs of your head; but love Him, love the blessed Son of God, your ever tender Friend. Let your intellect be exercised concerning the Lord Jesus. Turn over and over by meditation what you read. Do not be those who only read the words--don't stop at the surface; dive into the depths. Don't be like the swallow which touches the brook with her wing, but be like the fish which penetrates to the deepest part. Drink deep portions of His love; do not sip, but dwell at the well as Isaac did at the well Lahai-roi. Stay with your Lord: let Him not be to you as a traveler that stays only for a night, but constrain Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is

almost over." Hold Him, and do not let Him go. The word "ponder," as you know, means to weigh. The scales of judgment are ready. Oh, but where are the scales that can weigh the Lord Christ? "Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust." Who will lift Him up? "He weighed the mountains on the scales." On what scales will we weigh Him? Be it so, if your understanding cannot comprehend, let your affections apprehend; and if your spirit cannot surround the Lord Jesus in the arms of its understanding, let it embrace Him in the arms of your affection. Oh, beloved, here is blessed Christmas work for you, if, like Mary, you treasure up all these things in your heart and ponder them.

IV. The last piece of holy Christmas work is to come. "The shepherds returned," we read in the twentieth verse, "GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD for all the things that they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told." Returned to what? "Returned to the business" of looking after the lambs and sheep. Then if we desire to glorify God we need not give up our business.

Some people get the notion into their heads that the only way in which they can live for God is by becoming ministers, missionaries, or Bible teachers. How many of us would be shut out from any opportunity of magnifying the Most High if this were the case. The shepherds went back to the sheep-pens glorifying and praising God. Beloved, it is not occupation, it is earnestness; it is not position, it is grace which will enable us to glorify God. God is most surely glorified in that factory corner where the godly worker, as he assembles the parts sings of the Savior's love, yes, glorified far more than in many a church pulpit where the minister performs his duties. The name of Jesus is glorified by the cab driver as he drives his vehicle and blesses his God, or speaks to his fellow cabby by the roadside as much as by the evangelist who, throughout the country, is thundering out the gospel. God is glorified by our remaining in our vocation. Take care you do not leave your calling, and take care you do not dishonor your profession while in it. Do not think much of yourselves, and do not think too little of your callings. There is no honest, moral, business which is not sanctified by the gospel. If you turn to the Bible, you will find the most menial forms of labor have been in some way

or other connected either with the most daring deeds of faith, or else with persons whose lives have been otherwise illustrious; keep to your calling, brother, keep to your calling! Whatever God has made you, when He calls you for salvation, then remain in that position in life, unless you are quite sure, mind that, unless you are quite sure that He is calling you to something else. The shepherds glorified God though they went back to their trade.

They glorified God "though they were shepherds." As we have already said, they were not educated men. So far from having an extensive library full of books, it is probable they could not read a word; yet they glorified God. This takes away all excuse for you good people who say, "I am not a scholar; I never had any education, I never even attended Sunday-school." Ah, but if your heart is right, you can glorify God. Never mind, don't be discouraged because you know so little. Learn more if you can, but make good use of what you do know. It is indeed a pity that you had to start work at an early age, therefore you couldn't even acquire even the rudiments of knowledge, but don't think that you can't glorify God. If you want to praise God, then live a holy life, you can do that by His grace, without a degree. If you want to do good to others, then be good in yourself, and that is a way which is as open to the most illiterate as it is to the best educated. Be of good courage! Shepherds glorified God, and so may you. Remember there is one thing in which they had as an advantage over the wise men. The wise men needed a star to lead them; the shepherds did not. The wise men went the wrong way even with a star, they stumbled into Jerusalem, the shepherds went straight to Bethlehem. Simple minds sometimes find a glorified Christ where educated people miss Him because of their confusion over their educated approach. A good doctor used to say, "Look, these simple uneducated persons have entered into the kingdom, while we learned men have been fumbling for the latch." It is often so; therefore you simple minds, be comforted and glad.

The way in which these shepherds honored God is worth noticing. They did it by praising Him. Let us regard the singing of sacred songs more than we sometimes do. When the song is bursting in full chorus from the thousands in this church, it is nothing but noise in the ear of some men;

but if those who are singing the songs have true hearts that are touched with the love of Jesus, then it is not a mere noise in God's estimation, there is a sweet music in it that delights His ear.

What is the great purpose of all Christian effort? When I stood here the other morning preaching the gospel, my mind was fully focused on the winning of souls, but while preaching I seemed to go beyond that. I thought, Well, that is not the chief end after all--the chief end is to glorify God. Then it struck me all of a sudden, "If when singing a Psalm or a hymn, we really do glorify God, then we are doing more than by preaching; because preaching is only a means by which we win the lost, whereas, singing hymns is a direct way to glorify God." If we praise God with our hearts and tongues then we are glorifying Him in the surest possible way, we are really glorifying Him then. Sing then, my brethren! Sing not only when you are together but sing alone. Lighten your work with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Make your family happy with sacred music. We sing too little, I am sure, yet the revival of religion has always been attended with the revival of worshipful Christian songs. Luther's translations of the psalms into songs were as much a blessing as Luther's discussions and controversies; and the hymns of Charles Wesley, and Cennick, and Toplady, and Newton, and Cowper, aided as much in the quickening of spiritual life in England as the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield. We need more singing. Sing more and murmur less, sing more and slander less, sing more and criticize less, sing more and complain less. God grant us today, as these shepherds did, to glorify God by praising Him.

I am not quite done with the shepherds yet. What was the subject of their praise? It appears that they praised God for what they had heard. If you think about it, there is good reason for blessing God every time we hear a gospel sermon. What would the souls in hell give if they could hear the gospel once more, and be allowed to respond to the pure and free salvation grace? What would dying men on their deathbeds give if they could once more hear the preaching of the gospel, and have another warning and an opportunity to yield to Christ. Brethren, what would you give sometimes when you are immobilized by sickness and cannot come and fellowship with the God's children, when your heart and your flesh

cry out for the Living God? Well, praise God for what you have heard. You have heard the faults of the preacher, let him agonize over them. You have heard his message from God, do you bless God for that? Nearly all sermons can make you sing if you are in the right mind. Praise God that you have heard that there is a Savior! Praise God that you have heard that the plan of salvation is very simple! Praise God that you have a Savior for your own soul! Praise God that you are forgiven, that you are saved! Praise Him for what you have heard, but observe, they also praised God for what they had seen.

Look at the twentieth verse--"heard and seen." There is the sweetest music--it is what we have experienced, it is what we have felt within, it is what we have made our own--the things that we have received by yielding to the King. Mere hearing may make some music, but the soul of song must come from seeing with the eye of faith. And, dear friends, you who have seen with that God-given eyesight, I pray you, do not let your tongues be tied in sinful silence, rather let them speak loudly to the praise of sovereign grace, wake up your glory and awake songs of praise and your musical instruments. One point for which they praised God was "for all the things they had heard and seen. Observe the last sentence, "which were just as they had been told." Haven't you found the gospel within you just what the Bible said it would be? Jesus said He would give you grace--haven't you received it? He promised you rest--haven't you received it? He said that you would have joy, and comfort, and life through believing in Him--haven't you received all these? Aren't His ways, ways of pleasantness, and His paths, paths of peace? Surely you can say with the queen of Sheba, "Indeed, not even half was told me, I have found Christ more sweet than His servants could ever have told us. I looked upon the likeness as they painted it, but it was a mere dab as compared with Himself--the King in His beauty. I have heard of the promised land, but oh! it flows with milk and honey more richly and sweetly than men were ever able to tell me with their most vivid words. Surely, what we have seen keeps pace with what we have heard. Let us then glorify and praise God for what He has done.

I want to say something to those who are not yet converted, and I then will be done. I do not think you can begin at the seventeenth verse, but I

wish you would begin at the eighteenth. You cannot begin at the seventeenth--you cannot tell others what you have not felt; do not try it. Neither teach Sunday-school, nor attempt to preach if you are not converted, for to the wicked, God says: "What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips?"

But I pray to God, that you would begin with the eighteenth verse--"amazed!" Amazed that you are still alive, being spared from death that would have brought immediate judgment into the fires of hell--amazed that His precious Holy Spirit still strives to convert you despite your many wicked sins. Amazed that this morning the gospel message of eternal life is still being offered to you after all your rejections of it in the past.

I want you to begin there, because then I would have the hope that you would go on to the next verse, and so go from amazement to pondering. Oh sinner, I wish you would ponder the doctrines of the cross. Think of your sin, God's wrath, judgment, hell, the Savior's blood, God's love, forgiveness, acceptance, heaven--think on these things. Go from amazement to pondering. And then I would pray to God that you would then go on to the next verse, from pondering to glorifying. Take Christ, look to Him, trust Him. Then sing "I am forgiven," and go your way a believing sinner, and therefore a sinner saved, washed in the blood, and cleansed. Then go back after that to the seventeenth verse, and spread the Word to others.

But as for you Christians who are saved, I want you to begin this very afternoon at the seventeenth verse.

"Then will I tell sinners all around
What a dear Savior I have found:
I'll point to His redeeming blood,
And say--'Look! the way to God!'"

Then when the day is over, go into to your bedroom and wonder, admire and adore; spend half an hour or so, like Mary, in pondering and treasuring up the day's work and the day's message from the Word in your hearts, and then close it all with that which never must close--go on

tonight, tomorrow, and all the days of your life, glorifying and praising God for all the things that you have seen and heard. May the Master bless you for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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God Incarnate, the End of Fear

“The angel said to them, `Do not be afraid.’“ Luke 2:10

As soon as the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, they were terrified. It had come to this, that man was afraid of his God, and when God sent down His loving messengers with tidings of great joy, men were filled with as much fear as though the angel of death had appeared with an uplifted sword. The silence of the night and its dreary gloom caused no fear in the shepherds' hearts, but the joyful herald of the skies, robed in the glories of grace, terrified them. We must not condemn the shepherds on this account as though they were timid or uneducated, for they were only acting as every other person in that age would have done under the same circumstances.

It was not because they were simple shepherds that they were overcome with fear, but it is probable that if they had been well-instructed prophets they would have displayed the same feeling; for there are many instances recorded in Scripture, in which the leading men of their time trembled and felt the horror of great darkness when special manifestations of God were given to them. In fact, a cringing fear of God was so common, that a tradition had grown out of it, which was all but universally received as absolute truth. It was generally believed that every supernatural manifestation was to be regarded as a token of speedy death, “We are doomed to die! We have seen God!” was not only Manoah's conclusion, but that of most men of his period. Indeed there were only a few who had contented minds like Manoah's wife, who could reason in a more encouraging style, she said, “If the LORD had meant to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this.”

It became “the settled conviction” of all men, whether wise or uneducated, whether good or bad, that a manifestation of God was not so much to be rejoiced in as to be dreaded; even as Jacob said, “How awesome [how frightening] is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” Without a doubt the spirit which

originated this tradition was fostered by the “legal dispensation,” which is better fitted for trembling servants than for rejoicing sons. The solemn night in which its greatest institution was ordained was a night of trembling, death was there in the slaughter of the lamb; blood was then sprinkled on a conspicuous part of the house: fire was there to roast the lamb, all the emblems of judgment were there to strike the mind with dread. It was at the dreaded hour of midnight when the solemn family conclave was assembled; the door was shut; the guests themselves standing in an uneasy attitude, and stricken with fright, for their hearts and minds could hear the wings of the destroying angel as he passed by the house.

Afterwards, when Israel came into the wilderness, and the law was proclaimed, we read that the people stood afar off and that boundaries were established around the mountain, and even if an animal touched the mountain, then it must be stoned, or killed with a sword? It was a day of fear and trembling when God spoke to them out of the fire. God's law did not come to His people's ears with the soft notes of harps; there were no soft wings of angels bringing the message, and no sunny smiles of heaven sweetened it to the mind, but it came with sounds of loud trumpets and thunder, out of the midst of blazing lightnings, with Mount Sinai smoking, the law was given. The law's voice was, “Do not go near it!” The spirit of Sinai is fear and trembling.

The legal ceremonies were designed to inspire fear rather than to generate trust. The worshiper at the temple saw bloodshed from the first of the year to the end of the year; the morning was ushered in with the shedding of the blood of the lamb, and the evening could not pass without blood again being spilled on the altar. God was in the midst of the camp, but the pillar of cloud and fire was His unapproachable retreat. The emblem of His glory was concealed behind the curtain of blue and scarlet and fine linen, behind which only one person was allowed to pass, and that only once a year. Men spoke of the God of Israel with bated breath, and with hushed and solemn voices. They had not learned to say, “Our Father in heaven.” They had not received the spirit of adoption, and were not able to say “Abba”; they smarted under the spirit of bondage, which made them terrified when the glory of the Lord's presence was displayed

among them.

At the bottom of all this cringing dread lay “sin.” We never find Adam afraid of God, nor of any manifestation of Deity while he was in Paradise as an obedient creature, but no sooner had he touched the forbidden fruit than he found out that he was naked, and hid himself when he heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, Adam was afraid and hid himself from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Sin makes miserable cowards of us all. See the man who once could hold delightful conversation with his Maker, now dreading to hear his Maker's voice and sneaking around in the garden like a felon, who knows his guilt, and is afraid to meet the officers of justice.

Beloved, in order to remove this dreaded nightmare of slavish fear from the heart of humanity, where its horrible influence represses all the noblest aspirations of the soul, our Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is one of the works of the devil which Jesus had come to destroy. Angels came to proclaim the good news of the coming of the incarnate God, and the very first note of their song was a foretaste of the sweet result of His coming to all those who will receive him. The angel said, “Do not be afraid!” as though the times of fear were over, and the days of hope and joy had arrived. “Do not be afraid!” These words were not meant for those trembling shepherds only, but were intended for you and for me, yes, to all nations to whom the glad tidings would come. “Do not be afraid!” Let God no longer be the object of your slavish dread! Do not stand at a distance from Him any more. The Word is made flesh. God has descended to live among men, that there may be no wall of restraining fire, no gulf between God and man.

I wish to dwell on this subject this morning as God would help me. I am aware of the value of the theme, and am very conscious that I cannot do it justice. I earnestly ask God the Holy Spirit to make you drink of the golden cup of the incarnation of Christ, which I have enjoyed in my quiet meditations. I desire this delight for my dearest friends. There is no better cure for fear than the subject of that midnight song, the first and best of Christmas choruses, which from its first word to its last note chimes out the sweet message, which begins with, “Do not be afraid!”

It is my sweetest comfort, Lord,
And will forever be,
To ponder on the gracious truth
Of Your humanity.

Oh joy! there dwells in our flesh,
On a throne of light
One of a human mother, born,
In perfect Godhead bright!

“Though earth's foundations should be moved,
Down to their lowest deep;
Though all the trembling universe
Into destruction sweep;

Forever God, forever man,
My Jesus will endure;
And fixed on Him, my hope remains
Eternally secure.”

Dear friends, I will first call your attention to the subject of “the fear” which I have already spoken; then, secondly, we shall invite your earnest attention to “the remedy” which the angels came to proclaim; and then, thirdly, we will endeavor to make an application of this remedy to various cases.

I. First let us turn to THE FEAR of the text.

There is a kind of fear towards God from which we must not wish to be freed from.

There is that lawful, necessary, admirable, excellent fear which is always due from the creature to the Creator, from the subject to the king, yes, and from the child toward the parent. That holy, respectful fear of God, which makes us dread sin, and constrains us to be obedient to His command, is to be cultivated; “We have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we

submit to the Father of our spirits and live!” This is the “The fear of the LORD [which] is the beginning of wisdom.” To have a holy fear of our most holy, just, righteous, and tender God is a privilege, not a bondage. Godly fear is not the “fear [which] has to do with punishment;” perfect love does not cast aside fear, but dwells with it in joyful harmony. The angels perfectly love God, and yet with holy fear they veil their faces with their wings as they approach Him; and when we, in heaven, behold the face of God, and will be filled with all His fullness, we will not cease humbly and reverently to adore the Infinite Majesty. Holy fear is a work of the Holy Spirit, and woe be to the man or woman who does not possess it; let them boast as they may, his “eating with you without the slightest qualm [or fear]” is a mark of his hypocrisy.

The fear which is to be avoided is “cringing fear;” the fear which perfect love casts out, as Sarah cast out the slave woman and her son.

That trembling which keeps us at a distance from God, which makes us think of Him as a Spirit with whom we can have no communion; as a person who does not care for us except to punish us, and for whom consequently we have no care except to escape if possible from His terrible presence.

This fear sometimes arises in men's hearts from their “thoughts that dwell exclusively on the divine greatness.”

Is it possible to stare into the vast abyss of Infinity and not to be afraid? Can the mind yield itself up to the thought of the Eternal, Self-existent, Infinite One without being filled, first with awe and then with dread? What am I? An insect creeping on a rosebud is a more considerable creature in relation to the word of humans than I can be in comparison with God. What am I? A grain of dust that does not register on the most sensitive scale is a greater thing to man than a man is to the Lord God. At best we are less than nothing and vanity.

But there is more to abase us than this. We have had the audacity to be disobedient to the will of this great One; and now the goodness and greatness of His nature are like a rushing current against which sinful humanity struggles in vain, for the irresistible torrent must run its course,

and overwhelm every opponent. What does the great God seem to those without Christ but a stupendous rock, threatening to crush them, or a bottomless sea, rushing to swallow them up? The contemplation of the divine greatness may in itself fill man with horror, and cast him into unspeakable misery! Dwell a long time on such themes, and like Job you will tremble before the Living God, who shakes the earth.

“Each one of the severe attributes of God” will cause the fear.

Think of His power by which He rolls the stars along, and put your hand over your mouth. Think of His wisdom by which He numbers the clouds, and settles the physical laws of the universe. Meditate on any one of these attributes, but especially on His justice, and on that devouring fire which burns continuously against sin, and it is no wonder that the soul becomes full of fear. Meanwhile let “a sense of sin” with its great whip of wire, scourge the conscience, and man will dread the thought of God. For this is the concern of the voice of man's guilty conscience, “If you were a righteous man, this God would still be frightful to you, for if even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in His eyes, if God charges his angels with error. How can a mortal be righteous before God, or have any claims on Him, for you have offended, you have lifted your hand of rebellion against the infinite majesty of omnipotence--what can become of you? What can be your end but to be set up forever as a monument of his righteous wrath?”

Now such a fear as that is easily created in the thoughtful mind, and is the natural heritage of man, since the result of sin is most wretched and harmful.

For wherever there is a cringing dread of the Divine Person, it alienates man completely from his God. We are by our evil nature enemies to God, and the assumption that God is cruel, harsh, and horrifying, adds fuel to the fire of our hatred. We can't love those whom we dread. You could not make your child show love to you if its little heart was full of fear; if it dreaded to hear your footstep, and was alarmed at the sound of your voice, it could not love you. You might obey some huge monster because you were afraid of him, but it would be impossible to love him. It is one of the masterpieces of Satan to deceive man by presenting to his mind a

hateful picture of God. He knows that man cannot love that which terrifies him, and therefore he paints the God of grace as a hard, unforgiving person who will not receive the repentant sinner and have pity on the sorrowful person. God is love! Surely if men only had the grace enough to see the beauty of that portrait of God—that was sketched with a single line, “God is love!” then they would willingly serve such a God. When the Holy Spirit enables the mind to perceive the character of God, the heart cannot refuse to love Him. Evil, fallen, depraved as men and women are, when they are illuminated by the Holy Spirit then they will have the right judgment of God, their hearts melt under the pleasant beams of divine love, and they love God because He has first loved them. But here is the masterpiece of Satan, that he will not let the understanding perceive the excellence of God's character, and then the heart cannot love that which the understanding does not perceive to be lovable.

In addition to alienating the heart from God, this fear “creates a prejudice against God's gospel of grace.”

There are persons in this church this morning who believe that if they were to become a Christian that they would be miserable. It is the settled conviction of some, that to trust in Jesus and to be obedient to God, which is the essence of true Christianity, would be miserable. “Oh,” says the worldly man, “I would have to give up my pleasure if I were to become a Christian.” Now, this is one of the biggest lies ever invented, and yet millions of people believe it. It is popular theology that to be an enemy of God is happiness, but to be the friend of God is misery. What a warped opinion men must have of God, when they believe that to love Him is to be wretched! Oh, I wish that they could truly understand Him. I wish that they could know how good God is instead of imagining that to be His servant would be slavery. I pray that they could only understand that to be His friends is to occupy the highest and happiest position which created beings can occupy.

This fear in some men “causes them to believe that can never be saved.”

They think God is a selfish Person, they keep at a distance from Him, and if they hear now and then, in a sermon, that God is Love and will save

everyone that comes to Him, the right desire for Him never matures into the practical resolve to do something. They don't say, "I will get up and go to my Father," because they don't know Him as a Father, they only know Him as a consuming fire. A man does not say, "I will get up and go into a consuming fire." No, but, like Jonah, he would pay his money, regardless of the expense, and go to Tarshish to flee from the presence of the Lord. This is what makes man so miserable—the fact that they cannot get away from God, since they think that if they could only escape from His presence they would then wander into absolute happiness; but being doomed to be where God is, then they conceive that for them there remains only anguish and misery. The soft warnings of mercy and the thunderings of justice are powerless on men so long as their hearts are seared and rendered hardened by an unholy dread of God.

This depraved fear of God frequently drives men and women to the extremities of sin.

The man says, "There is no hope for me; I have made one fatal mistake by becoming God's enemy, and I am permanently ruined. There is no hope that I will ever be restored to happiness or peace. Then what will I do? I will unleash all my passions, I will defy fate and take my chance. I will get all the happiness that can be found in sin. If I cannot be reconciled to heaven I will become a servant of hell." Consequently men and women have been known to rush from one crime to another with a spiteful rebellion against God, as if they could never be satisfied nor contented until they had heaped up more and more sins against the majesty of God whom in their hearts they dreaded with a burning Satanic dread mingled with hate. If they could only comprehend that He is still willing to receive the rebellious sinner, that His heart yearns to save sinners; if they could only believe that He is love and is not willing that any sinner should ever be lost forever, but would rather that the sinner would repent and submit to Him and live eternally in heaven, surely the course of their lives would be changed; but the god of this world blinds them, and slanders the Lord until the unbeliever considers it foolishness to repent and submit to Christ.

Dear friends, this evil of Satan operates in countless ways. It dishonors God.

Oh, it is notorious, it is evil to make out our God, who is light and in whom there is no darkness at all, to be an object of horrible fear. It is hellish; it is devilish to the highest degree to paint Him as a demon, who is the Holy God, the God of Love. Oh, the disrespect of the prince of darkness, and the madness of man to consent to the suggestion, that God should be depicted as being unwilling to forgive, unkind, harsh, hard, cruel, when in fact He is love; supremely and above all things, love. He is just, but all the more truly loving because He is just. He is true, and therefore sure to punish sin, yet even punishing sin because it is not being righteous to let sin go unpunished. This is vile ingratitude on the part of a creature who has received so much that he should slander God the giver of all things.

The evil which is therefore done to God recoils upon man, for this “fear brings torment.”

Nothing is more tormenting in the world than to think of God as being our unappeasable foe. You Christians who have lost for awhile the joy of your salvation [not your salvation, just the joy of it], you who have wandered a distance away from God, nothing can be more tormenting to you than the fear that the Lord has cast you away and will not receive you again. You backsliders, nothing can hold you back from your heavenly Father like a dread of Him. If you really knew that He is not to be dreaded with a cringing fear, you will come to him as your child does to you, and you would say, “My Father, I have offended You—have pity on me! My Father, I am irritated and grieved over my sin--forgive me, receive me again into Your arms, and help me, by Your mighty grace, that from this moment on I may walk in Your commandments, and be obedient to Your will.” My dear friends, you who know anything about spiritual life, don't you feel that when you have sweet thoughts of God breathed into you from above, and have your heart filled with His special love, that it is then that you are the holiest! Haven't you perceived that the only way in which you can grow in that which is morally and spiritually lovely, is by highly esteeming your gracious God, and feeling His precious love filling your hearts?

The very thing which God desires for His elect ones is that they may

become like little children. It is this which His Spirit works in His chosen ones; it is to this that we must come if we are to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints. Cringing fear is so opposed to the childlike spirit that it is just like the poison of a cobra to it. Dread and fear brings out everything in us that is of the “man” rather than of the “child,” for it stirs us up to resist the object of our fear. An assured confidence in the goodness of God casts out fear and brings forth everything that is childlike in us. A child easily and naturally trusts in a good and generous father, and if I, a poor, weak, feeble child, conscious that I am such, knowing that I am all foolishness and weakness, can just believe in my good, great God, through Jesus Christ and come and trust myself with Him, and leave Him to do as He likes with me, believing that He will not be unkind, and cannot be unwise; If I can wholly rest in His love and be obedient to His will, only then will I have reached the highest point that the creature can reach; the Holy Spirit will then have brought about His finished work in me, and I will be fit for heaven. Beloved, it is because fear opposes this, and prevents this, that I would say with the angel, “Do not be afraid”

II. I am afraid that I will tire you while I speak on this somewhat sorrowful theme, and therefore with as much brevity as the abundance of the matter may permit, let us note in the second place, THE CURE FOR THIS FEAR, which the angel came to proclaim. It lies in this: “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.”

Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just and sacred Three,
Are terrors to my mind.

But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins.”

That is the remedy—God with us—God made flesh. Let us try and show this from the angel's song.

According to the text they were not to be afraid, first of all, because “the angel had come to bring them good news.” What does it say? It says, “I bring you good news of great joy.” But what was this gospel? Further on we are told that the gospel was the fact that Christ was born. So, then, it is good news to men that Christ is born, that God has come down and taken manhood into union with Himself. Truly this is good news. He who made the heavens sleeps in a manger. What does that mean? Why it means that God is not necessarily an enemy to man, because here is God actually taking manhood into union with Deity.

There cannot be permanent, entrenched, immovable hatred between the two natures, or otherwise the divine nature could not have taken the human into hypostatical union with itself. Isn't there comfort in that? You are a destitute, wicked, feeble person, and that which makes you afraid of the Lord is this fear that there is hatred between God and man; but there need not be such animosity, for your Creator has actually taken manhood into union with Himself.

Don't you see another thought? The Eternal seems to be so far away from us. He is infinite, and we are such little creatures. There appears to be a great gulf fixed between man and God—He is the Creator and we are the creature. But observe, He who is God has also become man. We never heard that God took the nature of angels into union with Himself, we may therefore say that between the Godhead and angels there must still be an infinite distance; but here the Lord has actually taken manhood into union with Himself, there is therefore no longer a great gulf fixed, on the contrary, here is a marvelous union; The Godhead has entered into marriage bonds with manhood. O my soul, you do not stand like a poor lonely orphan wailing across the deep sea after your Father who has gone far away and cannot hear you; you don't sob and sigh like an infant left naked and helpless, its Creator having gone too far away to regard its needs or listen to its cries. No, your Creator has become like yourself. Is that too strong a word to use? He who created all things, and in Whom all things are held together, is that same Word who lived for a while among us and was made flesh, and made flesh in such a way that He was tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. O mankind, was there ever such good news as this for you!

Inferior mankind, you weak worm of the dust, far lower than the angels, lift up your head, and don't be afraid! Inferior mankind, born in weakness, living a life of work and stress, covered with sweat, and then dying only to be eaten by the worms, don't you be ashamed even in the presence of Heaven's highest ranking angels, for next to God is man, and not even an archangel stands in position between God and man; no, not next to God, there is an absolute complete union between God and man, for Jesus who is God is also man; Jesus Christ, eternally God, was born, and lived and died as we also do. That is the first word of comfort to expel our fear.

The second point that takes away fear is that this Man Jesus who was also God was actually born. Observe the angel's word, "A Savior has been born to you."

Our Lord Jesus Christ is in some senses more man than Adam. Adam was not born; Adam never had to struggle through the risks and weaknesses of infancy; he did not know what it was like to be a toddler or a little child—he was created full grown. Our earthly father Adam could not sympathize with me as a baby and a child. But how manlike is Jesus! He is cradled with us in the manger; He does not begin with us in mid-life, as Adam, but he accompanies us in the pains and feebleness and weaknesses of infancy, and He continues with us even to the grave. Beloved, this is such sweet comfort. He that is God today was once an infant: so that if my cares are little and even trivial and comparatively infantile, I may go to Him, for He once was a child. Though the great ones of the earth may sneer at the children living in poverty, and say, "You are too unimportant, and your trouble is too insignificant for pity;" I remember with humble joy, that the King of heaven nursed on a woman's breast, and was wrapped in rags, and therefore I can tell Him all my sorrows. How wonderful that He was an infant, and also was the Living God, blessed forever! I am not afraid of God anymore; this blessed link between me and God, the holy child Jesus, has taken all the fear away.

Observe, the angel told them something of His position, as well as His birth. "Today in the town of David a `Savior' has been born to you." The

very purpose for which He was born and came into this world was that He might deliver us from sin.

What, then, was it that made us afraid? Weren't we afraid of God because we felt that we were lost through sin? Well then, here is joy upon joy. Here not only has the Lord come among us as a man, but He was made man in order to save man from that which separated him from God. I feel as if I could burst into weeping for some here who have been racing through their lives unrestrained and are a great distance from God their Creator because of their evil ways. I know they are afraid to come to Him. They think that the Lord will not receive them, that there is no mercy for such sinners as they have been. Oh, but think of this—Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost. He was born to save. If He does not save then He was born in vain, for the object of His birth was salvation. If He will not be a Savior, then the mission of God to earth has missed its objective, for its design was that lost sinners might be saved. Lost one, lost one, if there were news that an angel had come to save you there might be some cheer in it; but there are even better tidings. God has come; the Infinite, the Almighty, has stooped from the highest heaven that He may pick you up, a poor cursed and worthless worm. Isn't there comfort here? Doesn't the incarnate Savior take away the horrible dread which hangs over men like a gloomy darkness?

Note that the angel did not forget to describe “the person” of this Savior-- “He is Christ the Lord.” There is His manhood. As man He was anointed. “The Lord.” There is His Godhead.

Yes, this is the solid truth upon which we plant our foot. Jesus of Nazareth is God; He who was conceived in the womb of the virgin and born in Bethlehem's manger is now, and always was, God over all, blessed forever. There is no gospel if He is not God. It is not good news to me to tell me that a great prophet is born. There have been great prophets before; but the world has never been redeemed from evil by mere testimony to the truth, and never will be. Tell me that God is born, that God Himself has taken up our nature, and taken it into union with Himself, then the bells of my heart ring with joy, for now I may come to God since God has come to me.

You will observe, dear friends, however, that the essence of what the angel said lay in this, “has been born to you.” You will never get true comfort from the incarnate Savior until you perceive your personal interest in Him.

Christ as man was a representative man. There were only two thoroughly representative men; the first is Adam: Adam was disobedient and the whole race fell. “In Adam all die.” Now, the man Jesus is the second great representative man. He does not represent the whole human race, He represents as many as His Father gave him; He represents a chosen company. Now, whatever Christ did, if you belong to those who are in Him—He did for you. So that Christ circumcised or Christ crucified, Christ dead or Christ living, Christ buried or Christ risen, you are a partaker of all that He did and all that He is, for you are considered to be one with Him. See then, the joy and comfort of the incarnation of Christ. Does Jesus, as man, take manhood up to heaven? He has taken me up there. Our earthly father Adam fell, and I fell too, for I was in him. The Lord Jesus Christ rises, and I rise if I am in Him. See, beloved, when Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross all His elect children were nailed there too, and they suffered and died in Him. When He was put into the grave the whole of His people lay slumbering there in Him, for they were in the loins of Jesus as Levi was in the loins of Abraham; and when He rose they rose and received the foretaste of their own future resurrection, because He lives they will also live; and now that He has gone up to heaven to claim the throne, He has claimed the throne for every soul that is in Him. Oh, this is joy indeed! Then how can I be afraid of God, for this day, by faith, I, a poor undeserving sinner, having put my trust in Jesus, can be bold and say that I sit upon the very throne of God. Don’t think that we have said too much, for in the person of Christ every believer is raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Because as Jesus is there, representatively, each one of us is there in Him.

I wish that I had power to bring out this precious doctrine of the incarnation as I desire too, but the more one ponders it, the happier one becomes. Let us view it as an all-important truth, that Jesus, the Son of God, has really come in the flesh. It is such an important truth, that we

have three witnesses appointed to keep it before us on earth. We have been insisting many times in this church on the spirituality of Christian worship. We have shown that the outward acts and deeds in Christianity, by itself, accomplishes nothing, it is the inward spirit that really means anything. I must confess that I have sometimes said to myself, and I hope not rebelliously, "What is Baptism for, and What is the Lord's Supper for?" These two outward ordinances, whatever may be their perfect purposes, have been the two things around which more errors have clustered than around anything else; and I have heard it said, by friends inclined to follow more fully the teachings of the Quakers, "Why not put aside the outward and visible altogether? Let it be the Spirit Baptism and not the water, let there be no bread and wine, but let there be fellowship with Christ without the outward sign. "I must confess, though I would never do it, because I am faithful to the plain testimony of Scripture, yet my heart has been somewhat tempted, and I have said to myself, "Men will always pervert these two ordinances, wouldn't it be better to just do away with them?"

While I have struggled over this issue, I have always be conscious that the ordinances are right, and must be practiced faithfully, because I have rested on the text, "There are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement." And what do they bear witness to? They bear witness to the mission of Jesus as the Christ, in other words to the real incarnation of God. They bear witness to the material nature of Christ. Have you ever noticed that when people have given up the two outward ordinances, they have usually betrayed a tendency to give up the literal fact that "God was made flesh!" The literal fact that Christ was really a man has generally been doubted or thrown into the background when the two outward ordinances have been given up, and I believe that these two symbolical ordinances, which are a link between the spiritual and the material, are set up on purpose to show that Christ Jesus, though most gloriously a spirit, was also a man clothed in a body of real flesh and blood like our own; so that He could be touched and handled even as He said, "Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." When I think of the Holy Spirit who bears witness that Christ was really a man, I thank Him for that witness; then I turn to the water, and when I read that Christ was publicly

baptized in Jordan, I perceive that He could not have been a phantom; He could not have been a mere supernatural appearance, for He was immersed in water, He must have been a solid substantial man. The preservation of the ordinance of baptism is a witness to the reality of the incarnate God. Then comes the blood, He could not have shed blood on Calvary if He had been only a vision. There could have been no blood streaming down from His side when the spear pierced Him if He had been only a ghostly appearance; He must have been solid flesh and blood like ourselves; and as often as we come to His table, and we take the cup and hear it said, "This cup is the New Covenant in my blood," there is a third witness on earth to the fact that Jesus did appear in very flesh and blood among men. So that the Spirit, the water, and the blood, are the three standing testimonies in the church of God, that Christ was God, and that He was also really, solidly, and substantially man. I will delight in the ordinances all the more because of this. Those two ordinances serve to make us remember that Christ was really flesh and blood, and that Christianity has something to do with this flesh and blood of ours. This very body is to rise again from the tomb; Jesus came to deliver this weak flesh from corruption; and so, while we must always keep the spiritual uppermost, we are prevented from casting away the material body as though that were from the devil. Christ purified as well the realm of matter as the realm of spirit; and in both He reigns triumphant. There is great comfort here.

III. Lastly, we can only take a few moments in APPLYING THE CURE TO VARIOUS CASES.

Child of God, You say, "I dare not come to God today, I feel so weak." Do not fear, for He that is born in Bethlehem said, "A bruised reed I will not break, and a smoldering wick I will not snuff out." "I will never get to heaven," says another; "I will never see acceptance on God's face; I am so tempted." "Do not fear, For you do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with your weaknesses, but you have one who has been tempted in every way, just as you are—yet was without sin." "But I am so lonely in the world," says another, "No man cares about me." Regardless, there is one man who does care; a true man like yourself. Furthermore, He is your fellow man, and does not forget the lonely spirit.

But I hear a sinner say, "I am afraid to go to God this morning and confess that I am a sinner." Well, don't go to God alone, but go to the member of the Trinity who is truly God and who also is a man—the God/man Christ Jesus. Surely you cannot be afraid of Him. If you only knew Jesus you would go to Him at once; you would not be afraid to tell Him your sins, for you would know that He would say, "Go now and leave your life of sin."

"I can't pray," one says, "I feel afraid to pray." What, afraid to pray, when it is a man who listens to you! You might dread the face of God, but when it is God in human flesh why should you be alarmed? Go, weak sinner, go to Jesus.

"I feel," one says, "unfit to come." You may be unfit to come to God, but you cannot be unfit to come to Jesus. There is a fitness necessary to stand in the presence of the Holy God, but there is no fitness needed in coming to the Lord Jesus. Come as you are, guilty, and lost, and ruined. Come just as you are, and He will receive you.

"Oh," says another, "I cannot trust." I can understand your not being able to trust the great invisible God, but can't you trust that dying, bleeding Son of Man who is also the Son of God?

"But I cannot hope," says another, "that He would even look on me:" and yet He used to look on such as you are. He received sinners and ate with them, and even prostitutes were not driven from His presence. Oh, do not be afraid, since God has taken man into union with Himself! If I speak to one who by reason of sin has wandered so far away from God that he is even afraid to think of God's name, yet inasmuch as Jesus Christ is called "the sinner's Friend," I pray that you think of Him, poor soul, as your friend. And, oh! may the Spirit of God open your blind eyes to see that there is no reason for your keeping away from God, except your own mistaken thoughts of Him! May you believe that He is able and willing to save to the uttermost! May you understand His good and gracious character, His readiness to forgive offenses, wickedness, and sin! And may the sweet influences of grace compel you to come to Him this very morning! God grant that Jesus Christ may come to live in you, the hope of glory; and then you will sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth

peace, good will toward men." Amen.

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The Incarnation and Birth of Christ

"But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."--Micah 5:2.

This is the season of the year when, whether we wish it or not, we are compelled to think of the birth of Christ. I hold it to be one of the greatest absurdities under heaven to think that there is any religion in keeping Christmas-day. There are no probabilities whatever that our Saviour Jesus Christ was born on that day, and the observance of it is purely of Popish origin; doubtless those who are Catholics have a right to hallow it, but I do not see how consistent Protestants can account it in the least sacred. However, I wish there were ten or a dozen Christmas-days in the year; for there is work enough in the world, and a little more rest would not hurt labouring people. Christmas-day is really a boon to us; particularly as it enables us to assemble round the family hearth and meet our friends once more. Still, although we do not fall exactly in the track of other people, I see no harm in thinking of the incarnation and birth of the Lord Jesus. We do not wish to be classed with those

"Who with more care keep holiday
The wrong, than others the right way."

The old Puritans made a parade of work on Christmas-day, just to show that they protested against the observance of it. But we believe they entered that protest so completely, that we are willing, as their descendants, to take the good accidentally conferred by the day, and leave

its superstitions to the superstitious.

To proceed at once to what we have to say to you: we notice, first, who it was that sent Christ forth. God the Father here speaks, and says, "Out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel." Secondly, where did he come to at the time of his incarnation? Thirdly, what did he come for? "To be ruler in Israel." Fourthly, had he ever come before? Yes, he had. "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

I. First, then, WHO SENT JESUS CHRIST?

The answer is returned to us by the words of the text. "Out of thee" saith Jehovah, speaking by the mouth of Micah, I out of thee shall he come forth unto me." It is a sweet thought that Jesus Christ, did not come forth without his Father's permission, authority, consent, and assistance. He was sent of the Father, that he might be the Saviour of men. We are, alas! too apt to forget, that while there are distinctions as to the persons in the Trinity, there are no distinctions of honor; and we do very frequently ascribe the honor of our salvation, or at least the depths of its mercy and the extremity of its benevolence, more to Jesus Christ than we do to the Father. This is a very great mistake. What if Jesus came? Did not his Father send him? If he was made a child did not the Holy Ghost beget him? If he spake wondrously, did not his Father pour grace into his lips, that he might be an able minister of the new covenant? If his Father did forsake him when he drank the bitter cup of gall, did he not love him still? and did he not, by-and by, after three days, raise him from the dead, and at last receive him up on high, leading captivity captive? Ah! beloved, he who knoweth the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost as he should know them, never setteth one before another; he is not more thankful to one than the other; he sees them at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane, and on Calvary, all equally engaged in the work of salvation. "He shall come forth unto me." O Christian, hast thou put thy confidence in the man Christ Jesus? Hast thou placed thy reliance solely on him? And art thou united with him? Then believe that thou art united unto the God of heaven; since to the man Christ Jesus thou art brother and holdest closest fellowship, thou art linked thereby with God the Eternal, and "the Ancient of days" is thy Father and thy friend. "He shall come forth unto me". Did you never

see the depth of love there was in the heart of Jehovah, when God the Father equipped his Son for the great enterprise of mercy? There had been a sad day in Heaven once before, when Satan fell, and dragged with him a third of the stars of heaven, and when the Son of God launching from his great right hand the Omnipotent thunders, dashed the rebellious crew to the pit of perdition; but if we could conceive a grief in heaven, that must have been a sadder day, when the Son of the Most High left his Father's bosom, where he had lain from before all worlds "Go," saith the Father, "and thy Father's blessing on thy head!" Then comes the unrobing. How do angels crowd around to see the Son of God take off his robes He laid aside his crown; he said, "My father, I am Lord over all, blessed for ever, but I will lay my crown aside, and be as mortal men are." He strips himself of his bright vest of glory; "Father," he says, "I will wear a robe of clay, just such a men wear." Then he takes off all those jewels wherewith he was glorified; he lays aside his starry mantles and robes of light, to dress himself in the simple garments of the peasant of Galilee. What a solemn disrobing that must have been!

And next, can you picture the dismissal! The angels attend the Saviour through the streets, until they approach the doors: when an angel cries, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and let the king of glory through!" Oh! methinks the angels must have wept when they lost the company of Jesus--when the Sun of Heaven bereaved them of all its light. But they went after him. They descended with him; and when his spirit entered into flesh and he became a babe, he was attended by that mighty host of angels, who after they had been with him to Bethlehem's manger, and seen him safely, laid on his mother's breast, in their journey upwards appeared to the shepherds and told them that he was born king of the Jews. The Father sent him! Contemplate that subject. Let your soul get hold of it, and in every period of his life think that he suffered what the Father willed; that every step of his life was marked with the approval of the great I AM. Let every thought that you have of Jesus be also connected with the eternal, ever-blessed God; for "he," saith Jehovah, "shall come forth unto me." Who sent him, then? The answer is, his Father.

II. Now, secondly, WHERE DID HE COME TO?

A word or two concerning Bethlehem. It seemed meet and right that our Saviour should be born in Bethlehem and that because of Bethlehem's history, Bethlehem's name, and Bethlehem's position--little in Judah.

1. First, it seemed necessary that Christ should be born in Bethlehem, because of Bethlehem's history. Dear to every Israelite was the little village of Bethlehem. Jerusalem might outshine it in splendour; for there stood the temple, the glory of the whole earth, and "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth was Mount Zion;" yet around Bethlehem there clustered a number of incidents which always made it a pleasant resting-place to every Jewish mind; and even the Christian cannot help loving Bethlehem. The first mention, I think, that we have of Bethlehem is a sorrowful one. There Rachel died. If you turn to the 35th of Genesis you will find it said in the 16th verse--"And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath; and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave, that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day." A singular incident this--almost prophetic. Might not Mary have called her own son Jesus, her Ben-oni; for he was to be the child of Sorrow? Simeon said to her--"Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." But while she might have called him Ben-oni, what did God his Father call him? Benjamin, the son of my right hand. Ben-oni was he as a man; Benjamin as to his Godhead.

This little incident seems to be almost a prophecy that Ben-oni--Benjamin, the Lord Jesus, should be born in Bethlehem. But another woman makes this place celebrated. That woman's name was Naomi. There lived at Bethlehem in after days, when, perhaps, the stone that Jacob's fondness had raised had been covered with moss and its inscription obliterated, another woman named Naomi. She too was a daughter of joy, and yet a daughter of bitterness. Naomi was a woman whom the Lord had loved and blessed, but she had to go to a strange

land; and she said, "Call me not Naomi (pleasant) but let my name be called Mara (bitter) for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." Yet was she not alone amid all her losses, for there cleaved unto her Ruth the Moabitess, whose Gentile blood should unite with the pure untainted stream of the Jew, and should thus bring forth the Lord our Saviour, the great king both of Jews and Gentiles. That very beautiful book of Ruth had all its scenery laid in Bethlehem. It was at Bethlehem that Ruth went forth to glean in the fields of Boaz; it was there that Boaz looked upon her, and she bowed herself before her lord; it was there her marriage was celebrated; and in the streets of Bethlehem did Boaz and Ruth receive a blessing which made them fruitful so that Boaz became the father of Obed, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David. That last fact gilds Bethlehem with glory--the fact that David was born there--the mighty hero who smote the Philistine giant, who led the discontented of his land away from the tyranny of their monarch, and who afterwards, by a full consent of a willing people, was crowned king of Israel and Judah. Bethlehem was a royal city, because the kings were there brought forth. Little as Bethlehem was, it was much to be esteemed; because it was like certain principalities which we have in Europe, which are celebrated for nothing but for bringing forth the consorts of the royal families of England. It was right, then, from history, that Bethlehem should be the birth-place of Christ.

2. But again: there is something in the name of the place. "Bethlehem Ephratah." The word Bethlehem has a double meaning. It signifies "the house of bread," and "the house of war." Ought not Jesus Christ to be born in "the house of bread?" He is the Bread of his people, on which they feed. As our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, so do we live on Jesus here below. Famished by the world, we cannot feed on its shadows. Its husks may gratify the swinish taste of worldlings, for they are swine; but we need something more substantial, and in that blest bread of heaven, made of the bruised body of our Lord Jesus, and baked in the furnace of his agonies, we find a blessed food. No food like Jesus to the desponding soul or to the strongest saint. The very meanest of the family of God goes to Bethlehem for his bread; and the strongest man, who eats strong meat, goes to Bethlehem for it. House of Bread! whence could come our nourishment but from thee? We have tried Sinai, but on her rugged

steeps there grow no fruits, and her thorny heights yield no corn whereon we may feed. We have repaired even to Tabor itself, where Christ was transfigured, and yet there we have not been able to eat his flesh and drink his blood. But Bethlehem, thou house of bread, rightly wast thou called; for there the bread of life was first handed down for man to eat. And it is also called "the house of war;" because Christ is to a man "the house of bread," or else "the house of war." While he is food to the righteous he causeth war to the wicked, according to his own word-- "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am not come to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Sinner! if thou dost not know Bethlehem as "the house of bread," it shall be to thee a "house of war." If from the lips of Jesus thou dost never drink sweet honey--if thou art not like the bee, which sippeth sweet luscious liquor from the Rose of Sharon, then out of the selfsame mouth there shall go forth against thee a two-edged sword; and that mouth from which the righteous draw their bread, shall be to thee the mouth of destruction and the cause of thine ill. Jesus of Bethlehem, house of bread and house of war, we trust we know thee as our bread. Oh! that some who are now at war with thee might hear in their hearts, as well as in their ears the song--

"Peace on earth, and mercy mild.
God and sinners reconciled."

And now for that word Ephratah That was the old name of the place which the Jews retained and loved. The meaning of it is, "fruitfulness," or "abundance." Ah! well was Jesus born in the house of fruitfulness; for whence cometh my fruitfulness and any fruitfulness, my brother, but from Bethlehem? Our poor barren hearts ne'er produced one fruit, or flower, till they were watered with the Saviour blood. It is his incarnation which fattens the soil of our hearts. There had been pricking thorns on all the ground, and mortal poisons, before he came; but our fruitfulness comes from him. "I am like a green fir-tree; from thee is my fruit found." "All my springs are in thee." If we be like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season, it is not because we were

naturally fruitful, but because of the rivers of water by which we were planted. It is Jesus that makes us fruitful. "If a man abide in me," he says, "and my words abide him, he shall bring forth much fruit." Glorious Bethlehem Ephratah! Rightly named! Fruitful house of bread--the house of abundant provision for the people of God!

3. We notice, next, the position of Bethlehem. It is said to be "little among the thousands of Judah." Why is this? Because Jesus Christ always goes among little ones. He was born in the little one "among the thousands of Judah." No Bashan's high hill, not on Hebron's royal mount, not in Jerusalem's palaces. but the humble, yet illustrious, village of Bethlehem. There is a passage in Zechariah which teaches us a lesson:--It is said that the man on the red horse stood among the myrtle-trees. Now the myrtle-trees grow at the bottom of the hill; and the man on the red horse always rides there. He does not ride on the mountain-top; he rides among the humble in heart. "With this man will I dwell, saith the Lord, with him who is of a humble and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." There are some little ones here this morning--"little among the thousands of Judah." No one ever heard your name, did they? If you were buried, and had your name on your tombstone, it would never be noticed. Those who pass by would say, "it is nothing to me: I never knew him." You do not know much of yourself, or think much of yourself; you can scarcely read, perhaps. Or if you have some talent and ability, you are despised amongst men; or, if you are not despised by them, you despise yourself. You are one of the little ones. Well, Christ is always born in Bethlehem among the little ones. Big hearts never get Christ inside of them; Christ lieth not in great hearts, but in little ones. Mighty and proud spirits never have Jesus Christ, for he cometh in at low doors, but he will not come in at high ones. He who hath a broken heart, and a low spirit, shall have the Saviour, but none else. He healeth not the prince and the king, but "the broken in heart, and he bindeth up their wounds." Sweet thought! He is the Christ of the little ones. "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."

We cannot pass away from this without another thought here, which is, how wonderfully mysterious was that providence which brought Jesus

Christ's mother to Bethlehem at the very time when she was to be delivered! His parents were residing at Nazareth; and what should they want to travel at that time for? Naturally, they would have remained at home; it was not at all likely that his mother would have taken journey to Bethlehem while in so peculiar a condition; but Caesar Augustus issues a decree that they are to be taxed. Very well, then, let them be taxed at Nazareth. No; it pleases him that they should all go to their city. But why should Caesar Augustus think of it just at that particular time? Simply because, while man deviseth his way, the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Why, what a thousand chances, as the world has it, met together to bring about this event! First of all, Caesar quarrels with Herod; one of the Herods was deposed; Caesar says, "I shall tax Judea, and make it a province, instead of having it for a separate kingdom. Well, it must be done. But when is it to be done? This taxing, it is said, was first commenced when Cyreneus was governor. But why is the census to be taken at that particular period--suppose, December? Why not have had it last October and why could not the people be taxed where they were living? Was not their money just as good there as anywhere else? It was Caesar's whim; but it was God's decree. Oh! we love the sublime doctrine of eternal absolute predestination. Some have doubted its being consistent with the free agency of man. We know well it is so, and we never saw any difficulty in the subject; we believe metaphysicians have made difficulties; we see none ourselves. It is for us to believe, that man does as he pleases, yet notwithstanding he always does as God decrees. If Judas betrays Christ, "thereunto he was appointed;" and if Pharaoh hardens his heart, yet, "for this purpose have I raised thee up, for to show forth my power in thee." Man doth as he wills; but God maketh him do as he willeth, too. Nay, not only is the will of man under the absolute predestination of Jehovah; but all things, great or little, are of him. Well hath the good poet said, "Doubtless the sailing of a cloud hath Providence to its pilot; doubtless the root of an oak is gnarled for a special purpose, God compasseth all things, mantling the globe like air."

There is nothing great or little, that is not from him. The summer dust moves in its orbit, guided by the same hand which rolls the stars along; the dewdrops have their father, and trickle on the rose leaf as God bids them; yea, the sear leaves of the forest, when hurled along by the tempest,

have their allotted position where they shall fall, nor can they go beyond it. In the great, and in the little, there is God--God in everything, working all things according to the counsel of his own will; and though man seeks to go against his Maker, yet he cannot. God hath bounded the sea with a barrier of sand; and if the sea mount up wave after wave, yet it shall not exceed its allotted channel. Everything is of God; and unto him, who guideth the stars and wingeth sparrows, who ruleth planets and yet moveth atoms, who speaks thunders and yet whispers zephyrs, unto him be glory; for there is God in everything,

III. This brings us to the third point: WHAT DID JESUS COME FOR?

He came to be "ruler in Israel." A very singular thing is this, that Jesus Christ was said to have been "born the king of the Jews." Very few have ever been "born king." Men are born princes, but they are seldom born kings. I do not think you can find an instance in history where any infant was born king. He was the prince of Wales, perhaps, and he had to wait a number of years, till his father died, and then they manufactured him into a king, by putting a crown on his head; and a sacred chrism, and other silly things; but he was not born a king. I remember no one who was born a king except Jesus; and there is emphatic meaning in that verse that we sing

"Born thy people to deliver;
Born a child, and yet a king."

The moment that he came on earth he was a king. He did not wait till his majority that he might take his empire; but as soon as his eye greeted the sunshine he was a king; from the moment that his little hands grasped anything, they grasped a sceptre, as soon as his pulse beat, and his blood began to flow, his heart beat royally, and his pulse beat an imperial measure, and his blood flowed in a kingly current. He was born a king. He came "to be ruler in Israel. "Ah!" says one, "then he came in vain, for little did he exercise his rule; _he came unto his own, and his own received him not; he came to Israel and he was not their ruler, but he was _despised and rejected of men,' cast off by them all, and forsaken by Israel, unto whom he came." Ay, but "they are not all Israel who are of Israel," neither because they are the seed of Abraham shall they all be

called. Ah, no! He is not ruler of Israel after the flesh, but he is the ruler of Israel after the spirit. Many such have obeyed him. Did not the apostles bow before him, and own him as their king? And now, doth not Israel salute him as their ruler? Do not all the seed of Abraham after the spirit, even all the faithful, for he is "the father of the faithful," acknowledge that unto Christ belong the shields of the mighty, for he is the king of the whole earth? Doth he not rule over Israel? Ay, verily he doth; and those who are not ruled over by Christ are not of Israel. He came to be a ruler over Israel.

My brother, hast thou submitted to the sway of Jesus? Is he ruler in thine heart, or is he not? We may know Israel by this: Christ is come into their hearts, to be ruler over them. "Oh!" saith one, "I do as I please, I was never in bondage to any man." Ah! then thou hatest the rule of Christ. "Oh!" says another, "I submit myself to my minister, to my clergyman, or to my priest, and I think that what he tells me is enough, for he is my ruler." Dost thou? Ah! poor slave, thou knowest not thy dignity; for nobody is thy lawful ruler but the Lord Jesus Christ. "Ay," says another, "I have professed his religion, and I am his follower." But doth he rule in thine heart? Doth he command thy will? Doth he guide thy judgment? Dost thou ever seek counsel at his hand in thy difficulties? Art thou desirous to honor him, and to put crowns upon his heart? Is he thy ruler? If so, then thou art one of Israel; for it is written, "He shall come to be ruler in Israel." Blessed Lord Jesus! thou art ruler in thy people's hearts, and thou ever shalt be; we want no other ruler save thyself, and we will submit to none other. We are free, because we are the servants of Christ; we are at liberty, because he is our ruler, and we know no bondage and no slavery, because Jesus Christ alone is monarch of our hearts. He came "to be ruler in Israel;" and mark you, that mission of his is not quite fulfilled yet, and shall not be till the latter-day glories.

In a little while you shall see Christ come again, to be ruler over his people Israel, and ruler over them not only as spiritual Israel, but even as natural Israel, for the Jews shall be restored to their land, and the tribes of Jacob shall yet sing in the halls of their temple; unto God there shall yet again be offered Hebrew songs of praise, and the heart of the unbelieving Jew shall be melted at the feet of the true Messiah. In a short

time, he who at his birth was hailed king of the Jews by Easterns, and at his death was written king of the Jews by a Western, shall be called king of the Jews everywhere--yes, king of the Jews and Gentiles also--in that universal monarchy whose dominion shall be co-extensive with the habitable globe, and whose duration shall be coeval with time itself. He came to be a ruler in Israel, and a ruler most decidedly he shall be, when he shall reign among his people with his ancients gloriously.

IV. And now, the last thing is, DID JESUS CHRIST EVER COME BEFORE?

We answer, yes: for our text says, "Whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."

First, Christ has had his goings forth in his Godhead. "From everlasting." He has not been a secret and a silent person up to this moment. That new-born child there has worked wonders long ere now; that infant slumbering in its mother's arms is the infant of to-day, but it is the ancient of eternity; that child who is there hath not made its appearance on the stage of this world; his name is not yet written in the calendar of the circumcised; but still though you wist it not, "his goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."

1. Of old he went forth as our covenant head in election, "according as he hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world." Christ be my first elect, he said, Then chose our souls in Christ our Head."

2. He had goings forth for his people, as their representative before the throne, even before they were begotten in the world. It was from everlasting that his mighty fingers grasped the pen, the stylus of ages, and wrote his own name, the name of the eternal Son of God; it was from everlasting that he signed the compact with his Father, that he would pay blood for blood, wound for wound, suffering for suffering, agony for agony, and death for death, in the behalf of his people; it was from everlasting that he gave himself up, without a murmuring word, that from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot he might sweat blood, that he might be spit upon, pierced, mocked, rent asunder, suffer the pain of death, and the agonies of the cross. His goings forth as our Surety were

from everlasting. Pause, my soul, and wonder! Thou hadst goings forth in the person of Jesus from everlasting. Not only when thou wast born into the world did Christ love thee, but his delights were with the sons of men before there were any sons of men. Often did he think of them; from everlasting to everlasting he had set his affection upon them. What! believer, has he been so long about thy salvation, and will he not accomplish it? Has he from everlasting been going forth to save me, and will he lose me now? What! has he had me in his hand, as his precious jewel, and will he now let me slip between his precious fingers? Did he choose me before the mountains were brought forth, or the channels of the deep scooped out, and will he lose me now? Impossible!

"My name from the palms of his hands
Eternity cannot erase;
Impress'd on his heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace."

I am sure he would not love me so long, and then leave off loving me. If he intended to be tired of me, he would have been tired of me long before now. If he had not loved me with a love as deep as hell and as unutterable as the grave, if he had not given his whole heart to me, I am sure he would have turned from me long ago. He knew what I would be, and he has had long time enough to consider of it; but I am his choice, and there is an end of it; and unworthy as I am, it is not mine to grumble, if he is but contented with me. But he is contented with me--he must be contented with me--for he has known me long enough to know my faults. He knew me before I knew myself; yea, he knew me before I was myself. Long before my members were fashioned they were written in his book, "when as yet there were none of them," his eyes of affection were set on them. He knew how badly I would act towards him, and yet he has continued to love me;

"His love in times past forbids me to think.
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink."

No; since "his goings forth were of old from everlasting," they will be "to everlasting."

Secondly, we believe that Christ has come forth of old, even to men, so that men have beheld him. I will not stop to tell you that it was Jesus who walked in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day, for his delights were with the sons of men; nor will I detain you by pointing out all the various ways in which Christ came forth to his people in the form of the angel of the covenant, the Paschal Lamb, the and ten thousand types with which the sacred history is so replete; but I will rather point you to four occasions when Jesus Christ our Lord has appeared on earth as a man, before his great incarnation for our salvation. And, first, I beg to refer you to the 18th chapter of Genesis, where Jesus Christ appeared to Abraham, of whom we read, "The Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground. "But whom did he bow to? He said "My Lord," only to one of them. There was one man between the other two, the most conspicuous for his glory, for he was the God-man Christ; the other two were created angels, who for a time had assumed the appearance of men. But this was the man Christ Jesus. "And he said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree." You will notice that this majestic man, this glorious person, stayed behind to talk with Abraham. In the 22nd verse it is said,-- "And the men turned their faces from thence and went towards Sodom;" that is, two of them, as you will see in the next chapter-- "but Abraham stood yet before the Lord." You will notice that this man, the Lord, held sweet fellowship with Abraham, and allowed Abraham to plead for the city he was about to destroy. He was in the positive form of man; so that when he walked the streets of Judea it was not the first time that he was a man; he was so before, in "the plain of Mamre, in the heat of the day."

There is another instance-his appearing to Jacob, which you have recorded in the 32nd chapter of Genesis and the 24th verse. All his family were gone, "And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go,

for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God." This was a man, and yet God. "For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." And Jacob knew that this man was God, for he says in the 30th verse: ,for I have seen God face to face. and my life is preserved."

Another instance you will find in the book of Joshua When Joshua had crossed the narrow stream of Jordan, and had entered the promised land, and was about to drive out the Canaanites, lo! this mighty man-God appeared to Joshua. In the 5th chapter, at the 13th verse, we read- And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went unto him, and (like a brave warrior, as he was,) said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." And Joshua saw at once that there was divinity in him; for Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said to him, "What saith my lord unto his servant?" Now, if this had been a created angel he would have reproved Joshua, and said, "I am one of your fellow servants." But no; "the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."

Another remarkable instance is that recorded in the third chapter of the book of Daniel, where we read the account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being cast into the fiery furnace, which was so fierce that it destroyed the men who threw them in. Suddenly the king said to his counsellors- Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, o king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." How should Nebuchadnezzar know that? Only that there was something so noble and majestic in the way in which that wondrous Man bore himself, and some awful influence about him, who so marvellously broke the consuming teeth of that biting and devouring flame, so that it could not so much as singe the children of God. Nebuchadnezzar recognized his

humanity. He did not say, "I see three men and an angel," but he said, "I see four positive men, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.' You see, then, what is meant by his goings forth being I from everlasting:'

Observe for a moment here, that each of these four great occurrences happened to the saints when they were engaged in very eminent duty, or when they were about to be engaged in it. Jesus Christ does not appear to his saints every day. He did not come to see Jacob till he was in affliction; he did not visit Joshua before he was about to be engaged in a righteous war. It is only in extraordinary seasons that Christ thus manifests himself to his people. When Abraham interceded for Sodom, Jesus was with him, for one of the highest and noblest employments of a Christian is that of intercession, and it is when he is so engaged that he will be likely to obtain a sight of Christ. Jacob was engaged in wrestling, and that is a part of a Christian's duty to which some of you never did attain; consequently, you do not have many visits from Jesus. It was when Joshua was exercising bravery that the Lord met him. So with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: they were in the high places of persecution, on account of their adherence to duty, when he came to them, and said, "I will be with you, passing through the fire." There are certain peculiar places we must enter, to meet with the Lord. We must be in great trouble, like Jacob; we must be in great labour, like Joshua; we must have great intercessory faith, like Abraham; we must be firm in the performance of duty, like Shadrach Meshach, and Abednego; or else we shall not know him, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting;" or, if we know him, we shall not be able to "comprehend with all the saints what is the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,"

Sweet Lord Jesus! thou whose goings forth were of old, even from everlasting, thou hast not left thy goings forth yet. Oh! that thou wouldst go forth this day, to cheer the faint, to help the weary, to bind up our wounds, to comfort our distresses! Go forth, we beseech thee, to conquer sinners, to subdue hard hearts-to break the iron gates of sinners' lusts, and cut the iron bars of their sirs in pieces! O Jesus! go forth; and when thou goest forth, come thou to me! Am I a hardened sinner? Come thou to me; I want thee: "

Oh! let thy grace my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph too;
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the honours of thy word."

Poor sinner! Christ has not left going forth yet. And when he goes forth, recollect, he goes to Bethlehem. Have you a Bethlehem in your heart? Are you little? will go forth to you yet. Go home and seek him by earnest prayer. If you have been made to weep on account of sin, and think yourself too little to be noticed, go home, little one! Jesus comes to little ones; his goings forth were of old, and he is going forth now. He will come to your poor old house; he will come to your poor wretched heart; he will come, though you are in poverty, and clothed in rags, though you are destitute, tormented, and afflicted; he will come, for his goings forth have been of old from everlasting. Trust him, trust him, trust him; and he will go forth to abide in your heart for ever. Amen.

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The Wise Men, the Star, and the Savior

"Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." Matthew 2:2

The incarnation of the Son of God was one of the greatest events in the history of the universe. Its actual occurrence was not, however, known to all mankind, but was specifically revealed to the shepherds of Bethlehem and to certain wise men from the east. To shepherds--the illiterate, men of very little learning--the angels in choral voices made known the birth of the Savior, Christ the Lord, and they hurried to Bethlehem to see the great sight; while the Scribes, the writers and expounders of the Law, knew nothing concerning the long promised birth of the Messiah. No band of angels entered the assembly of the Sanhedrin and proclaimed that the Christ was born; and when the chief priests and Pharisees [elite religious leaders] met together, though they gathered around copies of

the law to consider where the Christ would be born, still it was not known to them that He had actually come, nor do they seem to have taken more than a passing interest in the matter, though they might have known that the time was very near when the Messiah would come, as spoken of by the prophets. How mysterious are the times for the giving of grace; the lowly things are chosen and the eminent are passed by! The coming of the Redeemer is revealed to the shepherds who kept their flocks of sheep by night, but not to the false religious shepherds whose allowed their sheep to stray. Admire the sovereignty of God.

The good news was also made known to wise men, magi, students of the stars and of old prophetic books from the far east. It would not be possible to tell how far off their native country lay; it may have been so distant that the journey occupied nearly the whole of the two years of which they spoke concerning the star. Traveling was slow in those days, surrounded with difficulties and many dangers. They may have come from Persia, or India, or even from the mysterious land of Sinim, now known as China. If so, strange and unknown must have been the speech of those who worshipped around the young child at Bethlehem, yet He needed no interpreter to understand and accept their adoration. Why was the birth of the King of the Jews made known to these foreigners, and not to those nearer home? Why did the Lord select those who lived hundreds of miles away, while the children of Israel, in whose very midst the Savior was brought forth, were yet strangely ignorant of His presence? See here again another instance of the sovereignty of God. Both in shepherds and in Eastern magi gathering around the young Child, I see God dispensing His favors as He wills; and, as I see it, I exclaim, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure." Herein we again see another instance of God's sovereign will; for I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon; there were many Jews in Israel who were called wise men, but the star did not appear to any of them; rather it shone only on Gentile eyes, and led a chosen company from the ends of the earth to bow at Immanuel's feet.

Sovereignty in these cases clothed itself in the robes of mercy. It was a great mercy that regarded the low estate of the shepherds, and it was a far reaching mercy which gathered from lands which lay in darkness a company of men and allowed them to see God's wonderful and blessed Savior. Mercy wearing her resplendent jewels was present with divine sovereignty in the lowly abode of Bethlehem. Isn't it a delightful thought, that around the cradle of the Savior, as well as around His throne in the highest heaven, these two attributes meet? He makes himself known--and herein is mercy; but it is to those whom He has chosen--and herein He shows that He will have mercy on whom He chooses to have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He chooses to have compassion.

We will now endeavor to learn a practical lesson from the story of the wise men who came from the east to worship Christ. We may, if God the Holy Spirit will teach us, gather such instruction as may lead us also to become worshipers of the Savior, and joyful believers in Him.

Notice, first "their inquiry;" may many of us become inquirers on the same matter--"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" Notice, secondly, "their encouragement"--"We saw His star in the east." Because they had seen His star they felt bold enough to ask, "Where is He?" And then, thirdly, "their example"--"We have come to worship Him."

I. THEIR INQUIRY--"Where is He?"

Many things are evident in this question. It is clear that when the wise men thus inquired, there was in their minds "interest awakened." The King of the Jews was born, but Herod did not ask, "Where is He?" until his jealousy was excited, and then he asked the question in a malicious spirit. Christ was born in Bethlehem, near to Jerusalem; yet throughout all the streets of the holy city there were no inquirers asking, "Where is He?" He was to be the glory of Israel, and yet in Israel there were indeed few who, like these wise men, asked the question, "Where is He?" My dear hearers, I will believe that there are some here this morning whom God intends to bless, and it will be a very hopeful sign that He intends to do so, if there any interest awakened in your mind concerning the work and person of the incarnate God. There are few who anxiously desire to

know of Him. Yes! when we preach Him most earnestly, and tell of His sorrows as the One who suffered a death of torment for human sin, we are compelled to lament most bitterly over the carelessness of mankind, and mournfully ask,

"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by;
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"

He is despised and rejected by men, He has no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him; but there are a chosen number [the Elect] who inquirer diligently, and who come to receive Him; to these who believe in His name, He gives the right to become children of God. It is a happy occurrence, therefore, whenever there is interest manifested. Interest in the things of Christ is not always demonstrated, even by those who regularly attend church. It gets to be a mere mechanical habit to attend public worship; you become accustomed to sit through the various parts of the service, to stand and sing at certain time, and to listen to the preacher with an apparent attention during the sermon; but to be really interested, to long to know what it is all about, to especially know whether you have a part in it, whether Jesus came from heaven to save you, whether He was born of a virgin for you, to make such personal inquiries with deep anxiety, is far from being a general practice: I pray to God that all who have ears to hear would hear the truth of the Word of God. Whenever the Word is heard with solemn interest, it is a very encouraging sign. It was said long ago, "They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces toward it." There is great hope for the man who listens with deep attention to the Word of God, searches God's book, and engages in thoughtful meditation with the view of understanding the gospel. When he feels that there is something weighty and important, something worth knowing, in the gospel of Jesus, then we are encouraged and hope good things about him.

But in the case of the wise men we see not only interest shown, but "outright belief." They said, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?" They were, therefore, fully convinced that He was the King of the Jews, and had recently been born. As a preacher I feel it to be a great mercy that I have to deal generally with persons who have some degree of belief concerning the things of God. I pray to God that we have more

missions to those who have no sort of faith and no knowledge of Christ; and may the day come when Jesus Christ will be known everywhere. But here at home with you we have something to begin with. You do believe somewhat concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was born King of the Jews. Consider it a blessing that you have already believed some truth. I count it a great advantage to a young man that he believes the Bible to be true. There are some who have a hard fight to reach so far as that, for the sinning ways of the world has warped their minds. It is not, of course, an advantage which will save you, for many go down to hell believing the Scriptures to be true, and thus they accumulate guilt upon themselves from that very fact; but it is a great advantage to be assured that you have God's Word before you, and not to be troubled with questions about its inspiration and authenticity. O that you may go from that point of faith to another, and become a true and devoted believer in Jesus.

These wise men were men so far advanced that they had some leverage for a further lift of faith, for they believed that Christ was born, and born a King. There are many who are not saved, and yet they know that Jesus is the Son of God. Even here today are those who have no doubts about the atonement of Jesus Christ. You certainly stand in the position of highly favored persons. I only trust you may have grace given to you that you would avail yourselves of the favorable position in which God has placed you. Value what you have already received. When a blind man, whose eyes have long been closed in darkness, has an operation by an eye surgeon and is thus able to see a little light, he is very thankful for it, and hopeful that another operation may allow the full light to stream forth on the darkened eyeball. So, dear friend, be thankful for any light. O soul, so soon to pass into another world, so sure to be lost except you have the divine light, so certain to be cast into the outer darkness of hell, where there is weeping and wailing and the gnashing of teeth, be thankful for a spark of heavenly light; prize it, treasure it, be anxious about it that it may come to something more, and who knows, the Lord may bless you with the fullness of His truth?

When a great bridge was to be built over a very broad river, the challenge was to pass the first rope across the wide river. I have read that it was accomplished by flying a kite, and allowing it to fall on the opposite bank.

The kite carried across a piece of string, then to the string was tied a line, and to the line a rope, and to the rope a stronger rope, and by-and-by the broad river was spanned, and the bridge was finished. In the same way God works by degrees. It is a good to see in human hearts a little interest concerning things divine, a little desire after Christ, a feeble wish to know who He is, and whether He is available to save the sinner from his judgment and torment. This hunger will lead to a craving after more, and that craving will be followed by another, till at last the soul will find her Lord and be satisfied in Him. In the wise men's case therefore we have, as I trust we have in some here, interest manifested, and a measure of outright belief.

Furthermore, in the case of the wise men, we see "ignorance admitted."

Wise men are never above asking questions, because they are wise men; so the magi asked, "Where is He?" Persons who have taken the name and degree of wise men, and are so esteemed, sometimes think it beneath them to confess any degree of ignorance, but the really wise do not think that way at all; they are too well instructed to be ignorant of their own ignorance. Many men might have been wise if they had but been aware that they were fools. The knowledge of our ignorance is the doorstep of the temple of knowledge. Some think they know, and therefore never know. Had they known that they were blind, they would soon have been made to see, but because they say, "We see," therefore their blindness remains. Beloved hearer, do you want to find a Savior? Do you desire to have all your many sins forgiven? Do you want to be reconciled to God the Father through Jesus Christ? Then don't be ashamed to ask, admit that you don't know. How would you know if heaven doesn't teach you? How would any man attain the knowledge of divine things, unless it be given to him from above? We must all be taught of the Spirit of God, or be fools forever. To know that we need to be taught of the Holy Spirit is one of the first lessons that the Holy Spirit Himself teaches us. Admit that you need a guide, and diligently ask for one. Cry out to God to lead you, and He will be your instructor. Do not be proud and self-sufficient. Ask for heavenly light, and you will receive it. Isn't it better to ask God to teach you, than to trust your own unaided reason? Bow, then, the knee, confess your aptness to error, and say, "What I don't know, please teach me."

Notice, however, that the wise men were not content with admitting their ignorance, but in their case they "craved information."

I cannot tell where they began to ask. They thought it likeliest that Jesus would be known in the most important city. Wasn't He the King of the Jews? Wouldn't He be certain to be known in the Capital? They went, therefore, to Jerusalem. Perhaps they asked the guards at the gate, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?" Truly the guards laughed and scorn them replying, "We know of no king but Herod." Then they met a drunkard in the streets, and said to him, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?" and he answered, "What do I care about such a crazy question? I am looking for another drink." They asked a merchant, but he sneered, and said, "Never mind kings, what will you buy today?" "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" they said to the Sadducee, the religious leader, and he replied, "Don't be so foolish as to talk in that way, or if you do, go call on my religious friend the Pharisee." They passed a woman in the streets, and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" but she said, "My child is sick at home, I have enough to do to think of my poor baby; I don't care who is born, or who may die." Even though they couldn't find the answers to their questions, they were not content until they had learned all that could be known. They did not know at first where the newborn King was, but they used every means to find Him, and asked everyone they could think of for information. It is delightful to see the holy eagerness of a soul which God has aroused; it cries, "I must be saved; I know something of the way of salvation, I am grateful for that, but I don't know all I want to know, and I can't rest until I do. If beneath the canopy of heaven a Savior is to be found, then I will find Him; if the Bible can teach me how to be saved, I will turn its pages day and night; I will go without sleep if in the reading of that book I may find Christ my Savior. If there is one whose preaching has been blessed to the souls of others, then I will hang on his lips, if perhaps the Word may be blessed to me, for I must have Christ: it is not I may or I may not have Him, but I `must' have Him; my hunger is great for this bread of heaven, my thirst unquenchable for this Water of Life; tell me, Christians, tell me, wise men, tell me, good men, tell me of any of you who can tell, Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? For I must have Christ, and I long to have him now."

Notice further, that in reference to these wise men from the east, there was for their search after Christ "a declared motive."

"Where is He," they said, "We have come to worship him!" Oh, dear soul, if you seek for Christ, let it be your motive that you will be saved by Him, and that henceforth and forever you may live to His glory. When it comes to this, that you don't listen to the gospel merely as a habit, but because you long to receive its promised salvation, it will not be long before you will find it. When a man says, I am going to church today to hear the Word of God preached, and my heart's desire is that God will grant me His salvation," then he will not go there in vain. When a hearer can declare, "As soon as I take my seat in the congregation, my one thought is, "Lord, bless my soul this day?" he won't be disappointed.

Usually in going to church we get what we came for. Some come because it is a habit, some to meet a friend, some don't even know why; but when you know what you come for, the Lord who gave you the desire will gratify it. I was pleased with the word of a dear sister this morning when I came in the church; she said to me, "My dear sir, my soul is very hungry this morning. May the Lord give you bread for me." I believe that food is being given to her. When a sinner is very hungry for Christ, Christ is very near to him. The worst of it is, many of you don't come to find Jesus, it is not Him you are seeking for; if you were seeking for Him, He would soon appear to you. A young woman was asked during a revival, "How is it that you have not found Christ?" "Sir," she said, "I think it is because I have not been looking for Him." It is true. None will be able to say in the end, if I haven't found Jesus, it must be because He has not been devoutly, earnestly, relentlessly sought, for His promise is, "Seek, and you will find." These wise men are to us a model in many things--their motive was clear to them, and they frankly acknowledged it to others. May all of us seek Jesus that we may worship Him.

Continuously there was an intense earnestness displayed by the wise men, which we would delight to see in any who as yet have not believed in Jesus. Evidently they were not just curiosity seekers. They came a long way, they suffered a lot of fatigue, they spoke about finding the newborn King in a practical, common sense way; they were not put off with this rebuff or that; they desired to find Him, and they would find Him. It is

most blessed to see the work of the Spirit in men's heart motivating them to long for the Savior to be their Lord and King; and to so long for Him that they will not accept defeat, thus they will leave no stone unturned, but by the Holy Spirit's help, they will be able to eventually say, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus, and He has become our salvation."

Am I at this moment speaking to anybody in particular? I trust I am. Some years ago there was a young man, who, on a morning much like the one today--cold, snowy, dark--entered a church, as you have done today. I thought as I came here, this morning, of that young man. I said to myself, "This morning is so very forbidding that I will have a very small congregation, but perhaps among them there will be one like that young man." To be plain to you, it comforted me to think that the morning when God blessed my soul with His saving grace, the preacher had a very small congregation, and it was very cold and bitter, and therefore I said to myself this morning, "Why shouldn't I go merrily to my task, and preach if there should only be a dozen there?" for Jesus may intend to reveal Himself to someone as He did to me, and that someone may be a soul winner, and the means of the salvation of tens of thousands in years to come. I wonder if that will occur to that young man over there, for I trust he has the searching heart of the wise men on his lips. I trust he will not quench those desires which now burn within him, but rather may the spark be fanned into a flame, and may this day witness his decision for Jesus. Oh, has the Lord looked on that young woman, or on that dear child, or on that elderly man over there? I don't know who it may be, but I will indeed bless God this morning, if the cry from many lips this morning is, "Sir, what must I do to be saved? Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?"

II. Having spoken of their inquiry, I will now notice **THEIR ENCOURAGEMENT**. Something encouraged these wise men to seek Jesus. It was this, "We saw His star."

Now, most of you who seek after Christ have a great encouragement in the fact that you have heard His gospel; you live in a land where you have the Scriptures, where Baptisms and the celebration of the Lord's Supper is freely accomplished. These are, as it were, Jesus Christ's star; they are

meant to lead you to Him. Here, observe, that to see His star was a "great favor." It was not given to all the dwellers in the east or west to see His star. These men, therefore, were highly privileged. It is not given to all mankind to hear the gospel, Jesus is not preached in all of our churches; His cross is not lifted high even in every place that is dedicated to His worship. You are highly favored, O my friend, if you have seen the star, the gospel, which points to Jesus.

To see the star involved these wise men in "great responsibility." For, suppose they had seen His star and had not set out to worship Him, they would have been far more guilty than others, who, not having received such an indication from heaven, would not have been able to seek after it at all. Oh, think of the responsibility of some of you, who in your childhood heard of a Savior, for whom a mother has wept many tears; you know the truth, at least in theory; you have the responsibility of having seen His star.

The wise men "did not regard the favor of seeing the star as a matter to be content with." They did not say, "We have seen His star, and that is enough." Man says, "Well, we attend a place of worship regularly, isn't that enough?" There are those who say, "We were baptized, I am saved by baptism; we come to the Lord's Supper, and don't I get saving grace through it?" Poor souls! they mistake the star which leads wise people to Christ, as Christ Himself, and worship the star instead of the Lord. O may none of you ever be so foolish as to believe that Baptism or Communion saves you! God will say to you, if you depend on Baptism or the Lord's Supper or on going to church, "Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts?" What does God care about outward forms and ceremonies?

When I see men putting on gowns and vestments, and scarves and bands, and singing their prayers, and bowing and genuflecting, I wonder what sort of God it is that they worship. Surely he must have more affinity with the gods of the heathen than with the great Jehovah who has made the heavens and the earth. Mark well the exceeding glory of Jehovah's works on the land and the sea; behold the heavens and their countless hosts of stars, listen to the howling of the winds and the rush of the hurricane,

think of Him who makes the clouds His chariot, and rides on the wings of the wind, and then consider whether this infinite God is like that being to whom it is a matter of grave consequence whether a cup of wine is lifted in worship as high as a man's hair or only as high as his nose! O foolish generation, to think that Jehovah is contained in your tabernacle made with hands, and that He cares for your vestments, your processions, your postures, and your genuflections. You fight over your ritual, even to the crossing of a "t" and the dotting of an "i". Surely you don't know the glorious Jehovah, if you conceive that these things yield any pleasure to Him. No, beloved, we desire to worship the Most High in all simplicity and earnest of spirit, and never to stop with the outward form, lest we be foolish enough to think that to see the star is sufficient, and therefore fail to find the incarnate God.

Note well, that these wise men "did not find satisfaction in what they had themselves done to reach the child." As we have observed, they may have come hundreds of miles, but they did not mention it; they did not sit down and say, "Well, we have journeyed across deserts, over hills, and across rivers, and now we are done." No, they must find the newborn King, nothing else would satisfy them. Do not say, dear hearer, "I have been praying now for months, I have been searching the Scriptures for weeks, to find the Savior." I am glad you have done so, but do not rest in it; you must get Christ, or else you will still perish in absolute torment after all your exertion and your trouble. You want Jesus, nothing more than Jesus, and nothing less than Jesus. Nor must you be satisfied with traveling in the way the star would lead you, you must reach HIM. Don't stop short of eternal life. Grab hold of it, don't merely seek for it and long for it, but grab hold of eternal life, and do not be content until it is an established fact with you that Jesus Christ is yours.

I would like you to notice how these wise men were not satisfied with merely getting to Jerusalem. They might have said, "Ah! Now we are in the land where the Child is born, we will be thankful and sit down." No, rather they ask, "Where is He?" He is born in Bethlehem. Well, they go to Bethlehem, but we don't find that when they reached that village they said, "This is a good spot, we will sit down here." Not at all, they wanted to know where the house was. They reached the house, and the star

stopped over it. It was a awesome sight to see the cottage with the star above it, and to think that the newborn King was there, but that did not satisfy them. No, they went right into the house; they did not rest till they saw the Child Himself, and had worshipped Him. I pray that you and I may always be so led by the Spirit of God that we may never put up with anything short of a real comprehension of Christ as a Savior, as our Savior, as our Savior even now.

If there is one danger above another that the young seeker should strive against, it is the danger of stopping short of a unrestrained faith in Jesus Christ. While your heart is tender like wax, be careful that no seal but the seal of Christ is pressed on it. Now that you are uneasy and under conviction, make this your vow, "I will not be comforted until Jesus comforts me with His great salvation." It would be better for you never to be awakened than to be lulled to sleep by Satan--for a sleep that follows a partial conviction is generally a deeper slumber than any other that falls on the sons of men. Dear soul, I charge you to get the Blood of Christ, and be washed in it; find the life of Christ, and let that life be in you, that you would indeed become God's child; don't put up with suppositions, don't be satisfied with appearances and maybes; don't rest anywhere until you have said--God having given you the faith to say it, "He loved me and gave Himself for me, He is my complete salvation and all my desire." See, then, how these wise men were not kept away from Christ by the star, but they were encouraged by it to come to Christ, and you be encouraged too, dear seeker, this morning to come to Jesus by the fact that you are blessed with the gospel. You have an invitation given to you to come to Jesus, you have the movements of God's Spirit on your conscience, awakening you; O come, come and welcome, and let this dark winter's day be a day of brightness and of gladness to many a seeking soul.

I have turned my thoughts on this last part into verse, and I will repeat the lines,

O where is Christ my King?
I long for the sight, I would fall to my knees worshipping,
For He's my soul's delight.

Himself, Himself alone,

I seek no less, no more,
Or on His cross, or on His throne,
I'd equally adore.

The wise men saw His star,
But would not be content,
The way was rough, the distance far,
Yet on that way they went,

And now my thoughts discern,
The sign that Christ is near,
With unquenchable love I burn,
To enjoy His company.

No star nor heavenly sign,
My soul's desire can fill,
For Him, my Lord, my King divine,
my soul is thirsting still.

III. And now we will conclude, by considering THE EXAMPLE of these wise men.

They came to Jesus, and in so doing, they did three things: they saw, they worshipped, they gave. Those are three things which every believer here may do this morning over again, and which every seeker should do for the first time.

First "they saw" the young Child.

I don't think they merely said, "There He is," and so ended the matter, but they stood still and looked. Perhaps for some time they did not speak. I would imagine that around the face of the infant Jesus was a supernatural beauty. Whether there was a beauty to everyone's eye I don't know, but to theirs there was assuredly a superhuman attraction. The incarnate God! They gazed with all their eyes. They looked, and looked, and looked again. They glanced at His mother, but they fixed their eyes on Him. "They saw the Child."

So, too, this morning let us think of Jesus with fixed and continuous thought. He is God, He is man, He is the substitute for sinners; He is willing to receive all who trust Him. He will save, and save this morning, everyone of us who will put their faith and trust in Him. Think of Him. If you are at home this afternoon, spend the time in thinking of Him. Bring Him before your mind's eye, consider and admire Him. Is it not a wonder that God would enter into union with man and come to this world as an infant? He who made heaven and earth nurses on a woman's breast for us! For our redemption the Word was made flesh. This truth will breed the brightest hope within your soul. If you follow that baby's wondrous life till it ends at the cross, I trust you may there be able to give such a look at Him that, like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and they that looked were healed, so you looking may be healed of all your spiritual diseases. Though it has been many years since I first looked at Him, I desire to look to Jesus again. The incarnate God! My eyes swim with tears to think that He who might have crushed me into hell forever, becomes a young child for my sake! Look at Him, all of you, and looking--then worship.

What did the wise men do next? They "worshipped" Him.

We cannot properly worship a Christ we do not know. "To the unknown God" is poor worship. But, oh, when you think of Jesus Christ, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times, the eternal Son of the Father, and then see Him coming here to be a man formed in the womb of a woman, and know and understand why He came and what He did when he came, then you will fall down and worship Him. "

Son of God, to You we bow,
You are Lord, and only You;
You the woman's promised seed;
You who did for sinners bleed."

We worship Jesus. Our faith sees Him go from the manger to the cross, and from the cross right up to the throne, and there where God the Father dwells, amidst the unendurable glory of the divine presence stands the man, the very man who slept at Bethlehem in the manger; there He reigns as Lord of lords. Our souls worship Him again. You are our

Prophet, every Word You speak, Jesus, we believe and desire to follow: You are our priest, Your sacrifice has made us clean, we are washed in Your Blood; You are our King, command, and we will obey, lead on, and we will follow: We worship You. We should spend a lot of time in worshipping the Christ, and He should always have the highest place in our reverence.

After worshipping, the wise men presented "their gifts."

One opened his box of gold, and laid it at the feet of the newborn King. Another presented frankincense--one of the precious products of the country from which they came; and another laid myrrh at the Redeemer's feet; all these they gave to prove the truth of their worship. They gave substantial offerings. And now, after you have worshipped Christ in your soul, and seen Him with the eye of faith, give Him yourself, give Him your heart, give Him all that you are and own. Why, you will not be able to keep from doing it. He who really loves the Savior in his heart, cannot help devoting to Him his life, his strength, his all. With some people, when they give Christ anything, or do anything for Him, it is very difficult and somewhat forced. They say, "The love of Christ ought to compel us." I don't know of any such text as that in the Bible, however, I do remember one text that says, "Christ's love compels us." If it does not compel us, it is because it is not in us. It is not merely a thing which ought to be, it must be. If any man loves Christ, he will soon be finding ways and means of proving his love by his sacrifices. Go home, Mary, and get the alabaster box, and pour the ointment on His head, and if any say, "Why this waste?" you will have a good answer, you have had many sins forgiven by Him, and therefore you love Him greatly. If you have gold, then give it; if you have frankincense, then give it; if you have myrrh, then give it to Jesus; if you don't have any of these things, give Him your love, all of your love, and that will be gold and spices all in one; give Him your tongue, speak of Him; give Him your hands, work for Him; give Him your whole self. I know you will, for He loved you, and gave Himself for you. The Lord bless you, and may this Christmas morning be a very memorable day to many of you assembled here today. I am surprised to see so vast a number present, and I can only hope the blessing will be in proportion, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Going Home--A Christmas Sermon

"Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."-Mark 5:19.

The case of the man here referred to is a very extraordinary one: it occupies a place among the memorabilia of Christ's life, perhaps as high as anything which is recorded by either of the evangelists. This poor wretch being possessed with a legion of evil spirits had been driven to something worse than madness. He fixed his home among the tombs, where he dwelt by night and day, and was the terror of all those who passed by. The authorities had attempted to curb him; he had been bound with fetters and chains, but in the paroxysms of his madness he had torn the chains in sunder, and broken the fetters in pieces. Attempts had been made to reclaim him; but no man could tame him. He was worse than the wild beasts, for they might be tamed; but his fierce nature would not yield. He was a misery to himself, for he would run upon the mountains by night and day, crying and howling fearfully, cutting himself with the sharp flints, and torturing his poor body in the most frightful manner. Jesus Christ passed by; he said to the devils, "Come out of him." The man was healed in a moment; he fell down at Jesus' feet; he became a rational being-an intelligent man, yea, what is more, a convert to the Saviour. Out of gratitude to his deliverer, he said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; I will be thy constant companion and thy servant; permit me so to be." "No," said Christ, "I esteem your motive; it is one of gratitude to me; but if you would show your gratitude, 'go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.'"

Now, this teaches us a very important fact, namely, this, that true religion does not break in sunder the bonds of family relationship. True religion

seldom encroaches upon that sacred, I had almost said divine institution called home; it does not separate men from their families, and make them aliens to their flesh and blood. Superstition has done that; an awful superstition, which calls itself Christianity, has sundered men from their kind; but true religion has never done so. Why, if I might be allowed to do such a thing, I would seek out the hermit in his lonely cavern, and I would go to him and say, "Friend, if thou art what thou dost profess to be, a true servant of the living God, and not a hypocrite, as I guess thou art-if thou art a true believer in Christ, and would show forth what he has done for thee, upset that pitcher, eat the last piece of thy bread, leave this dreary cave, wash thy face, untie thy hempen girdle; and if thou wouldst show thy gratitude, go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee. Canst thou edify the sere leaves of the forest? Can the beasts learn to adore that God whom thy gratitude should strive to honor? Dost thou hope to convert these rocks, and wake the echoes into songs? Nay, go back; dwell with thy friends, reclaim thy kinship with men, and unite again with thy fellows, for this is Christ's approved way of showing gratitude." And I would go to every monastery and every nunnery, and say to the monks, 'Come out brethren, come out! If you are what you say you are, servants of God, go home to your friends. No more of this absurd discipline; it is not Christ's rule; you are acting differently from what he would have you; go home to your friends!' And to the sisters of mercy we would say, "Be sisters of mercy to your own sisters; go home to your friends; take care of your aged parents; turn your own houses into convents; do not sit here nursing your pride by a disobedience to Christ's rule, which says, "go home to thy friends." "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." The love of a solitary and ascetic life, which is by some considered to be a divine virtue, is neither more nor less than a disease of the mind. In the ages when there was but little benevolence, and consequently few hands to build lunatic asylums, superstition supplied the lack of charity, and silly men and women were allowed the indulgence of their fancies in secluded haunts or in easy laziness. Young has most truly said,-

"The first sure symptoms of a mind in health
Are rest of heart and pleasure found at home."

Avoid, my friends, above all things, those romantic and absurd conceptions of virtue which are the offspring of superstition and the enemies of righteousness. Be not without natural affection, but love those who are knit to you by tie of nature.

True religion cannot be inconsistent with nature. It never can demand that I should abstain from weeping when my friend is dead. "Jesus wept." It cannot deny me the privilege of a smile, when providence looks favorably upon me; for once "Jesus rejoiced in the spirit, and said, Father, I thank thee." It does not make a man say to his father and mother, "I am no longer your son." That is not Christianity, but something worse than what beasts would do, which would lead us to be entirely sundered from our fellows, to walk among them as if we had no kinship with them. To all who think a solitary life must be a life of piety, I would say, "It is the greatest delusion." To all who think that those must be good people who snap the ties of relationship, let us say, "Those are the best who maintain them." Christianity makes a husband a better husband, it makes a wife a better wife than she was before. It does not free me from my duties as a son; it makes me a better son, and my parents better parents. Instead of weakening my love, it gives me fresh reason for my affection; and he whom I loved before as my father, I now love as my brother and co-worker in Christ Jesus; and she whom I revered as my mother, I now love as my sister in the covenant of grace, to be mine for ever in the state that is to come. Oh! suppose not, any of you, that Christianity was ever meant to interfere with households; it is intended to cement them, and to make them households which death itself shall never sever, for it binds them up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God, and re-unites the several individuals on the other side of the flood.

Now, I will just tell you the reason why I selected my text. I thought within myself, there are a large number of young men who always come to hear me preach; they always crowd the aisles of my chapel, and many of them have been converted to God. Now, here is Christmas-day come round again, and they are going home to see their friends. When they get home they will want a Christmas Carol in the evening; I think I will suggest one to them-more especially to such of them as have been lately

converted. I will give them a theme for their discourse on Christmas evening; it may not be quite so amusing as "The Wreck of the Golden Mary," but it will be quite as interesting to Christian people. It shall be this: "Go home and tell your friends what the Lord hath done for your souls, and how he hath had compassion on you." For my part, I wish there were twenty Christmas days in the year. It is seldom that young men can meet with their friends; it is rarely they can all be united as happy families; and though I have no respect to the religious observance of the day, yet I love it as a family institution, as one of England's brightest days, the great Sabbath of the year, when the plough rests in its furrow, when the din of business is hushed, when the mechanic and the working man go out to refresh themselves upon the green award of the glad earth. If any of you are masters you will pardon me for the digression, when I most respectfully beg you to pay your servants the same wages on Christmas-day as if they were at work. I am sure it will make their houses glad if you will do so. It is unfair for you to make them feast or fast, unless you give them wherewithal to feast and make themselves glad on that day of joy.

But now to come to the subject. We are going home to see our friends, and here is the story some of us have to tell. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for them, and hath had compassion on thee." First, here is what they are to tell; secondly, why they are to tell it; and then thirdly, how they ought to tell it.

I. First, then, HERE IS WHAT THEY ARE TO TELL.

It is to be a story of personal experience. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." You are not to repair to your houses and forthwith begin to preach. That you are not commanded to do. You are not to begin to take up doctrinal subjects and expatiate on them, and endeavour to bring persons to your peculiar views and sentiments. You are not to go home with sundry doctrines you have lately learned, and try to teach these. At least you are not commanded so to do; you may, if you please, and none shall hinder you; but you are to go home and tell not what you have believed, but what you have felt-what you really know to be your own; not what great things you have read, but what great things the Lord

hath done for you; not alone what you have seen done in the great congregation, and how great sinners have turned to God, but what the Lord has done for you. And mark this: there is never a more interesting story than that which a man tells about himself. The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner derives much of its interest because the man who told it was himself the mariner. He sat down, that man whose finger was skinny, like the finger of death, and began to tell that dismal story of the ship at sea in the great calm, when slimy things did crawl with legs over the shiny sea. The Wedding guest sat still to listen, for the old man was himself a story. There is always a great deal of interest excited by a personal narrative. Virgil, the poet, knew this, and therefore he wisely makes Aeneas tell his own story, and makes him begin it by saying, "In which I also had a great part myself." So if you would interest your friends, tell them what you felt yourself. Tell them how you were once a lost abandoned sinner, how the Lord met with you, how you bowed your knees, and poured out your soul before God, and how at last you leaped with joy, for you thought you heard him say within you, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake." Tell your friends a story of your own personal experience.

Note, next, it must be a story of free grace. It is not, "Tell thy friends how great things thou hast done thyself," but "how great things the Lord hath done for thee." The man who always dwells upon free will and the power of the creature, and denies the doctrines of grace, invariably mixes up a great deal of what he has done himself in telling his experience; but the believer in free grace, who holds the great cardinal truths of the gospel, ignores this, and declares, "I will tell what the Lord hath done for me. It is true I must tell how I was first made to pray; but I will tell it thus-

'Grace taught my soul to pray,
Grace made my eyes o'erflow.'

It is true, I must tell in how many troubles and trials God has been with me; but I will tell it thus:-

"Twas grace which kept me to this day,
And will not let me go."

He says nothing about his own doings, or willings, or prayings, or seekings, but he ascribes it all to the love and grace of the great God who looks on sinners in love, and makes them his children, heirs of everlasting life. Go home, you man, and tell the poor sinner's story; go home, young woman, and open your diary, and give your friends stories of grace. Tell them of the mighty works of God's hand which he hath wrought in you from his own free, sovereign, undeserved love. Make it a free grace story around your family fire.

In the next place, this poor man's tale was a grateful story. I know it was grateful, because the man said, "I will tell thee how great things the Lord hath done for me;" and (not meaning a pun in the least degree) I may observe, that a man who is grateful is always full of the greatness of the mercy which God has shown him; he always thinks that what God has done for him is immensely good and supremely great. Perhaps when you are telling the story one of your friends will say, "And what of that?" And your answer will be, "It may not be a great thing to you, but it is to me. You say it is little to repent, but I have not found it so; it is a great and precious thing to be brought to know myself to be a sinner, and to confess it; do you say it is a little thing to have found a Saviour." Look them in the face and say, "If you had found him too you would not think it little. You think it little I have lost the burden from my back; but if you had suffered with it, and felt its weight as I have for many a long year, you would think it no little thing to be emancipated and free, through a sight of the cross." Tell them it is a great story, and if they cannot see its greatness shed great tears, and tell it to them with great earnestness, and I hope they may be brought to believe that you at least are grateful, if they are not. May God grant that you may tell a grateful story. No story is more worth hearing than a tale of gratitude.

And lastly, upon this point: it must be a tale told by a poor sinner who feels himself not to have deserved what he has received. "How he hath had compassion on thee." It was not a mere act of kindness, but an act of free compassion towards one who was in misery. Oh! I have heard men tell the story of their conversion and of their spiritual life in such a way that my heart hath loathed them and their story too, for they have told of their sins as if they did boast in the greatness of their crime, and they

have mentioned the love of God not with a tear of gratitude, not with the simple thanksgiving of the really humble heart, but as if they as much exalted themselves as they exalted God. Oh! when we tell the story of our own conversion, I would have it done with deep sorrow, remembering what we used to be, and with great joy and gratitude, remembering how little we deserve these things, I was once preaching upon conversion and salvation, and I felt within myself, as preachers often do, that it was but dry work to tell this story, and a dull, dull tale it was to me; but on a sudden the thought crossed my mind, "Why, you are a poor lost ruined sinner yourself; tell it, tell it, as you received it; begin to tell of the grace of God as you trust you feel it yourself." Why, then, my eyes began to be fountains of tears; those hearers who had nodded their heads began to brighten up, and they listened, because they were hearing something which the man felt himself, and which they recognised as being true to him, if it was not true in them. Tell your story, my hearers, as lost sinners. Do not go to your home, and walk into your house with a supercilious air, as much as to say, "Here's a saint come home to the poor sinners, to tell them a story;" but go home like a poor sinner yourself; and when you go in, your mother remembers what you used to be, you need not tell her there is a change-she will notice it, if it is only one day you are with her; and perhaps she will say, "John, what is this change that is in you?" and if she is a pious mother, you will begin to tell her the story, and I know, man though you are, you will not blush when I say it, she will put her arms round your neck, and kiss you as she never did before, for you are her twice-born son, hers from whom she shall never part, even though death itself shall divide you for a brief moment. "Go home, then, and tell your friends what great things the Lord hath done for you, and how he hath had compassion on you."

II. But now, in the second place, WHY SHOULD WE TELL THIS STORY?

For I hear many of my congregation say, "Sir, I could relate that story to any one sooner than I could to my own friends; I could come to your vestry, and tell you something of what I have tasted and handled of the Word of God; but I could not tell my father, nor my mother, nor my brethren, nor my sisters." Come, then; I will try and argue with you, to induce you to do so, that I may send you home this Christmas-day, to be

missionaries in the localities to which you belong, and to be real preachers, though you are not so by name. Dear friends, do tell this story when you go home.

First, for your Master's sake. Oh! I know you love him; I am sure you do, if you have proof that he loved you. You can never think of Gethsemane and of its bloody sweat, of Gabbatha and of the mangled back of Christ, flayed by the whip: you can never think of Calvary and his pierced hands and feet, without loving him; and it is a strong argument when I say to you, for his dear sake who loved you so much, go home and tell it. What! do you think we can have so much done for us, and yet not tell it? Our children, if anything should be done for them, do not stay many minutes before they are telling all the company, "such an one hath give me such a present, and bestowed on me such-and-such a favor." And should the children of God be backward in declaring how they were saved when their feet made haste to hell, and how redeeming mercy snatched them as brands from the burning? You love Jesus, young man! I put it to you, then, will you refuse to tell the tale of his love to you? Shall your lips be dumb, when his honor is concerned? Will you not, wherever you go, tell of the God who loved you and died for you? This poor man, we are told, "Departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him, and all men did marvel." So with you. If Christ has done much for you, you cannot help it-you must tell it. My esteemed friend, Mr. Oncken, a minister in Germany told us last Monday evening, that so soon as he was converted himself, the first impulse of his new-born soul was to do good to others. And where should he do that good? Well, he thought he would go to Germany. It was his own native land, and he thought the command was, "Go home to thy friends and tell them." Well, there was not a single Baptist in all Germany, nor any with whom he could sympathise, for the Lutherans had swerved from the faith of Luther, and gone aside from the truth of God. But he went there and preached, and he has now seventy or eighty churches established on the continent. What made him do it? Nothing but love for his Master, who had done so much for him, could have forced him to go and tell his kinsmen the marvellous tale of Divine goodness.

But, in the next place, are your friends pious?

Then go home and tell them, in order to make their hearts glad. I received last night a short epistle written with a trembling hand by one who is past the natural age of man, living in the country of Essex. His son, under God, had been converted by hearing the Word preached, and the good man could not help writing to the minister, thanking him, and blessing most of all, his God, that his son had been regenerated. "Sir," he begins, "an old rebel writes to thank you, and above all to thank his God, that his dear son has been converted." I shall treasure up that epistle. It goes on to say, "Go on! and the Lord bless you."

And there was another case I heard some time ago, where a young woman went home to her parents, and when her mother saw her, she said, "There! if the minister had made me a present of all London, I should not have thought so much of it as I do of this-to think that you have really become a changed character, and are living in the fear of God." Oh! if you want to make your mother's heart leap within her, and to make your father glad-if you would make that sister happy who sent you so many letters, which sometimes you read against a lamp-post, with your pipe in your mouth-go home and tell your mother that her wishes are all accomplished, that her prayers are heard, that you will no longer chaff her about her Sunday-school class, and no longer laugh at her because she loves the Lord, but that you will go with her to the house of God, for you love God, and you have said, "Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God, for I have a hope that your heaven shall be my heaven for ever." Oh! what a happy thing it would be if some here who had gone astray, should thus go home!

It was my privilege a little while ago to preach for a noble institution for the reception of women who had led abandoned lives-and before I preached the sermon I prayed to God to bless it, and in the printed sermon you will notice that at the end of it there is an account of two persons who were blessed by that sermon and restored.

Now, let me tell you a story of what happened to Mr. Vanderkist, a city missionary, who toils all night long to do good in that great work. There had been a drunken broil in the street; he stepped between the men to part them, and said something to a woman who stood there concerning how dreadful a thing it was that men should thus be intemperate. She

walked with him a little way, and he with her, and she began to tell him such a tale of woe and sin too-how she had been lured away from her parents' home in Somersetshire, and have been brought up here to her soul's eternal hurt. He took her home with him, and taught her the fear and love of Christ; and what was the first thing she did, when she returned to the paths of godliness, and found Christ to be the sinner's Saviour? She said, "Now, I must go home to my friends." Her friends were written to; they came to meet her at the station at Bristol, and you can hardly conceive what a happy meeting it was. The father and mother had lost their daughter, they had never heard from her; and there she was, brought back by the agency of this institution, and restored to the bosom of her family.

Ah! if such an one be here! I know not; among such a multitude there may be such an one. Woman! hast thou strayed from thy family? Hast thou left them long? "Go home to thy friends," I beseech thee, ere thy father totters to his grave, and ere thy mother's grey hairs sleep on the snow-white pillow of her coffin. Go back. I beseech thee! Tell her thou art penitent; tell her that God hath met with thee-that the young minister said, "Go back to thy friends." And if so, I shall not blush to have said these things, though you may think I ought not to have mentioned them; for if I may but win one such soul, I will bless God to all eternity. "Go home to thy friends. Go home and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee."

Cannot you imagine the scene, when the poor demoniac mentioned in my text went home? He had been a raving madman; and when he came and knocked at the door, don't you think you see his friends calling to one another in affright, "Oh! there he is again," and the mother running up stairs and locking all the doors, because her son had come back that was raving mad; and the little ones crying because they knew what he had been before-how he cut himself with stones, because he was possessed with devils. And can you picture their joy, when the man said, "Mother! Jesus Christ has healed me; let me in; I am no lunatic now!" And when the father opened the door, he said, "Father! I am not what I was; all the evil spirits are gone; I shall live in the tombs no longer. I want to tell you how the glorious man who wrought my deliverance accomplished the

miracle-how he said to the devils, 'Get ye hence,' and they ran down a steep place into the sea, and I am come home healed and saved." Oh! if such an one, possessed with sin, were here this morning, and would go home to his friends, to tell them of his release, methinks this scene would be somewhat similar.

Once more, dear friends. I hear one of you say. "Ah! Sir, would to God I could go home to pious friends! But when I go home I go into the worst of places; for my home is amongst those who never knew God themselves, and consequently never prayed for me, and never taught me anything concerning heaven." Well, young man, go home to your friends. If they are ever so bad they are your friends.

I sometimes meet with young men wishing to join the church, who say, when I ask them about their father, "Oh, sir, I am parted from my father." Then I say, "Young man, you may just go and see your father before I have anything to do with you; if you are at ill-will with your father and mother I will not receive you into the church; if they are ever so bad they are your parents." Go home to them, and tell them, not to make them glad, for they will very likely be angry with you; but tell them for their soul's salvation. I hope, when you are telling the story of what God did for you, that they will be led by the Spirit to desire the same mercy themselves. But I will give you a piece of advice. Do not tell this story to your ungodly friends when they are all together, for they will laugh at you. Take them one by one, when you can get them alone, and begin to tell it to them, and they will hear you seriously.

There was once a very pious lady who kept a lodging-house for young men. All the young men were very gay and giddy, and she wanted to say something to them concerning religion. She introduced the subject, and it was passed off immediately with a laugh. She thought within herself, "I have made a mistake." The next morning, after breakfast, when they were all going, she said to one of them, "Sir, I should like to speak with you a moment or two," and taking him aside into another room she talked with him. The next morning she took another, and the next morning another, and it pleased God to bless her simple statement, when it was given individually: but, without doubt, if she had spoken to them altogether, they would have backed each other up in laughing her to scorn.

Reprove a man alone. A verse may hit him whom a sermon flies. You may be the means of bringing a man to Christ who has often heard the Word and only laughed at it, but who cannot resist a gentle admonition.

In one of the states of America, there was an infidel who was a great despiser of God, a hater of the Sabbath and all religious institutions. What to do with him the ministers did not know. They met together and prayed for him. But among the rest, one Elder B_____ resolved to spend a long time in prayer for the man; after that he got on horseback, and rode down to the man's forge, for he was a blacksmith. He left his horse outside, and said, "Neighbour, I am under very great concern about your soul's salvation; I tell you I pray day and night for your soul's salvation." He left him, and rode home on his horse. The man went inside to his house after a minute or two, and said to one of his faithful friends, "Here's a new argument; here's Elder B_____ been down here, he did not dispute, and never said a word to me except this, 'I say, I am under great concern about your soul; I cannot bear that you should be lost.' Oh! that fellow," he said, "I cannot answer him;" and the tears began to roll down his cheeks. He went to his wife, and said, "I can't make this out; I never cared about my soul, but here's an elder, that has no connection with me, but I have always laughed at him, and he has come five miles this morning on horseback just to tell me he is under concern about my salvation. After a little while he thought it was time he should be under concern about his salvation too. He went in, shut the door, began to pray, and the next day he was at the deacon's house, telling him that he too was under concern about his salvation, and asking him to tell him what he must do to be saved.

Oh! that the everlasting God might make use of some of those now present in the same way, that they might be induced to

"Tell to others round
What a dear Saviour they have found;
To point to his redeeming blood,
And say, Behold the way to God!"

III. I shall not detain you much longer; but there is a third point, upon

which we must be very brief. HOW IS THIS STORY TO BE TOLD?

First, tell it truthfully. Do not tell more than you know; do not tell John Bunyan's experience, when you ought to tell your own. Do not tell your mother you have felt what only Rutherford felt. Tell her no more than the truth. Tell your experience truthfully; for mayhap one single fly in the pot of ointment will spoil it, and one statement you may make which is not true may ruin it all. Tell the story truthfully.

In the next place, tell it very humbly. I have said that before. Do not intrude yourselves upon those who are older, and know more; but tell your story humbly; not as a preacher, not ex-cathedra, but as a friend and as a son.

Next, tell it very earnestly. Let them see you mean it. Do not talk about religion flippantly; you will do not good if you do. Do not make puns on texts; do not quote Scripture by way of joke: if you do, you may talk till you are dumb, you will do no good, if you in the least degree give them occasion to laugh by laughing at holy things yourself. Tell it very earnestly.

And then, tell it very devoutly. Do not try to tell your tale to man till you have told it first to God. When you are at home on Christmas-day, let no one see your face till God has seen it. Be up in the morning, wrestle with God; and if your friends are not converted, wrestle with God for them; and then you will find it easy work to wrestle with them for God. Seek, if you can, to get them one by one, and tell them the story. Do not be afraid; only think of the good you may possibly do. Remember, he that saves a soul from death hath covereth a multitude of sins, and he shall have stars in his crown for ever and ever. Seek to be under God-Saviours in your family, to be the means of leading your own beloved brethren and sisters to seek and to find the Lord Jesus Christ, and then one day, when you shall meet in Paradise, it will be a joy and blessedness to think that you are there, and that your friends are there too, whom God will have made you the instrument of saving. Let your reliance in the Holy Spirit be entire and honest. Trust not yourself, but fear not to trust him. He can give you words. He can apply those words to their heart, and so enable you to "minister grace to the hearers."

To close up, by a short, and I think, a pleasant turning of the text, to suggest another meaning to it. Soon, dear friends, very soon with some of us, the Master will say, "Go home to thy friends." You know where the home is. It is up above the stars.

"Where our best friends, our kindred dwell,
Where God our Saviour reigns."

Yon grey-headed man has buried all his friends; he has said, "I shall go to them, but they will not return to me." Soon his Master will say, "Thou hast had enough tarrying here in this vale of tears: go home to thy friends!" Oh! happy hour! Oh! blessed moment, when that shall be the word-"Go home to thy friends!" And when we go home to our friends in Paradise, what shall we do? Why, first we will repair to that blest seat where Jesus sits, take off our crown and cast it at his feet, and crown him Lord of all. And when we have done that, what shall be our next employ? Why, we will tell the blessed ones in heaven what the Lord hath done for us, and how he hath had compassion on us. And shall such a tale be told in heaven? Shall that be the Christmas Carol of the angels? Yes, it shall be; it has been published there before- blush not to tell it yet again-for Jesus has told it before, "When he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." And thou, poor sheep, when thou shall be gathered in, wilt thou not tell how thy Shepherd sought thee, and how he found thee? Will thou not sit in the grassy meads of heaven, and tell the story of thine own redemption? Wilt thou not talk with thy brethren and thy sisters, and tell them how God loved thee and hath brought thee there? Perhaps thou sayest, "It will be a very short story." Ah! it would be if you could write now. A little book might be the whole of your biography; but up there when your memory shall be enlarged, when your passion shall be purified and your understanding clear, you will find that what was but a tract on earth will be a huge tome in heaven. You will tell a long story there of God's sustaining, restraining, constraining grace, and I think that when you pause to let another tell his tale, and then another, and then another, you will at last, when you have been in heaven a thousand years, break out and exclaim, "O saints, I have something else to say." Again they will tell their tales, and again you will interrupt them

with "Oh, beloved, I have thought of another case of God's delivering mercy." And so you will go on, giving them themes for songs, finding them the material for the warp and woof of heavenly sonnets. "Go home," he will soon say, "go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Wait awhile; tarry his leisure, and ye shall soon be gathered to the land of the hereafter, to the home of the blessed, where endless felicity shall be thy portion. God grant a blessing for his name's sake! Amen.

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Joy Born at Bethlehem

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."—Luke 2:10-12.

We have no superstitious regard for times and seasons. Certainly we do not believe in the present ecclesiastical arrangement called Christmas: first, because we do not believe in the mass at all, but abhor it, whether it be said or sung in Latin or in English; and, secondly, because we find no Scriptural warrant whatever for observing any day as the birthday of the Savior; and, consequently, its observance is a superstition, because not of divine authority. Superstition has fixed most positively the day of our Savior's birth, although there is no possibility of discovering when it occurred. Fabricius gives a catalogue of 136 different learned opinions upon the matter; and various divines invent weighty arguments for advocating a date in every month in the year. It was not till the middle of the third century that any part of the church celebrated the nativity of our Lord; and it was not till very long after the Western church had set the example, that the Eastern adopted it. Because the day is not known, therefore superstition has fixed it; while, since the day of the death of our Savior might be determined with much certainty, therefore superstition

shifts the date of its observance every year. Where is the method in the madness of the superstitious? Probably the fact is that the holy days were arranged to fit in with heathen festivals. We venture to assert, that if there be any day in the year, of which we may be pretty sure that it was not the day on which the Savior was born, it is the twenty-fifth of December. Nevertheless since, the current of men's thoughts is led this way just now, and I see no evil in the current itself, I shall launch the bark of our discourse upon that stream, and make use of the fact, which I shall neither justify nor condemn, by endeavoring to lead your thoughts in the same direction. Since it is lawful, and even laudable, to meditate upon the incarnation of the Lord upon any day in the year, it cannot be in the power of other men's superstitions to render such a meditation improper for to-day. Regarding not the day, let us, nevertheless, give God thanks for the gift of his dear son.

In our text we have before us the sermon of the first evangelist under the gospel dispensation. The preacher was an angel, and it was meet it should be so, for the grandest and last of all evangels will be proclaimed by an angel when he shall sound the trumpet of the resurrection, and the children of the regeneration shall rise into the fullness of their joy. The key-note of this angelic gospel is joy—"I bring unto you good tidings of great joy." Nature fears in the presence of God—the shepherds were sore afraid. The law itself served to deepen this natural feeling of dismay; seeing men were sinful, and the law came into the world to reveal sin, its tendency was to make men fear and tremble under any and every divine revelation. The Jews unanimously believed that if any man beheld supernatural appearances, he would be sure to die, so that what nature dictated, the law and the general beliefs of those under it also abetted. But the first word of the gospel ended all this, for the angelic evangelist said, "Fear not, behold I bring you good tidings." Henceforth, it is to be no dreadful thing for man to approach his Maker; redeemed man is not to fear when God unveils the splendor of his majesty, since he appears no more a judge upon his throne of terror, but a Father unbending in sacred familiarity before his own beloved children.

The joy which this first gospel preacher spoke of was no mean one, for he said, "I bring you good tidings"—that alone were joy: and not good tidings

of joy only, but "good tidings of great joy." Every word is emphatic, as if to show that the gospel is above all things intended to promote, and will most abundantly create the greatest possible joy in the human heart wherever it is received. Man is like a harp unstrung, and the music of his soul's living strings is discordant, his whole nature wails with sorrow; but the son of David, that mighty harper, has come to restore the harmony of humanity, and where his gracious fingers move among the strings, the touch of the fingers of an incarnate God brings forth music sweet as that of the spheres, and melody rich as a seraph's canticle. Would God that all men felt that divine hand.

In trying to open up this angelic discourse this morning, we shall note three things: the joy which is spoken of; next, the persons to whom this joy comes; and then, thirdly, the sign, which is to us a sign as well as to these shepherds—a sign of the birth and source of joy.

I. First, then, THE JOY, which is mentioned in our text—whence comes it, and what is it?

We have already said it is a "great joy"—"good tidings of great joy." Earth's joy is small, her mirth is trivial, but heaven has sent us joy immeasurable, fit for immortal minds. Inasmuch as no note of time is appended, and no intimation is given that the message will ever be reversed, we may say that it is a lasting joy, a joy which will ring all down the ages, the echoes of which shall be heard until the trumpet brings the resurrection; aye, and onward for ever and for ever. For when God sent forth the angel in his brightness to say, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which be to all people," he did as much as say, "From this time forth it shall be joy to the sons of men; there shall be peace to the human race, and goodwill towards men for ever and for ever, as long as there is glory to God in the highest." O blessed thought! the Star of Bethlehem shall never set. Jesus, the fairest among ten thousand, the most lovely among the beautiful, is a joy for ever.

Since this joy is expressly associated with the glory of God, by the Words, "Glory to God in the highest," we may be quite clear that it is a pure and holy joy. No other would an angel have proclaimed, and, indeed, no other joy is joy. The wine pressed from the grapes of Sodom may sparkle and

foam, but it is bitterness in the end, and the dregs thereof are death; only that which comes from the clusters of Eschol is the true wine of the kingdom, making glad the heart of God and man. Holy joy is the joy of heaven, and that, be ye sure, is the very cream of joy. The joy of sin is a fire-fountain, having its source in the burning soil of hell, maddening and consuming those who drink its fire-water; of such delights we desire not to drink. It were to be worse than damned to be happy in sin, since it is the beginning of grace to be wretched in sin, and the consummation of grace to be wholly escaped from sin, and to shudder even at the thought of it. It is hell to live in sin and misery, it is a deep lower still when men could fashion a joy in sin. God save us from unholy peace and from unholy joy! The joy announced by the angel of the nativity is as pure as it is lasting, as holy as it is great. Let us then always believe concerning the Christian religion that it has its joy within itself, and holds its feasts within its own pure precincts, a feast whose viands all grow on holy ground. There are those who, to-morrow, will pretend to exhibit joy in the remembrance of our Savior's birth, but they will not seek their pleasure in the Savior: they will need many additions to the feast before they can be satisfied. Joy in Immanuel would be a poor sort of mirth to them. In this country, too often, if one were unaware of the name, one might believe the Christmas festival to be a feast of Bacchus, or of Ceres, certainly not a commemoration of the Divine birth. Yet is there cause enough for holy joy in the Lord himself, and reasons for ecstasy in his birth among men. It is to be feared that most men imagine that in Christ there is only seriousness and solemnity, and to them consequently weariness, gloom, and discontent; therefore, they look out of and beyond what Christ allows, to snatch from the tables of Satan the delicacies with which to adorn the banquet held in honor of a Savior. Let it not be so among you. The joy which the gospel brings is not borrowed but blooms in its own garden. We may truly say in the language of one of our sweetest hymns—

"I need not go abroad for joy,
I have a feast at home,
My sighs are turned into songs,
My heart has ceased to roam.

Down from above the Blessed Dove

Has come into my breast,
To witness his eternal love,
And give my spirit rest."

Let our joy be living water from those sacred wells which the Lord himself has digged; may his joy abide in us, that our joy may be full. Of Christ's joy we cannot have too much; no fear of running to excess when his love is the wine we drink. Oh to be plunged in this pure stream of spiritual delights!

But why is it that the coming of Christ into the world is the occasion of joy? The answer is as follows:—First, because it is evermore a joyous fact that God should be in alliance with man, especially when the alliance is so near that God should in very deed take our manhood into union with his godhead; so that God and man should constitute one divine, mysterious person. Sin had separated between God and man; but the incarnation bridges the separation: it is a prelude to the atoning sacrifice, but it is a prelude full of the richest hope. From henceforth, when God looks upon man, he will remember that his own Son is a man. From this day forth, when he beholds the sinner, if his wrath should burn, he will remember that his own Son, as man, stood in the sinner's place, and bore the sinner's doom. As in the case of war, the feud is ended when the opposing parties intermarry, so there is no more war between God and man, because God has taken man into intimate union with himself. Herein, then, there was cause for joy.

But there was more than that, for the shepherds were aware that there had been promises made of old which had been the hope and comfort of believers in all ages, and these were now to be fulfilled. There was that ancient promise made on the threshold of Eden to the first sinners of our race, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; another promise made to the Father of the faithful that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed, and promises uttered by the mouths of prophets and of saints since the world began. Now, the announcement of the angel of the Lord to the shepherds was a declaration that the covenant was fulfilled, that now in the fullness of time God would redeem his word, and the Messiah, who was to be Israel's glory and the world's hope; was now really come. Be glad ye heavens, and

be joyful O earth, for the Lord hath done it, and in mercy hath he visited his people. The Lord hath not suffered his word to fail, but hath fulfilled unto his people his promises. The time to favor Zion, yea the set time, is come. Now that the scepter is departed from Judah, behold the Shiloh comes, the Messenger of the covenant suddenly appears in his temple!

But the angel's song had in it yet fuller reason for joy; for our Lord who was born in Bethlehem came as a Savior. "Unto you is born this day a Savior." God had come to earth before, but not as a Savior. Remember that terrible coming when there went three angels into Sodom at nightfall, for the Lord said, "I will go now and see whether it be altogether according to the cry thereof." He had come as a spy to witness human sin, and as an avenger to lift his hand to heaven, and bid the red fire descend and burn up the accursed cities of the plain. Horror to the world when God thus descends. If Sinai smokes when the law is proclaimed, the earth itself shall melt when the breaches of the law are punished. But now not as an angel of vengeance, but as a man in mercy God has come; not to spy out our sin, but to remove it; not to punish guilt, but to forgive it. The Lord might have come with thunderbolts in both his hands he might have come like Elias to call fire from heaven; but no, his hands are full of gifts of love, and his presence is the guarantee of grace. The babe born in the manger might have been another prophet of tears, or another son of thunder, but he was not so: he came in gentleness, his glory and his thunder alike laid aside.

"'Twas mercy filled the throne,
And wrath stood silent by,
When Christ on the kind errand came
To sinners doomed to die."

Rejoice, ye who feel that ye are lost; your Savior comes to seek and save you. Be of good cheer ye who are in prison, for he comes to set you free. Ye who are famished and ready to die, rejoice that he has consecrated for you a Bethlehem, a house of bread, and he has come to be the bread of life to your souls. Rejoice, O sinners, everywhere for the restorer of the castaways, the Savior of the fallen is born. Join in the joy, ye saints, for he

is the preserver of the saved ones, delivering them from innumerable perils, and he is the sure prefecter of such as he preserves. Jesus is no partial Savior, beginning a work and not concluding it; but, restoring and upholding, he also prefects and presents the saved ones without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing before his Father's throne. Rejoice aloud all ye people, let your hills and valleys ring with joy, for a Savior who is mighty to save is born among you.

Nor was this all the holy mirth, for the next word has also in it a fullness of joy:—"a Savior, who is Christ," or the Anointed. Our Lord was not an amateur Savior who came down from heaven upon an unauthorized mission; but he was chosen, ordained, and anointed of God; he could truly say, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me." Here is great comfort for all such as need a Savior; it is to them no mean consolation that God has himself authorized Christ to save. There can be no fear of a jar between the mediator and the judge, no peril of a nonacceptance of our Savior's work; because God has commissioned Christ to do what he has done, and in saving sinners he is only executing his Father's own will. Christ is here called "the anointed." All his people are anointed, and there were priests after the order of Aaron who were anointed, but he is the anointed, "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows;" so plenteously anointed that, like the unction upon Aaron's head, the sacred anointing of the Head of the church distils in copious streams, till we who are like the skirts of his garments are made sweet with the rich perfume. He is "the anointed" in a threefold sense: as prophet to preach the gospel with power; as priest to offer sacrifice; as king to rule and reign. In each of these he is preeminent; he is such a teacher, priest, and ruler as was never seen before. In him was a rare conjunction of glorious offices, for never did prophet, priest, and king meet in one person before among the sons of men, nor shall it ever be so again. Triple is the anointing of him who is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, a prophet like unto Moses, and a king of whose dominion there is no end. In the name of Christ, the Holy Ghost is glorified, by being seen as anointing the incarnate God. Truly, dear brethren, if we did but understand all this, and receive it into our hearts, our souls would leap for joy on this Sabbath day, to think that there is born unto us a Savior who is anointed of the Lord.

One more note, and this the loudest, let us sound it well and hear it well—"which is Christ the Lord." Now the word Lord, or Kurios, here used is tantamount to Jehovah. We cannot doubt that, because it is the same word used twice in the ninth verse, and in the ninth verse none can question that it means Jehovah. Hear it, "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." And if this be not enough, read the 23rd verse, "As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." Now the word Lord here assuredly refers to Jehovah, the one God, and so it must do here. Our Savior is Christ, God, Jehovah. No testimony to his divinity could be plainer; it is indisputable. And what joy there is in this; for suppose an angel had been our Savior, he would not have been able to bear the load of my sin or yours; or if anything less than God had been set up as the ground of our salvation, it might have been found too frail a foundation. But if he who undertakes to save is none other than the Infinite and the Almighty, then the load of our guilt can be carried upon such shoulders, the stupendous labor of our salvation can be achieved by such a worker, and that with ease: for all things are possible with God, and he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Ye sons of men perceive ye here the subject of your joy. The God who made you, and against whom you have offended, has come down from heaven and taken upon himself your nature that he might save you. He has come in the fullness of his glory and the infinity of his mercy that he might redeem you. Do you not welcome this news? What! will not your hearts be thankful for this? Does this matchless love awaken no gratitude? Were it not for this divine Savior, your life here would have been wretchedness, and your future existence would have been endless woe. Oh, I pray you adore the incarnate God, and trust in him. Then will you bless the Lord for delivering you from the wrath to come, and as you lay hold of Jesus and find salvation in his name, you will tune your songs to his praise, and exult with sacred joy. So much concerning this joy.

II. Follow me while I briefly speak of THE PEOPLE to whom this joy comes. Observe how the angel begins, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born this day." So, then, the joy began with the first who heard it, the shepherds. "To you," saith he; "for unto you is born." Beloved hearer, shall the joy begin with you to-day?—for it little

avails you that Christ was born, or that Christ died, unless unto you a child is born, and for you Jesus bled. A personal interest is the main point. "But I am poor," saith one. So were the shepherds. O ye poor, to you this mysterious child is born. "The poor have the gospel preached unto them." "He shall judge the poor and needy, and break in pieces the oppressor." But I am obscure and unknown," saith one. So were the watchers on the midnight plain. Who knew the men who endured hard toil, and kept their flocks by night? But you, unknown of men, are known to God: shall it not be said, that "unto you a child is born?" The Lord regardeth not the greatness of men, but hath respect unto the lowly. But you are illiterate you say, you cannot understand much. Be it so, but unto the shepherds Christ was born, and their simplicity did not hinder their receiving him, but even helped them to it. Be it so with yourself: receive gladly the simple truth as it is in Jesus. The Lord hath exalted one chosen out of the people. No aristocratic Christ have I to preach to you, but the Savior of the people, the friend of publicans and sinners. Jesus is the true "poor men's friend;" he is "a covenant for the people," given to be "a leader and commander to the people." To you is Jesus given. O that each heart might truly say, to me is Jesus born; for it I truly believe in Jesus, unto me Christ is born, and I may be as sure of it as if an angel announced it, since the Scripture tells me that if I believe in Jesus He is mine.

After the angel had said "to you," he went on to say, "it shall be to all people." But our translation is not accurate, the Greek is, "it shall be to all the people." This refers most assuredly to the Jewish nation; there can be no question about that; if any one looks at the original, he will not find so large and wide an expression as that given by our translators. It should be rendered "to all the people." And here let us speak a word for the Jews. How long and how sinfully has the Christian church despised the most honorable amongst the nations! How barbarously has Israel been handled by the so-called church! I felt my spirit burn indignantly within me in Rome when I stood in the Jew's quarter, and heard of the cruel indignities which Popery has heaped upon the Jews, even until recently. At this hour there stands in the Jew's quarter a church built right in front of the entrance to it, and into this the unhappy Jews were driven forcibly on certain occasions. To this church they were compelled to subscribe—

subscribe, mark you, as worshippers of the one invisible God, to the support of a system which is as leprous with idolatry as were the Canaanites whom the Lord abhorred. Paganism is not more degrading than Romanism. Over the door of this church is placed, in their own tongue in the Hebrew, these words: —"All day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying generation;" how, by such an insult as that, could they hope to convert the Jew. The Jew saw everywhere idols which his soul abhorred, and he loathed the name of Christ, because he associated it with idol worship, and I do not wonder that he did. I praise the Jew that he could not give up his own simple theism, and the worship of the true God, for such a base, degrading superstition as that which Rome presented to him. Instead of thinking it a wonder of unbelief that the Jew is not a Christian, I honor him for his faith and his courageous resistance of a fascinating heathenism. If Romanism be Christianity I am not, neither could I be, a Christian. It were a more manly thing to be a simple believer in one God, or even an honest doubter upon all religion, than worship such crowds of gods and goddesses as Popery has set up, and to bow, as she does, before rotten bones and dead men's winding sheets. Let the true Christian church think lovingly of the Jew, and with respectful earnestness tell him the true gospel; let her sweep away superstition, and set before him the one gracious God in the Trinity of his divine Unity; and the day shall yet come when the Jews, who were the first apostles to the Gentiles, the first missionaries to us who were afar off; shall be gathered in again. Until that shall be, the fullness of the church's glory can never come. Matchless benefits to the world are bound up with the restoration of Israel; their gathering in shall be as life from the dead. Jesus the Savior is the joy of all nations, but let not the chosen race be denied their peculiar share of whatever promise holy writ has recorded with a special view to them. The woes which their sins brought upon them have fallen thick and heavily; and even so let the richest blessings distil upon them.

Although our translation is not literally correct, it, nevertheless, expresses a great truth, taught plainly in the context; and, therefore, we will advance another step. The coming of Christ is a joy to all people. It is so, for the fourteenth verse says: "On earth peace," which is a wide and even unlimited expression. It adds, "Good will towards"—not Jews, but "men"

—all men. The word is the generic name of the entire race, and there is no doubt that the coming of Christ does bring joy to all sorts of people. It brings a measure of joy even to those who are not Christians. Christ does not bless them in the highest and truest sense, but the influence of his teaching imparts benefits of an inferior sort, such as they are capable of receiving; for wherever the gospel is proclaimed, it is no small blessing to all the population. Note this fact: there is no land beneath the sun where there is an open Bible and a preached gospel, where a tyrant long can hold his place. It matters not who he be, whether pope or king; let the pulpit be used properly for the preaching of Christ crucified, let the Bible be opened to be read by all men, and no tyrant can long rule in peace. England owes her freedom to the Bible; and France will never possess liberty, lasting and well-established, till she comes to reverence the gospel, which too long she has rejected. There is joy to all mankind where Christ comes. The religion of Jesus makes men think, and to make men think is always dangerous to a despot's power. The religion of Jesus Christ sets a man free from superstition; when he believes in Jesus, what cares he for Papal excommunications, or whether priests give or withhold their absolution? The man no longer cringes and bows down; he is no more willing, like a beast, to be led by the nose; but, learning to think for himself and becoming a man, he disdains the childish fears which once held him in slavery. Hence, where Jesus comes, even if men do not receive him as the Savior, and so miss the fullest joy, yet they get a measure of benefit; and I pray God that everywhere his gospel may be so proclaimed, and that so many may be actuated by the spirit of it, that it may be better for all mankind. If men receive Christ, there will be no more oppression: the true Christian does to others as he would that they should do to him, and there is no more contention of classes, nor grinding of the faces of the poor. Slavery must go down where Christianity rules, and mark you, if Romanism be once destroyed, and pure Christianity shall govern all nations, war itself must come to an end; for if there be anything which this book denounces and counts the hugest of all crimes, it is the crime of war. Put up thy sword into thy sheath, for hath not he said, "Thou shalt not kill," and he meant not that it was a sin to kill one but a glory to kill a million, but he meant that bloodshed on the smallest or largest scale was sinful. Let Christ govern, and men shall break the bow and cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot in the

fire. It is joy to all nations that Christ is born, the Prince of Peace, the King who rules in righteousness.

But, beloved, the greatest joy is to those who know Christ as a Savior. Here the song rises to a higher and sublimer note. Unto us indeed a child is born, if we can say that he is our "Savior who is Christ the Lord." Let me ask each of you a few personal questions. Are your sins forgiven you for his name's sake? Is the head of the serpent bruised in your soul? Does the seed of the woman reign in sanctifying power over your nature? Oh then, you have the joy that is to all the people in the truest form of it; and, dear brother, dear sister, the further you submit yourself to Christ the Lord, the more completely you know him, and are like him, the fuller will your happiness become. Surface joy is to those who live where the Savior is preached; but the great deeps, the great fathomless deeps of solemn joy which glisten and sparkle with delight, are for such as know the Savior, obey the anointed one, and have communion with the Lord himself. He is the most joyful man who is the most Christly man. I wish that some Christians were more truly Christians: they are Christians and something else; it were much better if they were altogether Christians. Perhaps you know the legend, or perhaps true history of the awakening of St. Augustine. He dreamed that he died, and went to the gates of heaven, and the keeper of the gates said to him, "Who are you?" And he answered, "Christianus sum," I am a Christian. But the porter replied, "No, you are not a Christian, you are a Ciceronian, for your thoughts and studies were most of all directed to the works of Cicero and the classics, and you neglected the teaching of Jesus. We judge men here by that which most engrossed their thoughts, and you are judged not to be a Christian but a Ciceronian." When Augustine awoke, he put aside the classics which he had studied, and the eloquence at which he had aimed, and he said, "I will be a Christian and a theologian;" and from that time he devoted his thoughts to the word of God, and his pen and his tongue to the instruction of others in the truth. Oh I would not have it said of any of you, "Well, he may be somewhat Christian, but he is far more a keen money-getting tradesman." I would not have it said, "Well, he may be a believer in Christ, but he is a good deal more a politician." Perhaps he is a Christian, but he is most at home when he is talking about science, farming, engineering, horses, mining, navigation, or pleasure-taking. No,

no, you will never know the fullness of the joy which Jesus brings to the soul, unless under the power of the Holy Spirit you take the Lord your Master to be your All in all, and make him the fountain of your intensest delight. "He is my Savior, my Christ, my Lord," be this your loudest boast. Then will you know the joy which the angel's song predicts for men.

III. But I must pass on. The last thing in the text is The SIGN. The shepherds did not ask for a sign, but one was graciously given. Sometimes it is sinful for us to require as an evidence what God's tenderness may nevertheless see fit to give as an aid to faith. Wilful unbelief shall have no sign, but weak faith shall have compassionate aid. The sign that the joy of the world had come was this,—they were to go to the manger to find the Christ in it, and he was to be the sign. Every circumstance is therefore instructive. The babe was found "wrapped in swaddling clothes." Now, observe, as you look at this infant, that there is not the remotest appearance of temporal power here. Mark the two little puny arms of a little babe that must be carried if it go. Alas, the nations of the earth look for joy in military power. By what means can we make a nation of soldiers? The Prussian method is admirable; we must have thousands upon thousands of armed men and big cannon and ironclad vessels to kill and destroy by wholesale. Is it not a nation's pride to be gigantic in arms? What pride flushes the patriot's cheek when he remembers that his nation can murder faster than any other people. Ah, foolish generation, ye are groping in the flames of hell to find your heaven, raking amid blood and bones for the foul thing which ye call glory. A nation's joy can never lie in the misery of others. Killing is not the path to prosperity; huge armaments are a curse to the nation itself as well as to its neighbors. The joy of a nation is a golden sand over which no stream of blood has ever rippled. It is only found in that river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. The weakness of submissive gentleness is true power. Jesus founds his eternal empire not on force but on love. Here, O ye people, see your hope; the mild pacific prince, whose glory is his self-sacrifice, is our true benefactor.

But look again, and you shall observe no pomp to dazzle you. Is the child wrapped in purple and fine linen? Ah, no. Sleeps he in a cradle of gold? The manger alone is his shelter. No crown is upon the babe's head,

neither does a coronet surround the mother's brow. A simple maiden of Galilee, and a little child in ordinary swaddling bands, it is all you see.

"Bask not in courtly bower,
Or sunbright hall of power,
Pass Babel quick,
and seek the holy land.
From robes of Tyrian dye,
Turn with undazzled eye
To Bethlehem's glade, and by the manger stand."

Alas, the nations are dazzled with a vain show. The pomp of empires, the pageants of kings are their delight. How can they admire those gaudy courts, in which too often glorious apparel, decorations, and rank stand in the stead of virtue, chastity, and truth. When will the people cease to be children? Must they for ever crave for martial music which stimulates to violence, and delight in a lavish expenditure which burdens them with taxation? These make not a nation great or joyous. Bah! how has the bubble burst across yon narrow sea. A bubble empire has collapsed. Ten thousand bayonets and millions of gold proved but a sandy foundation for a Babel throne. Vain are the men who look for joy in pomp; it lies in truth and righteousness, in peace and salvation, of which yonder newborn prince in the garments of a peasant child is the true symbol.

Neither was there wealth to be seen at Bethlehem. Here in this quiet island, the bulk of men are comfortably seeking to acquire their thousands by commerce and manufactures. We are the sensible people who follow the main chance, and are not to be deluded by ideas of glory; we are making all the money we can, and wondering that other nations waste so much in fight. The main prop and pillar of England's joy is to be found, as some tell us, in the Three per Cents., in the possession of colonies, in the progress of machinery, in steadily increasing our capital. Is not Mammon a smiling deity? But, here, in the cradle of the world's hope at Bethlehem, I see far more of poverty than wealth; I perceive no glitter of gold, or spangle of silver. I perceive only a poor babe, so poor, so very poor, that he is in a manger laid; and his mother is a mechanic's wife, a woman who wears neither silk nor gem. Not in your gold, O Britons, will ever lie your joy, but in the gospel enjoyed by all classes, the

gospel freely preached and joyfully received. Jesus, by raising us to spiritual wealth, redeems us from the chains of Mammon, and in that liberty gives us joy.

And here, too, I see no superstition. I know the artist paints angels in the skies, and surrounds the scene with a mysterious light, of which tradition's tongue of falsehood has said that it made midnight as bright as noon. This is fiction merely; there was nothing more there than the stable, the straw the oxen ate, and perhaps the beasts themselves, and the child in the plainest, simplest manner, wrapped as other children are; the cherubs were invisible and of haloes there were none. Around this birth of joy was no sign of superstition: that demon dared not intrude its tricks and posturings into the sublime spectacle: it would have been there as much out of place as a harlequin in the holy of holies. A simple gospel, a plain gospel, as plain as that babe wrapped in the commonest garments, is this day the only hope for men. Be ye wise and believe in Jesus, and abhor all the lies of Rome, and inventions of those who ape her detestable abominations.

Nor does the joy of the world lie in philosophy. You could not have made a schoolmen's puzzle of Bethlehem if you had tried to do so; it was just a child in the manger and a Jewish woman looking on and nursing it, and a carpenter standing by. There was no metaphysical difficulty there, of which men could say, "A doctor of divinity is needed to explain it, and an assembly of divines must expound it." It is true the wise men came there, but it was only to adore and offer gifts; would that all the wise had been as wise as they. Alas, human subtlety has disputed over the manger, and logic has darkened counsel with its words. But this is one of man's many inventions; God's work was sublimely simple. Here was "The Word made flesh" to dwell among us, a mystery for faith, but not a football for argument. Mysterious, yet the greatest simplicity that was ever spoken to human ears, and seen by mortal eyes. And such is the gospel, in the preaching of which our apostle said, "we use great plainness of speech." Away, away, away with your learned sermons, and your fine talk, and your pretentious philosophies; these never created a jot of happiness in this world. Fine-spun theories are fair to gaze on, and to bewilder fools, but they are of no use to practical men, they comfort not the sons of toil,

nor cheer the daughters of sorrow. The man of common sense, who feels the daily rub and tear of this poor world, needs richer consolation than your novel theologies, or neologies, can give him. In a simple Christ, and in a simple faith in that Christ, there is a peace deep and lasting; in a plain, poor man's gospel there is a joy and a bliss unspeakable, of which thousands can speak, and speak with confidence, too, for they declare what they do know, and testify what they have seen.

I say, then, to you who would know the only true peace and lasting joy, come ye to the babe of Bethlehem, in after days the Man of Sorrows, the substitutionary sacrifice for sinners. Come, ye little children, ye boys and girls, come ye; for he also was a boy. "The holy child Jesus" is the children's Savior, and saith still, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. Come hither, ye maidens, ye who are still in the morning of your beauty, and, like Mary, rejoice in God your Savior. The virgin bore him on her bosom, so come ye and bear him in your hearts, saying, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." And you, ye men in the plenitude of your strength, remember how Joseph cared for him, and watched with reverent solicitude his tender years; be you to his cause as a Father and a helper; sanctify your strength to his service. And ye women advanced in years, ye matrons and widows, come like Anna and bless the Lord that you have seen the salvation of Israel, and ye hoar heads, who like Simeon are ready to depart, come ye and take the Savior in your arms, adoring him as your Savior and your all. Ye shepherds, ye simple hearted, ye who toil for your daily bread, come and adore the Savior; and stand not back ye wise men, ye who know by experience and who by meditation peer into deep truth, come ye, and like the sages of the East bow low before his presence, and make it your honor to pay honor to Christ the Lord. For my own part, the incarnate God is all my hope and trust. I have seen the world's religion at the fountain head, and my heart has sickened within me; I come back to preach, by God's help, yet more earnestly the gospel, the simple gospel of the Son of Man. Jesus, Master, I take thee to be mine for ever! May all in this house, through the rich grace of God, be led to do the same, and may they all be thine, great Son of God, in the day of thine appearing, for thy love's sake. Amen.

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The Star and the Wise Men

"Now Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews'? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."—Matthew 2:1-2, 9-10.

See, dear friends, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ even in his state of humiliation! He is born of lowly parents, laid in a manger, and wrapped in swaddling bands; but, lo! the principalities and powers in the heavenly places are in commotion. First, one angel descends to proclaim the advent of the new-born King and suddenly there is with him a multitude of the heavenly host singing glory unto God. Nor was the commotion confined to the spirits above; for in the heavens which overhang this card, there is a stir. A star is deputed on behalf of all the stars, as if he were the envoy and plenipotentiary of all worlds to represent them before their King. This star is put in commission to wait upon the Lord, to be his herald to men afar off, his usher to conduct them to his presence, and his body-guard to sentinel his cradle. Earth, too, is stirred. Shepherds have come to pay the homage of simple-minded ones: with all love and joy they bow before the mysterious child; and after them from afar come the choice and flower of their generation, the most studious minds of the age. Making a long and difficult journey, they too at last arrive, the representatives of the Gentiles. Lo! the kings of Seba and Sheba offer gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Wise men, the leaders of their peoples, bow down before him, and pay homage to the Son of God. Wherever Christ is he is honorable. "Unto you that believe he is honor." In the day of small things, when the cause of God is denied entertainment, and is

hidden away with things which are despised, it is still most glorious. Christ, though a child, is still King of kings; though among the oxen, he is still distinguished by his star.

Beloved friends, if wise men of old came to Jesus and worshipped, should not we come also? My intense desire this morning is that we all may pay homage to him of whom we sing, "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given." Let those of us who have long worshipped, worship anew with yet lowlier reverence and intenser love. And God grant—oh, that he would grant it!—that some who are far off from him spiritually, as the Magi were far off locally, may come to-day and ask, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have come to worship him." May feet that have been accustomed to broad roads, but unaccustomed to the narrow path, this day pursue that way till they see Jesus, and how before him with all their hearts, finding salvation in him. These wise men came naturally, traversing the desert; let us come spiritually, leaving our sins. These were guided by the sight of a star; let us be guided by faith in the divine Spirit, by the teaching of his word and all those blessed lights which the Lord uses to conduct men to himself. Only let us come to Jesus. It was well to come unto the babe Jesus, led by the feeble beams of a star; you shall find it still more blessed to come to him now that he is exalted in the highest heavens, and by his own light reveals his own perfect glory. Delay not, for this day he cries, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

This morning let us try to do three things. First, let us gather light from this star; secondly, let us gather wisdom from those wise men; and thirdly, let us act as wise men helped by our own particular star.

I. First, then, **LET US GATHER LIGHT FROM THIS STAR.** May the Spirit of the Lord enable us so to do.

I suppose you have each one his own imagination as to what this star was. It would seem to have been altogether supernatural, and not a star, or a comet of the ordinary kind. It was not a constellation, nor a singular conjunction of planets: there is nothing in the Scriptures to support such a conjecture. In all probability it was not a star in the sense in which we now speak of stars: for we find that it moved before the wise men, then

suddenly disappeared, and again shone forth to move before them. It could not have been a star in the upper spheres like others, for such movements would not have been possible. Some have supposed that the wise men went in the direction in which the star shone forth in the heavens, and followed the changes of its position: but it could not in that case have been said that it stood over the place where the young child was. If the star was at its zenith over Bethlehem, it would have been in its zenith over Jerusalem too; for the distance is so small that it would not have been possible to observe any difference in the position of the star in the two places. It must have been a star occupying quite another sphere from that in which the planets revolve. We believe it to have been a luminous appearance in mid-air; probably akin to that which led the children of Israel through the wilderness, which was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Whether it was seen in the daylight or not we cannot tell. Chrysostom and the early fathers are wonderfully positive about many things which Scripture leaves in doubt, but as these eminent divines drew upon their imagination for their facts, we are not under bonds to follow them. They aver that this star was so bright as to be visible all day long. If so, we can imagine the wise men travelling day and night; but if it could be seen only by night, the picture before us grows far more singular and weird—like as we see these easterns quietly pursuing their star-lit way, resting perforce when the sun was up, but noiselessly hurrying at night through slumbering lands. These questions are not of much importance to us, and therefore we will not dwell long upon them.

Only here is a first lesson: if it should ever be that men should fail to preach the gospel, God can conduct souls to his Son by a star. Ah! say not only by a star, but by a stone, a bird, a blade of grass, a drop of dew.

"Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere."

Therefore, despond not when you hear that one minister has ceased to preach the gospel, or that another is fighting against the viral truth of God. Their apostasy shall be to their own loss rather than to the hurt of Jesus and his church; and, sad though it be to see the lamps of the sanctuary put out, yet God is not dependent upon human lights, he is the Shekinah light of his own holy place. Mortal tongues, if they refuse to

preach his word, shall have their places supplied by books in the running brooks and sermons in stones. The beam shall cry out of the wall, and the timber shall answer it. When chief priests and scribes have all gone out of the way, the Lord puts stars into commission, and once more in very deed the heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament is showing his handiwork. Sooner than lack speakers for the incarnate God, mountains and hills shall learn eloquence and break forth into testimony. Jehovah's message shall be made known to the utmost ends of the earth. God shall save his own elect; he shall give to Christ to see of the travail of his soul and to be satisfied. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Hallelujah!

Now, when the Lord does use a star to be his minister, what is the order of his ministry? We may learn by this enquiry what kind of ministry God would have ours to be if we are stars in his right hand. We also shine as lights in the world: let us see how to do it.

We notice, first, that star-preaching is all about Christ. We do not know what the color of the star was, nor the shape of the star, nor to what magnitude it had attained; these items are not recorded, but what is recorded is of much more importance; the wise men said—"We have seen his star." Then the star which the Lord will use to lead men to Jesus must be Christ's own star. The faithful minister, like this star, belongs to Christ; he is Christ's own man in the most emphatic sense. Before we can expect to be made a blessing, dear friends, we must ourselves be blessed of the Lord. If we would cause others to belong, to Jesus, we must belong wholly to Jesus ourselves. Every beam in that star shone forth for Jesus. It was his star, always, and only, and altogether. It shone not for itself, but only as his star: as such it was known and spoken of—"we have seen his star." As I have already said, there is no note taken of any peculiarity that it had except this one, that it was the star of the King. I wish that you and I, whatever our eccentricities or personalities may be, may never make so much of them as to attract men's attention to them. May people never dwell upon our attainments or our deficiencies, but may they always observe this one thing, that we are men of God, that we are ambassadors of Christ, that we are Christ's servants, and do not attempt to shine for ourselves, or to make ourselves conspicuous; but that we

labor to shine for him, that his way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all people. Brother, it is well for us to forget ourselves in our message, to sink ourselves in our Master. We know the names of several of the stars, yet they may each one envy that star which remains anonymous, but can never be forgotten because men who sought the King of Israel knew it as "his star." Though you be but a very little star, twinkling for Jesus; however feeble your light may be, be it plain that you are his star, so that if men wonder what you are, they may never wonder whose you are, for on your very forefront it shall be written, "Whose I am and whom I serve." God will not lead men to Christ by us unless we are Christ's heartily, wholly, unreservedly. In his temple our Lord uses no borrowed vessels; every bowl before the altar must be his own. It is not consistent with the glory of God for him to use borrowed vessels. He is not so poor as that comes to. This lesson is worthy of all acceptance. Are you in a hurry to preach, young man? Are you sure you are Christ's? Do you think it must be a fine thing to hold a company or people listening to your words? Have you looked at it in another light,? Have you weighed the responsibility of having to speak as Christ would have you speak, and of yielding yourself in your entire personality to the utterance of the mind of God? You must be consecrated and concentrated if you hope to be used or the Lord. If you have one ray, or ten thousand rays, all must shine with the one design of guiding men to Jesus. You have nothing now to do with any object, subject, design, or endeavor, but Jesus only: in him, and for him, and to him must you live henceforth, or you will never be chosen of the Lord to conduct either wise men or babes to Jesus. See ye well to it that perfect consecration be yours.

Note next that true star-preaching leads to Christ. The star was Christ's star itself, but it also led others to Christ. It did this very much because it moved in that direction. It is a sad thing when a preacher is like a sign-post pointing the way but never following it, on his own account. Such were those chief priests at Jerusalem: they could tell where Christ was born, but they never went to worship him; they were indifferent altogether to him and to his birth. The star that leads to Christ must always be going to Christ. Men are far better drawn by example than driven by exhortation. Personal piety alone can be owned of God to the production of piety in others. "Go," say you; but they will not go. Say

"come," and lead the way: then they will come. Do not the sheep follow the shepherd? He who would lead others to Christ should go before them himself, having his face towards his Master, his eyes towards his Master, his steps toward his Master, his heart towards his Master. We are so to live that we may without boasting exhort those around us to have us for an example. Oh, that all who think themselves to be stars would themselves diligently move towards the Lord Jesus. The star in the east led wise men to Christ because it went that way itself: there is a wisdom in example which truly wise men are quick to perceive. This star had such an influence upon the chosen men that they could not but follow it: it charmed them across the desert. Such a charm may reside in you and in me, and we may exercise a powerful ministry over many hearts, being to them as loadstones, drawing them to the Lord Jesus. Happy privilege! We would not, merely show the road, but induce our neighbors to enter upon it. We read of one of old, not that they told him of Jesus, but that "they brought him to Jesus." We are not only to tell the story of the cross, but we are to persuade men to fly to the Crucified One for salvation. Did not the king in the parable say to his servants, "Compel them to come in." Assuredly he girds his own messengers with such a compelling power that men cannot hold out any longer, but must follow their lead and bow at the King's feet. The star did not draw, "as it were with a cart rope," nor by any force, material and physical; yet it drew these wise men from the remote east right to the manger of the new-born child. And so, though we have no arm of the law to help us, nor patronage, nor pomp of eloquence, nor parade of learning, yet we have a spiritual power by which we draw to Jesus thousands who are our joy and crown. The man sent of God comes forth from the divine presence permeated with a power which makes men turn to the Savior and live. Oh! that such power might go forth from all God's ministers yea, from all God's servants engaged in street-preaching, in Sunday-schools, in tract-visitation, and in every form of holy service. God uses those whose aim and intent it is to draw men to Christ. He puts his Spirit into them, by which Spirit they are helped to set forth the Lord Jesus as so lovely and desirable that men run to him and accept his glorious salvation. It is a small thing to shine, but it is a great thing to draw. Any cast-away may be brilliant; but only the real saint will be attractive for Jesus. I would not pray to be an orator, but I do pray to be a soul-winner. Do not aim, beloved brethren, at anything short of leading

men to Jesus. Do not be satisfied to lead them to orthodox doctrine, or merely to bring them to a belief in those views which you hold to be Scriptural, valuable as that way be. It is to the person of the incarnate God that we must bring them to his feet we must conduct them that they may worship him: our mission is not accomplished, it is a total failure, unless we conduct our hearers to the house where Jesus dwells, and then stand over them, keeping watch over their souls for Jesus' sake.

Once more, the star which God used in this case was a star that stopped at Jesus: it went before the wise men till it brought them to Jesus, and then it stood still over the place where the young child was. I admire the manner of this star. There are remarkable stars in the theological sky at the present, time: they have led men to Jesus, so they say, and now they lead them into regions beyond, of yet undeveloped thought. The gospel of the Puritans is "old-fashioned"; these men have discovered that it is unsuitable for the enlarged intellects of the times; and so these stars would guide us further still. To this order of wandering stars I do not belong myself, and I trust I never shall. Progress beyond the gospel I have no desire for. "God forbid that I should glory save ill the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When the star had come to the place where the young child was, it stood still: and so should the gracious mind become settled, fixed, immovable. The wise men knew where to find that star, and where to find the young child by it: so be it with us. Oh, you that have hitherto been diligent in leading souls to Christ, never indulge for a single moment the notion that you need a broader philosophy or a deeper spirituality than are to be found in Jesus. Abide in him. Cry, "Oh God, my heart is fixed. My heart is fixed." There is nothing beyond Christ which is worth a moment's thought. Do not lose your paradise in Christ for another taste of that tree of knowledge of good-and-evil which ruined our first parents. Stick you to the old points: your one subject Christ, your one object to bring men to Christ, your one glory the glory of Christ. Standing by your Lord, and there alone, from this day to the last day, you will secure a happy, honored, and holy life. They said of Greece after her fall that it had become so ruined that you might search for Greece in Greece and fail to find it: I fear I must say that some professed preachers of the gospel have roamed so far away from it that you cannot find the gospel in their gospel, nor Christ himself in the Christ they preach. So far have some diverged

from the grand essential soul-saving truth beyond which no man ought to dare to think of going, that they retain nothing of Christianity but the name. All that is beyond truth is a lie; anything beyond revelation is at best a minor matter, and most probably is an old wives' fable, even though he may be of the masculine gender who invented it. Stand you to your colors you who hope to be used of the Lord. Abide so that men shall find you in twenty years' time shining for Jesus and pointing to the place where the Savior is to be found, even as you are doing now. Let Jesus Christ be your ultimatum. Your work is done when you bring souls to Jesus, and help to keep them there, by being yourself "steadfast, unmovable." Be not carried away from the hope of your calling; but hold fast even the form of sound words, for it may be that in letting go the form you may lose the substance also.

II. Now that we have somewhat rejoiced in the light of the star, let us see if we can GATHER WISDOM FROM THE WISE MEN.

Perhaps you have heard the "much speaking" of tradition as to who they were, whence they came, and how they traveled. In the Greek church, I believe, they know their number, their names, the character of their retinue, and what kind of ornaments were on their dromedaries' necks. Details which are not found in the word of God you may believe or not, at your pleasure, and you will be wise if our pleasure is not to believe too much. We only know that they were Magi, wise men from the East, possibly of the old Parsee religion—watchers if not worshippers of the stars. We will not speculate about them, but learn from them.

They did not content themselves with admiring the star and comparing it with other stars, and taking notes as to the exact date of its appearance, and how many times it twinkled, and when it moved, and all that; but they practically used the teaching of the star. Many are hearers and admirers of God's servants, but they are not wise enough to make fit and proper use of the preaching. They notice the peculiarity of the preacher's language, how much he is like one divine, how much he is unlike another; whether he coughs too often, or speaks too much in his throat; whether he is too loud or too low; whether he has not a provincial tone, whether there may not be about him a commonness of speech approaching to vulgarity; or, on the other hand, whether he may not be too florid in his

diction. Such fooleries as these are the constant observations of men for whose souls we labor. They are perishing, and yet toying with such small matters. With many it is all they go to the house of God for, to criticise in this paltry fashion. I have even seen them come to this place with opera glasses, as if they came hither to inspect an actor who lived and labored to arouse their leisure hours. Such is the sport of fools; but these were wise men, and therefore practical men. They did not become star-gazers, and stop at the point of admiring the remarkable star; but they said, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." They set out at once to find the now-born King, of whose coming the star was the signal. Oh, my dear hearers, how I wish that you were all wise in this same manner! I would sooner preach the dullest sermon that was ever preached than preach the most brilliant that was ever spoken if I could by that poor sermon lead you quite away from myself to seek the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the one thing I care about. Will you never gratify me by enquiring after my Lord and Master? I long to hear you say, "What is the man talking about? He speaks about a Savior; we will have that Savior for ourselves. He talks about pardon through the blood of Christ; he speaks about God coming down among men to save them; we will find out if there is any reality in this pardon, any truth in this salvation. We will seek Jesus, and find for ourselves the blessings which are reported to be laid up in him." If I heard you all saying this I should be ready to die of joy.

Is not this a good day on which to set out to find your Savior? Some of you that have postponed it long, would it not be well to set out at once ere this expiring year has seen its last day? These wise men appear to have set out as soon as they discovered the star: they were not among those who have time to waste in needless delays. "There is the star," said they; "away we go beneath its guidance. We are not satisfied with a star, we go to find the King whose star it is!" And so they set out to find Christ immediately and resolutely.

Being wise men, they persevered in their search after him. We cannot tell how far they journeyed. Travelling was extremely difficult in those times. There were hostile tribes to avoid, the broad rivers of the Tigris and the Euphrates to cross, and trackless deserts to penetrate; but they made

nothing of difficulty or danger. They set out for Jerusalem, and to Jerusalem they came, seeking the King of the Jews. If it be true that God has taken upon himself our nature, we ought to resolve to find him, let it cost what it may. If we must circumnavigate the globe to find a Savior, the distance and the expense ought to be nothing so long as we may but reach him. Were the Christ in the bowels of the earth, or in the heights of heaven we ought not to rest till we come at him. Everything that was necessary for their expedition the wise men soon gathered together, regardless of expense; and off they went following the star that they might discover the Prince of the kings of the earth.

At length they came to Jerusalem, and here new trials awaited them. It must have been a great trouble to them when they asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" and the people shook their heads as if they thought the question an idle one. Neither rich nor poor in the metropolitan city knew anything of Israel's King. The ribald multitude replied, "Herod is king of the Jews. Mind how you speak of another king, or your head may have to answer for it. The tyrant brooks no rival." The wise men must have been more astonished still when they found that Herod was troubled. They were glad to think that he was born who was to usher in the age of gold; but Herod's face grew blacker than ever at the bare mention of a king of the Jews. His eyes flashed, and a thundercloud was upon his brow; a dark deed of murder will come of it, though for the moment he conceals his malice. There is tumult all through the streets of Jerusalem, for no man knows what grim Herod may do now that he has been roused by the question, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Thus there was a ferment in Jerusalem, beginning at the palace; but this did not deter the wise men from their search for the promised Prince. They did not pack up their bales and go back and say, "It is useless to try to discover this questionable personage who is unknown even in the country of which he is King, and who appears to "be terribly unwelcome to those who are to be his subjects. We must leave to another day the solution of the question: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

These earnest-minded seekers were not dispirited by the clergy and the learned men when they came together. To the chief priests and scribes the question was put, and they answered the enquiry as to where Christ

would be born, but not a mother's son among them would go with the wise men to find this new-born King. Strange apathy! Alas, how common! Those who should have been leaders were no leaders; they would not even be followers of that which is good, for they had no heart towards Christ. The wise men rose superior to this serious discouragement. If the clergy would not help them they would go to Jesus by themselves. Oh, dear friend, if you are wise you will say, "I will find Christ alone if none will join me: if I dig to the center, I will find him; if I fly to the sun, I will find him; if all men put me off, I will find him; if the ministers of the gospel appear indifferent to me, I will find him: the kingdom of heaven or old suffered violence, and the violent took it by force, and so will I." The first Christians had to leave all the authorized teachers of the day behind, and to come out by themselves: it will be no strange thing if you should have to do the same. Happy will it be if you are determined to go through floods and flames to find Christ; for he will be found of you. Thus these men were wise because, having started on the search, they persevered in it till they found the Lord and worshipped him.

Notice that they were wise because, when they again saw the star, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." While enquiring among the priests at Jerusalem they were perplexed, but when the star shone out again, they were at ease and full of joy: this joy they expressed, so that the evangelist recorded it. In these days very wise people think it necessary to repress all emotion, and appear like men of stone or ice. No matter what happens, they are stoical, and raised far above the enthusiasm of the vulgar. It is wonderful how fashions change, and folly stands for philosophy. But these wise men were children enough to be glad when their perplexity was over, and the clear light shone forth. It is a good sign when a man is not ashamed to be happy because he hears a plain, unmistakable testimony for the Lord Jesus. It is good to see the great man come down from his pedestal, and, like a little child, rejoice to hear the simple story of the cross. Give me the hearer who looks not for fineries, but cries out, "Lead me to Jesus. I want a guide to Jesus, and nothing else will suit me." Why, truly, if men did but know the value of things they would rejoice more to see a preacher of the gospel than a king. If the feet of the heralds of salvation be blessed, how much more their tongues when they tell out the tidings of a Savior. These wise men, with all their mystic learning

were not ashamed to rejoice because a little star lent them its beams to conduct them to Jesus. We unite with them in rejoicing over a clear gospel ministry. For us all else is darkness, sorrow, and vexation of spirit; but that which leads us to our own glorious Lord is spirit, and light, and life. Better the sun should not shine than that a clear gospel should not be preached. We reckon that a country flourishes or decays according as gospel light is revealed or withdrawn.

Now follow these wise men a little further. They have come to the house where the young child is. What will they do? Will they stand looking at the star? No: they enter in. The star stands still, but they are not afraid to lose its radiance, and behold the Sun of righteousness. They did not cry, "We see the star, and that is enough for us; we have followed the star, and it is all we need to do." Not at all. They lift, the latch, and enter the lowly residence of the babe. They see the star no longer, and they have no need to see it, for there is he that is born King of the Jews. Now the true Light has shone upon them from the face of the child; they behold the incarnate God. Oh, friends! how wise you will be if, when you have been led to Christ by any man, you do not rest in his leadership, but must see Christ for yourselves. How much I long that you may enter into the fellowship of the mystery, pass through the door, and come and behold the young child, and bow before him. Our woe is that so many are so unwise. We are only their guides, but they are apt to make us their end. We point the way, but they do not follow the road; they stand gazing upon us. The star is gone; it did its work, and passed away: Jesus remains, and the wise men live in him. Will any of you be so foolish as to think only of the dying preacher, and forget the ever-living Savior? Come, be wise, and hasten to your Lord at once.

These men were wise, last of all—and I commend their example to you—because when they saw the child they worshipped. Theirs was not curiosity gratified, but devotion exercised. We, too, must worship the Savior, or we shall never be saved by him. He has not come to put away our sins, and yet to leave us ungodly and self-willed. Oh you that have never worshipped the Christ of God, may you be led to do so at once! He is God over all, blessed for ever, adore him! Was God ever seen in such a worshipful form before? Behold he bows the heavens; he rides upon the

wings of the wind; he scatters flames of fire; he speaks, and his dread artillery shakes the hills: you worship in terror. Who would not adore the great and terrible Jehovah? But is it not much better to behold him here, allied to your nature, wrapped like other children in swaddling clothes, tender, feeble, next akin to your own self? Will you not worship God when he thus comes down to you and becomes your brother, born for your salvation? Here nature itself suggests worship: O may grace produce it! Let us hasten to worship where shepherds and wise men and angels have led the way.

Here let my sermon come to a pause even as the star did. Enter the house and worship! Forget the preacher. Let the starlight shine for other eyes. Jesus was born that you might be born again. He lived that you might live. He died that you might die to sin. He is risen, and to-day he maketh intercession for transgressors that they may be reconciled to God through him. Come, then; believe, trust, rejoice, adore! If you have neither gold, frankincense, nor myrrh, bring your faith, your love, your repentance, and falling down before the Son of God pay him the reverence of your hearts.

III. And now I turn to my third and last point, which is this: LET US ACT AS WISE MEN UNDER THE LIGHT OF OUR STAR. We too have received light to lead us to the Savior: I might say that for us many stars have shone to that blessed end. I will, however, on this point content myself with asking questions.

Do you not think that there is some light for you in your particular vocation, some call from God in your calling? Listen to me, and then listen to God. These men were watchers of the stars; therefore a star was used to call them. Certain other men soon after were fishermen; and by means of an amazing take of fish the Lord Jesus made them aware of his superior power, and then he called them to become fishers of men. For a star-gazer a star; for a fisherman a fish. The Master-Fisher hath a bait for each one of his elect, and oftentimes he selects a point in their own calling to be the barb of the hook. Were you busy yesterday at your counter? Did you bear no voice saying "Buy the truth and sell it not"? When you closed the shop last night did you not bethink yourself that soon you must close it for the last time? Do you make bread? and do you never ask yourself,

"Has my soul eaten the bread of heaven?" Are you a farmer? do you till the soil? Has God never spoken to you by those furrowed fields and these changing seasons, and made you wish that your heart might be tilled and sown.? Listen! God is speaking! Hear, ye deaf; for there are voices everywhere calling you to heaven. You need not go miles about to find a link between you and everlasting mercy: the telegraphic wires are on either side of the road, God and human souls are near each other. How I wish that your common vocation would be viewed by you as concealing within itself the door to your high vocation. Oh that the Holy Spirit would turn your favourite pursuits into opportunities for his gracious work upon you. If not among the stars, yet among the flowers of the garden, or the cattle of the hills, or the waves of the sea may he find a net in which to enclose you for Christ. I wish that those of you who conclude that your calling could never draw you to Christ would make a point of seeing whether it might not be so. We are to learn from ants, and swallows, and cranes, and conies; surely we need never be short of tutors. It did seem that a star was an unlikely thing to head a procession of eastern sages, and yet it was the best guide that could be found; and so it may seem that your trade is an unlikely thing to bring you to Jesus, and yet the Lord may so use it. There may be a message from the Lord to thee in many a left-handed providence; a voice for wisdom may come to thee from the month of an ass; a call to a holy life may startle thee from a bush, a warning may flash upon thee from a wall, or a vision may impress thee in the silence of night when deep sleep falleth upon men. Only be thou ready to hear and God will find a way of speaking to thee. Answer the question as the wise men would have answered it, and say, "Yes, in our calling there is a call to Christ."

Then, again, what should you and I do better in this life than seek after Christ! The wise men thought all other pursuits of small account compared with this. "Who is going to attend to that observatory and watch the rest of the stars?" They shake their heads, and say they do not know: these things must wait; they have seen his star, and they are going to worship him. But who will attend to their wives and families, and all besides, while they make this long journey? They reply that every lesser thing must be subordinate to the highest thing. Matters must be taken in proportion, and the search after the King of the Jews, who is the desire of

all nations, is so out of all proportion great that all the rest must go. Are not you, also, wise enough to judge in this sensible fashion? Do you not think, dear friends, it would be well to use all to-morrow in seeking Jesus? It will be a leisure day, could you spend it better than in Seeking your Redeemer? If you were to take a week, and give it wholly to your own soul, and to seeking Christ, would it not be well spent? How can you live with your soul in jeopardy? Oh that you would say, "I must get this matter right; it is an all-important business, and I must see it secure." This would be no more than common-sense. If you are driving, and a trace is broken, do you not stop the horse, and get the harness right? How, then, can you go on with the chariot of life when all its harness is out of order, and a fall means eternal ruin? If you will stop driving to arrange a buckle for fear of accident, I would beg of you to stop anything and everything to see to the safety of your soul. See how the engineer looks to the safety-valve: are you content to run more desperate risks? If your house were not insured, and you carried on a hazardous trade, the probability is you would feel extremely anxious until you had arranged that matter: but your soul is uninsured, and it may burn for ever,—will you not give heed to it? I beseech you be just to yourself,—kind to yourself. Oh! see to your eternal well-being. You are not certain that you will get home to dinner to-day. Life is frail as a cobweb. You may be in hell before yon clock strikes one! Remember that. There is not a step between you and everlasting destruction from the presence of God if you are as yet unregenerate; and your only hope is to find the Savior, trust the Savior, obey the Savior. Wherefore, like these wise men, put everything on one side, and set out now upon an earnest, resolute, persevering endeavor to find Jesus. I was about to say—resolve to find Jesus, or to die; but I will change the words, and say—resolve to find him, and live.

When we do come near to Jesus, let us ask ourselves this question, "Do we see more in Jesus than other people do?" for if we do, we are God's elect taught of God, illuminated by his Spirit. We read in the Scriptures that when these wise men saw the young child they fell down and worshipped him. Other people might have come in and seen the child, and said, "Many children are as interesting as this poor woman's babe." Ay, but as these men looked, they saw: all eyes are not so blessed. Eyes that see are gifts from the All-seeing One. Carnal eyes are blind; but these

men saw the Infinite in the infant; the Godhead gleaming through the manhood; the glory hiding beneath the swaddling bands. Undoubtedly there was a spiritual splendor about this matchless child! We read that Moses' father and mother saw that he was a "goodly child"; they saw he was "fair unto God," says the original. But when these elect men saw that holy thing which is called the Son of the Highest, they discovered in him a glory all unknown before. Then was his star in the ascendant to them: he became their all in all, and they worshipped with all their hearts. Have you discovered such glory in Christ? "Oh!" says one, "you are always harping upon Christ and his glory. You are a man of one idea!" Precisely so. My one idea is that he is "altogether lovely," and that there is nothing out of heaven nor in heaven that can be compared with him even in his lowest and weakest estate. Have you ever seen as much as that in Jesus? If so, you are the Lord's; go you, and rejoice in him. If not, pray God to open your eyes until, like the wise men, you see and worship.

Lastly, learn from these wise men that when they worshipped they did not permit it to be a mere empty-handed adoration. Ask yourself, "What shall I render unto the Lord?" Bowing before the young child, they offered "gold, frankincense and myrrh," the best of metals and the best of spices; an offering to the King of gold; an offering to the priest of frankincense; an offering to the child of myrrh. Wise men are liberal men. Consecration is the best education. To-day it is thought to be wise to be always receiving; but the Savior said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." God judges our hearts by that which spontaneously comes from them: hence the sweet cane bought with money is acceptable to him when given freely. He doth not tax his saints or weary them with incense; but he delights to see in them that true love which cannot express itself in mere words, but must use gold and myrrh, works of love and deeds of self-denial, to be the emblems of its gratitude. Brothers, you will never get into the heart of happiness till you become unselfish and generous; you have but chewed the husks of religion which are often bitter, you have never eaten of the sweet kernel until you have felt the love of God constraining you to make sacrifice. There is nothing in the true believer's power which he would not do for his Lord: nothing in our substance which we would not give to him, nothing in ourselves which we would not devote to his service.

God give to you all grace to come to Jesus, even though it be by the starlight of this Sermon, for his love's sake! Amen.

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The Agreement Of Salvation By Grace With Walking In Good Works

Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them - Ephesians 2:9-10

I shall call your attention to the near neighborhood of these two phrases, "Not of works," and "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The text reads with a singular sound; for it seems strange to the ear that good works should be negated as the cause of salvation, and then should be spoken of as the great end of it. You may put it down among what the Puritans called "Orthodox Paradoxes," if you please; though it is hardly so difficult a matter as to deserve the name.

Not long ago, I tried to handle the point of difference supposed to exist between the doctrine of faith—"Believe, and thou shalt be saved," and the doctrine of the new birth and its necessity—"Ye must be born again." My method was on this wise: I did not explain the difficulties which appear to the logician and the doctor of metaphysics; but I tried to show that, practically, there were none. If we deal only with difficulties which block up the way to salvation, there are none. As for those matters which involve no real hindrance, I leave them where they are. A rock which is in nobody's way may stand where it is. He that believes in Jesus is born again. These two things are equally true: there must be a work of the Spirit within, yet he that believeth in the Lord Jesus hath everlasting life.

Now, there is a contention always going on about the doctrine of good works: and instead of taking one side or the other, we shall try to see whether there really is anything to quarrel over if we keep to the Scriptures. We insist upon it, with all our might, that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." But, on the other hand, we freely admit, and earnestly teach, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Where there are no good works, there is no indwelling of the Spirit

of God. The faith which does not produce good works is not saving faith: it is not the faith of God's elect: it is not faith at all in the Scriptural sense. I have just taken these two points, to bring them forward for the help and comfort of beginners. I seek not to instruct you who are well-taught already; but my aim at this time is to instruct beginners on this important subject. Salvation is not of works; but, at the same time, we, who are the subjects of divine grace, are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." This is plain to the enlightened believer; but babes in grace have weak eyes, and cannot at once perceive.

Before, in the gracious providence of God, Luther was raised up to preach the doctrine of justification by faith, the common notion among religious persons was, that men must be saved by works; and the result was that, knowing nothing of the root from which virtue springs, very few persons had any good works at all. Religion so declined that it became a mere matter of empty ceremony, or of useless seclusion; and, in addition, superstition overlaid the original truth of the gospel, so that one could hardly find it out at all. The reign of self-justification and priestcraft led to no good result upon the masses of religious people. Indulgences and forgivenesses of sins were hawked through the streets, and publicly sold. So much was charged for the pardon of one sin, and so much for another, and the exchequer of "his holiness" at Rome—who might better have been called "his unholiness"—was filled by payments for abating penalties in a purgatory of Rome's inventing Luther learned from the sacred Volume, by the Spirit of the Lord, that we are saved by grace alone through faith; and, having found it out, he was so possessed by that one truth that he preached it with a voice of thunder. His witness on one point was so concentrated that it would be too much to expect equal clearness upon all other truths. I sometimes compare him to a bull who shuts his eyes, and goes straight on at the one object which he means to overthrow. With a mighty crash, he broke down the gates of Papal superstition. He saw nothing—he did not want to see anything—except this, "By grace are ye saved through faith." He made very clear and good work upon that point, faulty as he was upon certain others. The echoes of his manly voice rang down the centuries. I note that nearly all the sermons of Protestant divines, for long after Luther, were upon justification by faith; and, whatever the text might be, they somehow or other brought in that article

of a standing or falling church. They seldom finished a sermon without declaring that salvation is not by works, but that it is by faith in Jesus Christ. I do not censure them for a moment; far rather do I commend them—better too much than too little upon the central doctrine of the gospel. The times needed that point to be made clear to all comers; and the Reforming preachers made it clear. Justification by faith was the nail that had to be driven home, and clinched; and all their hammers went at that nail. They were nothing like so specific and clear upon many other doctrines as they were upon this; but then it was a foundation-stone, and they were occupied in laying it, and they did lay it, and laid it thoroughly, and laid it for ever.

Still, they would have more fully completed the circle of revealed truth if sanctification had been as fully apprehended and as clearly explained as justification. It had been as well if the legs of the gospel of the Reformation had been equal, for one was a little longer and a little stronger than the other, and therefore there was a limp—a halting like that of victorious Israel, as he came from Jabbok—but still a limp, which it would be well to cure. We have passed beyond the stage of dwelling too much on the cardinal doctrine, and I greatly fear that in these times we do not have enough preaching of justification by faith. I could wish the Lutheran times back again, and that the old thunders of Wittenberg could be heard once more; and yet I shall be glad if everything that is practical in the gospel shall also have its full sphere allotted to it. Imputed righteousness, by all means; but let us hear of imparted righteousness also; for both are precious boons of grace. The duties—let me rather say, the high and holy privileges—which come to us as children and servants of God—these should be maintained and fully preached, side by side with the blessed truth embodied in those lines—

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One:
There is life at this moment for thee."

I shall dwell, first of all, upon the first point of the text, which is this, "Not of works," or the way of salvation. "Not of works" is negative description, but within the negative there lies very clearly the positive. The way of salvation is by something other than our own works. Secondly, I shall

speak about the walk of salvation. We who are saved walk in holiness; for we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." It is a decree of the sovereign Lord that his chosen should be led to walk in holiness.

I. First, then, THE WAY OF SALVATION is negatively described as "Not of works." To this many take exception; but that we cannot help; the Scripture is plain enough. We are told that we ought not, on any occasion, to allow persons to sing—

"Sinner, nothing do,
Either great or small,
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago."

Great exception has been taken to that expression; but I believe that, if the same truth had been expressed in any other words, the same objection would have been raised, for it is the truth that is objected to, rather than the words in which it is set forth. My text itself would be, to such persons, very objectionable—"Not of works." They are ready to rail at Paul for speaking thus evangelically. They hate the doctrine of salvation all of gift, and not in the least of merit—a doctrine which we love. We preach salvation "not of works"; we repeat the teaching again and again, and mean to repeat it continually, till we die. Salvation is of the Lord's mercy, and not by works of the law.

If we were to preach that salvation is of works, we should please many fine folk; but as we do not know that it would be at all to their benefit that they should be pleased, we shall not brush one hair of our head in a different way from that in which it grows, to please them; much less shall we keep back, or explain away, the fundamental truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and that for several reasons.

If we were to preach to sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, that salvation would be by their own works, we should be setting aside the way of salvation by grace. There cannot be two ways of salvation for the same people. If we take to the one, we practically deny the other. It cannot be

questioned that a guilty man, if saved at all, must be saved through the mercy of God. It cannot be denied, also, that our Savior and his apostles taught that we are saved by faith. A man must shut his eyes if he does not see this to be their teaching. If, then, I teach men that they can be saved by works, I have practically told them that salvation by grace is a myth, a mistake, a mischievous error. I have set it aside; for, as I have said before, there cannot be two ways to heaven: there cannot be more than one. If I set up the way of works, I shut up the way of grace. If salvation be of merit, it is not of mercy. But if there be no salvation of men by the pure mercy of God, what an unhappy case are we in! To deny grace is really to deny hope. Where, then, would there be any gospel, or glad tidings, or good news? The way of salvation by works is not "news." It is the old way of man's devising, which is the general and well-known error of all the ages. Moreover, it is not "good news," or glad news; for there is nothing good or glad in it. That we shall be rewarded for our works, is nothing more than the heathens taught. Justification by religious performances, and meritorious deeds, is nothing better than the old Pharisaism with a Christian name stuck upon it. It is not worth revealing by the Spirit of God, for it is to be seen by the light of man's own candle. That doctrine makes the Lord Jesus Christ to be practically a nobody; for if salvation be of works, then the way of salvation through faith in a Savior is superfluous, and even mischievous.

Next, to preach the way of salvation by works is to propose to men a way in which they have already failed. If you are to be saved by works, you must begin very early: you must begin before you sin, since one sin decides the matter. But already you have commenced to break the law of God. I am not addressing persons who have yet to start upon the way, for they have started already. You are a good way on the road, one way or other; and since you began in the way of works, what a failure you have made of it already! Is there anyone here who can claim that he is already saved by works, as far as he has gone? Has anyone among you been without sin? Look at your lives; examine your consciences; observe your words, your thoughts, your imaginations, your motives; for all these come into the account. Is there a man here that doeth good, and sinneth not? Scripture declares that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own

way." The way of salvation cannot, therefore, be by following a road from which we have already so sinfully and steadily departed. If you were perfect as Adam was before he sinned, you might follow the way of works, and be safe; but you are not in that condition. If I could be sent to an Adam and an Eve altogether unfallen, I might propose to them the way of salvation by obedience to the law; but you have fallen, and your nature is inclined to forsake the right way. The very garments that you wear show that you have discovered your shame. The daily labors which weary you prove that you are not in paradise. The very preaching of the gospel implies that you are in a sinful world. You are not possessed of a will unbiassed, or inclined to that which is good: you have chosen the evil, and still continue to choose it; and therefore I should only be proposing to you a road in which you have already stumbled, and I should be setting you a task in which you have already broken down.

And, next, I think it will be admitted by all, that the way of salvation by good works would be self-evidently unsuitable to a considerable number. I will take a case. I am sent for on an emergency, and it is the dead of night. A man is dying, smitten suddenly by the death-blast. I go to his bedside, as requested. Consciousness remains; but he is evidently in mortal agony. He has lived an ungodly life, and he is about to die. I am asked by his wife and friends to speak to him a word that may bless him. Shall I tell him that he can only be saved by good works? Where is the time for works? Where is the possibility of them? Almost while I am speaking, his life is struggling to escape him. He looks at me in the agony of his soul, and he stammers out, "What must I do to be saved?" Shall I read to him the moral law? Shall I expound to him the Ten Commandments, and tell him that he must keep all these? He would shake his head, and say, "I have broken them all; I am condemned by them all." If salvation be of works, what more have I to say? I am of no use here. What can I say? The man is utterly lost. There is no remedy for him. How can I tell him the cruel dogma of "modern thought" that his own personal character is everything? How can I tell him that there is no value in belief, no help for the soul in looking to another—even to Jesus, the Substitute? There is no whisper of hope for a dying man in the hard and stony doctrine of salvation by works.

If salvation had been by works, our Lord could not have said to the thief, dying at his side, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." That man could do no works. His hands and feet were fastened to the cross, and he was in the agonies of death. No, it must be of grace, all-conquering grace; and the modus operandi must be by faith, or else for dying men the gospel is a mockery. The man must look, and live. The expiring sinner must trust the expiring Savior. As life ebbs out, the penitent must find life in Jesus' death. Is it not clear that the gospel of works is unsuitable in such a case as that? Now, a gospel which is unsuitable to anybody is not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, I put it plainly. A gospel that does not suit everybody does not suit anybody; and if it suits any class and condition really and truly, it must suit all classes. I think I have told you that, on one occasion, I had a letter which was intended to be very irritating to me, from some rather eminent, aristocratic gentleman, who said that he had read some of my sermons when he was out on the coast of Africa, and he found that certain black fellows out there—certain "niggers"—delighted in them very much. He wrote to inform me that I was a very competent preacher for "niggers." I accepted the assurance at once as a very high compliment. I felt that, if I could preach to "niggers," I could preach to anybody; and that, if the gospel that I preached was suitable to the natives on the coast of Africa it would certainly suit the people in London; if those who are afar off could understand it, you, who are near, could also understand it. The gospel was not sent into the world to be a patent medicine that could only be purchased by the wealthy, or a spell that could only be uttered by Latin scholars. It is a gospel for all ranks and conditions of men; and if I prove that what you call the gospel is unsuitable for the dying, or is unsuitable for the ignorant, it is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of salvation by grace, through faith, is suitable for every class of persons that we have to deal with. Sinful habit has bound in iron fetters many of our fellow-citizens, and the gospel can free them. Be the habit drunkenness, or profanity, or what it may, the habit holds them fast; and the prophet says, concerning habit, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." To what purpose, then, do I cry to the leopard, "Change your spots," or to the Ethiopian, "Change your skin"? I must bring a superior force to bear upon the leopard or the Ethiopian, before this can be accomplished; and there is no force in mere

exhortation. You may exhort a blind man to see as long as you like; but he will not see. You may exhort a dead man to live as long as you like; but he will not live through your exhortation alone. Something more is wanted. The forces of natural depravity, and the acquired habits of sin in many cases—I think you will grant it—put the doctrine of salvation by works out of court; and if out of court as to one, it is gone as to all; for there can be but one gospel. Go through your convict settlements; go through your jails; and just see what you can do with a doctrine of salvation by good works. You will come home disappointed, however earnest may be your address. But go there, and tell of free grace and dying love, and pardon bought with blood, and eyes that stream with tears, confessions of sin, and cries for pardon, will tell you that you have not spoken in vain.

Further, dear friends, if we go and preach to men salvation by works, we are preaching to them a way of salvation impossible to all because of the perfection of the law. What are the good works that can merit heaven? What are the good works that can ensure eternal life? These are not the easy things which some seem to imagine. They must be perfectly pure, continuous, and unspotted. "The law of the Lord is perfect." It condemns a thought, and even the glance of an eye, as an act of criminality. "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." The law of God in ten commands means much more than the bare words would imply: it deals with the whole range of moral condition, motive, and thought. Dream not that its sweep includes only external acts: it does include externals, but, in very deed, the ten commands are spiritual, they go right through the heart, and search the inward parts of the spirit. The more a man understands the law, the more he feels condemned by it, and the less does he indulge the dream that he, as he is, shall ever be able to keep it intact. With such foul hands as ours, how can we do clean work? With hearts so polluted, how can we be "undefiled in the way"? Nature rises no higher than its source, and that which comes out of the heart will be no better than the heart, and that is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

The law of God is one; and if you break it in any one point, you break it altogether. If, in a chain of one hundred links, ninety-nine should be perfect; yet if a single link, anywhere in the chain, should be too weak for

the weight placed upon it, the load will fall to the ground quite as surely as if twenty links were snapped. One breakage of the perfect law of God involves transgression against the whole of it. In order to be saved by works, there must be absolutely perfect, continuously perfect obedience to it, in thought, and word, and deed; and that obedience must be rendered cheerfully, and from the heart, for this is the pith of the first table—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Can you keep that? Vain-glorious man, have you measured your moral strength against requirements so great, and yet so just? Have you hitherto proved yourself equal to the task? Here is the pith of the second table—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Have you ever tried to do that—to love your neighbor as yourself? You have been a little kind, and sometimes generous; but the standard of loving your neighbor as yourself—have you ever reached to that? Has your charity been equal to your self-love? I do not believe that it has ever gone even half the way. Now, "What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law;" and if it saith all this to you, and you cannot answer to its demands, how can you hope that you shall live by it? When a man fails to keep the law, it condemns him; and its penalty—in other words, its curse—falls on him as justly his due. He that is under the law is under the curse. All that the law has to say to you is—"Thou hast broken me; and thou must die for it." Read the curses written in the Book of Deuteronomy, and remember that all these are pronounced over your head.

"Look to the flames that Moses saw,
And shrink, and tremble, and despair."

And again, dear friends, if we preach salvation by works, we shall take the minds of men away from a sense of their great need. Here is a person who has a terrible disease. He can be cured. The knife must be used; but if, instead thereof, I lay down for him rules of cleanliness, and of general hygiene, I may do him some sort of good; but meanwhile he will neglect the chief evil, his disease will spread, and will become fatal. What am I to do, if I am a surgeon? Must I not impress him, first, with the conviction that a serious operation is required, and that it must be submitted to? All the rest will be proper enough, and even necessary, in due time; but I

must do nothing to take his mind away from the great master-evil that is destroying his life. The sinner must be told that he must be born again, that his nature is corrupt, that this corrupt nature must be destroyed, that a new nature must be created in him: to this his mind must be turned. He must be made "a new creature" in Christ Jesus; and if I stir him up to eternal action, with a view to his salvation by it, I shall be taking his thoughts away from the inward evil of sin, which is the very essence of the matter. O sirs, if you had committed an offense against the government of your country, and you were found guilty, and condemned to die, my first business with you would be to entreat you to ask pardon of your queen. I might come into your cell, and say that I would have you dressed more respectably; would have you read such a book, or learn such a science; and this might be all very well; but the first thing you need is to have the sentence of death repealed. I will exhort you, my dear hearers, to do everything that is honest, and right, and good; but there is something needed even more than this. You need to be cleansed from sin by the precious blood of Christ. You need to be renewed in heart by the Holy Spirit, and you must turn your thoughts to these things. You first and most of all need the Lord Jesus. Look to him, I pray you. I dare not exhort you to this work, or to that, lest I distract your mind from Christ.

The preaching of legal justification has no power over men. Congregations thus instructed are usually careless, worldly, and devoted to carnal amusements. Those who hear about works feel as if they had now done enough, and did not need to practice them. There is nothing in such doctrine to arouse anxiety, or move desire, or stir the depths of the soul. It has nothing divine about it, nothing supernatural, nothing which can really raise the fallen, cheer the faint, or inspire the gracious. Without unction, life, or fire, a legal ministry is mere fiddling a tune to lame men, or setting forth a course of living action for a vault full of corpses. This point we know to be fact, and therefore we shall not repeat the experiment.

I am afraid that, if we began to preach salvation by works, we should encourage pride in some, and create despair in others. Many would think that they had done pretty well, as compared with other people; they would, therefore, right speedily wrap themselves up in a false hope. But

others, knowing that they had not done well, as compared with other people, would think that there was no hope for them, and so would sit down in despair. What practical purpose could this serve—to be making some more proud, and others more wicked, through the influence of despair upon them?

But the very worst matter is, that it would be taking them off from Jesus. Our business, my brethren, is to hold up Jesus Christ. To what end did he die, if men could be saved by their own works? It was a superfluity that he should hang upon the cross if our own merits can open a way of salvation. How could the great God permit and even ordain such a death if we could be saved by our own merits? Why that bloody sweat? Why that nailing of the hands and feet? Why that, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" if of yourselves you can be saved? But it is not so. You cannot save yourselves by efforts of your own, and hence we have to come to you, shutting you up to this one thing only—that you must be saved by faith in him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin. You need the love of God; you need the power of the Holy Ghost; you need to be quickened into newness of life; you need to be helped to run in the ways of righteousness: in a word, you need everything until you come to Christ, and everything that you want you will find in him, and in him alone. Within yourselves there is nothing that you want. You may search, and look, and turn the dunghill of your nature over and over again, but you will never find the jewel of salvation there. That pearl of great price is in the Lord who assumed human nature, and lived, and loved, and died, and rose again, that he might redeem men from the fall, and all the sin consequent thereon. Oh, that you would look away from self once for all! God forbid that the preacher should ever hold up anything else before you except the crucified Savior, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, bidding men look and live.

To talk to unbelieving men about the possibility of salvation by their own works would keep them from eternal life. All that the life of nature can do will never suffice to produce a higher nature. Let the natural exert itself as it may, it will never rise to the spiritual. The best-working horse does not thereby become a man: the best-living unregenerate man cannot thereby become regenerate. There must be a new birth; and that comes by faith,

and not by works. To believe in Jesus is the entrance gate of the new life, and there is no other door. If we, in any way, set you hunting about for another way, we shall cause you to miss the one only entrance, and that will be to your soul's eternal loss. As we dread this, we more and more resolve to hold up the cross, and the cross alone, and again and again we cry, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." God forbid that, by our essays upon virtue, or "the enthusiasm of humanity," we should distract you from hastening to the Lord Jesus, that he may give you rest, life, and holiness! We want you to let your thoughts run, all of them, to Calvary, and to that wondrous Person, whose wounds upon the tree bleed healing for the wounds of sin, and whose death is for believers the death of the great evil power which once held them in bondage.

Thus much upon a topic which we shall never wear threadbare, and which we shall always continue to insist upon while life or breath remains, because it will always be needed while sinners remain on earth needing salvation.

II. But now we come to this second most important part of the subject, namely, THE WALK OF SALVATION. Those who have believed in Christ, and have been the subjects of the Spirit's work, are now "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them." God desires that his people should abound in good works. It is his great object to produce a people fit to commune with himself: a holy people, with whom he can have fellowship in time and in eternity. He wishes us not only to produce good works, but to abound in them; and to abound in the highest order of them. He would have us become imitators of himself as dear children, possessing the same moral attributes as the Father in heaven possesses. Is it not written, "Be ye perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect"? Oh, that we came within measurable distance of this blissful consummation!

Note in the text, first, that there is a new creation. One of the poets said of old that "an honest man is the noblest work of God." That is not true, unless we put upon the word "honest" an emphatic spiritual sense. A Christian man, however, is the noblest work of God. He is the product of the second creation. At first man fell, and marred his Creator's work; but,

in the new creation, he that makes all things makes us anew. Now, the object of the new creation of our race is holiness unto the glory of God. You are not new-made in the image of the fallen Adam, but in the likeness of the second Adam. You are not new-created to sin—this cannot be imagined. The new creature sinneth not, for it is born of God. The new life is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. The old nature sins, and always will sin; but the now life is of God, and it strives daily against the sin of the old nature, and perseveres, and pushes forward towards everything that is holy, upright, and perfect. Its instincts all run towards perfect holiness. The old nature does not care to pray; but the new nature prays as readily as we breathe. The old nature murmurs, but the new nature sings and praises God from an impulse within. The old nature goes after the flesh, for it is fleshly; but the new nature seeks the things of the Spirit, for it is spiritual. If you have been born again at all, you have been born unto holiness. If you have been new-created, you have been created unto good works. If this be not so with us, our religion is a mere pretence.

This new creation in connection with Christ, for we read in the text, "Created in Christ Jesus." We are the branches; he is the Vine out of which we grow. Your life, and all your fruit-producing power lie in your union to Christ. You are not merely new-created, but you are created in Christ Jesus. It is not merely a change from a lower nature to a higher, but from separation from Christ to union with him. What a wonderful thing that is—that you and I should not only be creatures in the world, but new creatures in Christ Jesus! Creatures we were in the first Adam; but our new-creatureship is in the second Adam. Beloved, if you are what you profess to be, you are one with Jesus by that vital union which cannot be dissolved; and good works follow upon that union. Joined to Jesus by faith in him, love to him, and imitation of him, you walk in good works. Your creation to holiness is your creation in Christ Jesus. As you become one with the anointed Savior, his anointing ordains you to service, and his salvation leads you into obedience. There cannot but be fruit on that branch which is vitally joined to that fruitful stem, Christ Jesus, who did always those things which pleased the Father.

Our good works must flow from our union with Christ by virtue of our

faith in him. We depend upon him to make us holy. We depend upon him to keep us holy. We overcome sin by the blood of the Lamb. We reach after holiness by the constraining love of Jesus. Love to Christ is the impelling cause of putting away, first one evil, and then another; and the energy enabling us to follow after one virtue, and then another. Love to Christ burns like a fire in the breast that has conceived it; and, as it burns, it makes the heart to glow, and to become transformed to its own nature. You have seen a piece of iron put into the fire, all black or rusty, and in the fire it has gradually become red with heat; and, as it has reddened, it has thrown off the scales of rust, until at last it has looked to be itself a mass of fire. The effect of the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, is to burn off the rust and scales of sin and depravity, and we become pure love to God through the force of the love of God, which takes possession of our being.

Moreover, that love moves us to patient imitation of Christ. Do you know what that means? "The Imitation of Christ" is a wonderful book upon the subject, which every Christian should read. It has its faults, but its excellences are many. May we not only read the book, but write it out anew in our own life and character by seeking in everything to be like to Jesus! It is a good thing to put up in your house the question, "What would Jesus do?" It answers nine out of ten of the difficulties of moral casuistry. When you do not know what to do, and the law does not seem very explicit upon it, put it so—"What would Jesus do?" Here, then, stands the case: by your creation in Christ you come to exhibit faith in him, love to him, and imitation of him; and all these are the means by which good works are produced in you. You are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

Notice, that creation unto these good works is the subject of a divine decree: "Which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This is God's decree. Am I ordained to eternal life? Answer the other question: "Am I ordained to walk in good works?" If I am ordained to good works, then I do walk in them, and the decree of God is manifestly carried out in me. But if I make a profession of being a Christian, attend a place of worship, and compliment myself upon my safety, while I am living in sin, then evidently there is no decree that I shall walk in good

works, for I am living otherwise than that decree would have caused me to live. O beloved, it is the eternal purpose of God to make his people holy! Agree with that purpose, with the freedom of your renewed will, and with the delight of your regenerated heart! Concur in the will of God. Yea, vehemently desire, heartily pant after, perfect holiness in the fear of God. Then may you, in the midst of severe struggles against temptation from without and from within, fall back upon the decree of predestination. Since it is God's decree, that, as being new-created in Christ, I should be full of good works, I shall be so despite my old nature, and despite my spiritual weakness. The decree, in the new creature of God, will be carried out despite my surroundings, despite the temptations of my circumstances, despite the opposition of the devil. God has before ordained that we should walk in good works; and walk in them we shall, sustained by his holy Spirit.

So, then, dear friends, these good works must be in the Christian. They are not the root, but the fruit of his salvation. They are not the way of the believer's salvation; they are his walk in the way of salvation. Where there is healthy life in a tree, the tree will bear fruit according to its kind; so, if God has made our nature good, the fruit will be good. But if the fruit be evil, it is because the tree is what it always was—an evil tree. The desire of men created anew in Christ is to be rid of every sin. We do sin, but we do not love sin. Sin gets power over us sometimes to our sorrow, but it is a kind of death to us to feel that we have gone into sin; yet it shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace; and therefore we shall conquer it, and get the victory.

The outcome of our union with Christ must be holiness. "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" What union can he have with men that love sin? How can they that are of the world, who love the world, be said to be members of the Head who is in heaven, in the perfection of his glory? Brothers, we must, in the power of the text, and especially in the power of our union to Christ, seek to make daily advances in good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them; for walking means not only persevering but advancing. We should go from strength to strength in holiness: we should do more, and do better. What are you doing for Jesus? Do twice as much. If you are spreading abroad the

knowledge of his name, work with both hands. If you are living uprightly, seek to put away any relics of sin that abide in your character, that you may glorify the name of God to the utmost.

And, lastly, this should be our daily exercise:—"That we should walk in them." Good works are not to be an amusement, but a vocation. We are not to indulge in them occasionally: they are to be the tenor and bent of our lives. "Oh," says one, "that is a hard saying:" Do you say so? Well, then, this displays, and sets in clear light, the first part of my subject. You see how impossible it is that you should be saved by these good works; do you not? But if you are saved—if you have obtained a present salvation, if you are now a child of God, if you are now assured of your safety, I charge you, by the love you bear to God, by the gratitude you have to his Christ, give yourself wholly to everything that is right, and good, and pure, and just. Help everything that has to do with temperance, and righteousness, and truth, and godliness; and "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

May the Spirit of God seal this sermon upon the hearts of his people, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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The Broad Wall

"The broad wall."—Nehemiah 3:8.

It seems that around Jerusalem of old, in the time of her splendor, there was a broad wall, which was her defence and her glory. Jerusalem is a type of the Church of God. It is always well when we can see clearly, distinctly, and plainly, that around the Church to which we belong there runs a broad wall.

This idea of a broad wall around the Church suggests three things:

separation, security, and enjoyment. Let us examine each of these in its turn.

I. First, the SEPARATION of the people of God from the world is like that broad wall surrounding the holy city of Jerusalem.

When a man becomes a Christian he is still in the world, but he is no longer to be of it. He was an heir of wrath, but he has now become a child of grace. Being of a distinct nature, he is required to separate himself from the rest of mankind, as the Lord Jesus Christ did, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." The Lord's Church was separated in his eternal purpose. It was separated in his covenant and decree. It was separated in the atonement, for even there we find that our Lord is called "the saviour of all men, especially of them that believe." An actual separation is made by grace, is carried on in the work of sanctification, and will be completed in that day when the heavens shall be on fire, and the saints shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air; and in that last tremendous day, he shall divide the nations as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, and then there shall be a great gulf fixed, across which the ungodly cannot go to the righteous, neither shall the righteous approach the wicked.

Practically, my business is to say to those of you who profess to be the Lord's people, take care that you maintain a broad wall of separation between yourselves and the world. I do not say that you are to adopt any peculiarity of dress, or to take up some singular style of speech. Such affectation gendereth, sooner or later, hypocrisy. A man be as thoroughly worldly in one coat as in another, he may be quite as vain and conceited with one style of speech as with another; nay, he may be even more of the world when he pretends to be separate, than if he had left the pretence of separation alone. The separation which we plead for is moral and spiritual. Its foundation is laid deep in the heart, and its substantial reality is very palpable in the life.

Every Christian, it seems to me, should be more scrupulous than other men in his dealings. He must never swerve from the path of integrity. He should never say, "It is the custom: it is perfectly understood in the trade." Let the Christian remember that custom cannot sanction wrong,

and that its being "understood" is no apology for misrepresentation. A lie "understood" is not therefore true. While the golden rule is more admired than practiced by ordinary men, the Christian should always do unto others as he would that they should do unto him. He should be one whose word is his bond, and who, having once pledged his word, sweareth to his own hurt, but changeth not. There ought to be an essential difference between the Christian and the best moralist, by reason of the higher standard which the gospel inculcates, and the Saviour has exemplified. Certainly, the highest point to which the best unconverted man can go might well be looked upon as a level below which the converted man will never venture to descend.

Moreover, the Christian should especially be distinguished by his pleasures, for it is here, usually, that the man comes out in his true colors. We are not quite ourselves, perhaps, in our daily toil, where our pursuits are rather dictated by necessity than by choice. We are not alone; the society we are thrown into imposes restraints upon us; we have to put the bit and the bridle upon ourselves. The true man does not then show himself; but when the day's work is done, then the "birds of a feather flock together." It is with the multitude of traders and commercial men as it was with those saints of old, of whom, when they were liberated from prison, it was said, "Being let go, they went unto their own company." So will your pleasures and pastimes give evidence of what your heart is, and where it is. If you can find pleasure in sin, then in sin you choose to live, and unless grace prevent, in sin you will not fail to perish. But if your pleasures are of a nobler kind, and your companions of a devouter character; if you seek spiritual enjoyments, if you find your happiest moments in worship, in communion, in silent prayer, or in the public assembling of yourselves with the people of God, then your higher instincts become proof of your purer character, and you will be distinguished in your pleasures by a broad wall which effectually separates you from the world.

Such separation should be carried, I think, into everything which affects the Christian. "What have they seen in thy house?" was the question asked of Hezekiah. When a stranger comes into our house it should be so ordered that he can clearly perceive that the Lord is there. A man ought

scarcely to tarry a night beneath our roof, without gathering that we have a respect unto him that is invisible, and that we desire to live and move in the light of God's countenance. I have already said that I would not have you cultivate singularities for singularity's sake; yet, as the most of men are satisfied if they do as other people do, you must never be satisfied until you do more and better than other people, having found out a mode and course of life as far transcending the ordinary worldling's life, as the path of the eagle in the air is above that of the mole which burrows under the soil.

This broad wall between the godly and the ungodly should be most conspicuous in the spirit of our mind. The ungodly man has only this world to live for; do not wonder if he lives very earnestly for it. He has no other treasure; why should he not get as much as he can of this? But you, Christian, profess to have immortal life, therefore, your treasure is not to be amassed in this brief span of existence. Your treasure is laid up in heaven and available for eternity. Your best hopes overleap the narrow bounds of time, and fly beyond the grave; your spirit must not, therefore, be earth-bound and grovelling, but soaring and heavenly. There should be about you always the air of one who has his shoes on his feet, his loins girded, and his staff in his hand—away, away, away to a better land. You are not to talk of this world as though it were to last for ever. You are not to hoard it and treasure it up, as though you had set your heart upon it, but you are to be on the wing as though you had not a nest here, and never could have, but expected to find your resting-place among the cedars of God, in the hill-tops of glory.

Depend upon it, the more unworldly a Christian is the better it is for him. Methinks I could mention several reasons why this wall should be very broad. If you are sincere in your profession, there is a very broad distinction between you and unconverted people. Nobody can tell how far life is removed from death. Can you measure the difference? They are as opposite as the poles. Now, according to your profession, you are a living child of God, you have received a new life, whereas the children of this world are dead in trespasses and sins. How palpable the difference between light and darkness? Yet, you profess to have been "sometimes darkness," but now you are made "light in the Lord." There is, therefore, a

great distinction between you and the world if you are what you profess to be. You say, when you put on the name of Christ, that you are going to the Celestial City, to the New Jerusalem; but the world turns its back upon the heavenly country, and goes downward to that other city of which you know that destruction is its doom; your path is different from theirs. If you be what you say you are, the road you take must be diametrically opposite to that of the ungodly man. You know the difference between their ends. The end of the righteous shall be glory everlasting, but the end of the wicked is destruction. Unless then you are a hypocrite, there is such a distinction between you and others as only God himself could make—a distinction which originates here, to be perpetuated throughout eternity. When the social diversities occasioned by rank and dependency, riches and poverty, ignorance and learning, shall all have passed away; the distinctions between the children of God and the children of men, between saints and scoffers, between the chosen and the castaway, will still exist. I pray you, then, maintain a broad wall in your conduct, as God has made a broad wall in your state and in your destiny.

Remember again, that our Lord Jesus Christ had a broad wall between him and the ungodly. Look at him and see how different he is from the men of his time. All his life long you observe him to be a stranger and a foreigner in the land. Truly, he drew near to sinners, as near as he could draw, and he received them when they were willing to draw near to him; but he did not draw near to their sins. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." When he went to his own city of Nazareth, he only preached a single sermon, and they would have cast him headlong down the hill if they could. When he passed through the street, he became the song of the drunkard, the butt of the foolish, the mark at which the proud shot out the arrows of their scorn. At last, having come to his own, and his own having received him not, they determined to thrust him altogether out of the camp, so they took him to Golgotha, and nailed him to the tree as a malefactor, a promoter of sedition. He was the great Dissenter, the great Nonconformist of his age. The National Church first excommunicated, and then executed him. He did not seek difference in things trivial; but the purity of his life and the truthfulness of his testimony, roused the spleen of the rulers and the chief men of their

synagogues. He was ready in all things to serve them and to bless them, but he never would blend with them. They would have made him a king. Ah! if he would but have joined the world, the world would have given him the chief place, as the world's Prince said on the mountain: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But he drives away the fiend, and stands immaculate and separate even to the close of his life. If you are a Christian, be a Christian. If you follow Christ, go without the camp. But if there be no difference between you and your fellow-man, what will you say unto the King in the day when he cometh and findeth that you have on no wedding garment by which you can be distinguished from the rest of mankind? Because Christ made a broad wall around himself, there must be such an one around his people.

Moreover, dear friends, you will find that a broad wall of separation is abundantly good for yourselves. I do not think any Christian in the world will tell you that when he has given way to the world's customs, he has ever been profited thereby. If you can go and find an evening's amusement in a suspicious place, and feel profited by it, I am sure you are not a Christian; for, if you were a Christian indeed, it would pain your conscience, and unfit you for devouter exercises of the heart. Ask a fish to spend an hour on dry land, and, I think, did it comply, the fish would find that it was not much to its benefit, for it would be out of its element. And it will be so with you in communion with sinners. When you are compelled to associate with worldly people in the ordinary course of business, you find much that grates upon the ear, that troubles the heart, and annoys the soul. You will be often like righteous Lot, vexed with the conversation of the wicked, and you will say with David:

"Ah! woe is me that I
In Meshech dwell so long:
That I in tabernacles stay,
To Kedar that belong!"

Your soul would pine and sigh to come forth and wash your hands of everything that is impure and unclean. As you find no comfort there, you will long to get away to the chaste, the holy, the devout, the edifying fellowship of the saints. Make a broad wall, dear friends, in your daily life. If you begin to give way a little to the world, you will soon give way a great

deal. Give sin an inch, and it will take an ell. "Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves," is an apt motto of economy. So, too, guard against little sins, if you would be clear of the great transgression. Look after the little approaches to worldliness, the little givings-up towards the things of ungodliness, and then you will not make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Another good reason for keeping up the broad wall of separation is, that you will do most good to the world thereby. I know Satan will tell you that if you bend a little, and come near to the ungodly, then they also will come a little way to meet you. Ay, but it is not so. You lose your strength, Christian, the moment you depart from your integrity. What do you think ungodly people say behind your back, if they see you inconsistent to please them? "Oh!" say they, "there is nothing in his religion, but vain pretence; the man is not sincere." Although the world may openly denounce the rigid Puritan, it secretly admires him. When the big heart of the world speaks out, it has respect to the man that is sternly honest, and will not yield his principles—no, not a hair's breadth. In such an age as this, when there is so little sound conviction, when principle is cast to the winds, and when a general latitudinarianism, but of thought and of practice, seems to rule the day, it is still the fact, that a man who is decided in his belief, speaks his mind boldly, and acts according to his profession—such a man is sure to command the reverence of mankind. Depend upon it, woman, your husband and your children will respect you none the more because you say, "I will give up some of my Christian privileges," or "I will go sometimes with you into that which is sinful." You cannot help them out of the mire if you go and plunge into the mud yourself. You cannot help to make them clean if you go and blacken your own hands. How can you wash their faces then? You young man in the shop—you young woman in the work-room—if you keep yourselves to yourselves in Christ's name, chaste and pure for Jesus, not laughing at jests which should make you blush: not mixing up with pastimes that are suspicious; but, on the other hand, tenderly jealous of your conscience as one who shrinks from a doubtful thing as a sinful thing, holding sound faith and being scrupulous of the truth—if you will keep yourselves, your company in the midst of others shall be as though an angel shook his wings, and they will say to one another, "Refrain from this or that just

now, for so-and-so is there." They will fear you, in a certain sense; they will admire you, in secret; and who can tell but they, at last, may come to imitate you.

Would ye tempt God? Would ye challenge the desolating flood? Whenever the church comes down to mingle with the world, it behooves the faithful few to fly to the ark and seek shelter from the avenging storm. When the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair to look upon, then it was that God said it repented him that he had made men upon the face of the earth, and he sent the deluge to sweep them away. A separate people God's people must be, and they shall be. It is his own declaration, "The people shall dwell alone; they shall not be numbered among the people." The Christian is, in some respects like the Jew. The Jew is the type of the Christian. You may give the Jew political privileges, as he ought to have; he may be adopted into the State, as he ought to be; but a Jew he is, and a Jew he must be still. He is not a Gentile, even though he calls himself English, or Portuguese, or Spanish, or Polish. He remains one of the people of Israel, a child of Abraham, a Jew still; and you can mark him as such—his speech betrayeth him in every land. So should it be with the Christian; mixing up with other men, as he must in his daily calling; going in and out among them, like a man among men; trading in the market; dealing in the shop; mingling in the joys of the social circle; taking his part in politics, like a citizen, as he is; but, at the same time even, having a higher and a nobler life, a secret into which the world cannot enter, and showing the world by his superior holiness, his zeal for God, his sterling integrity, and his unselfish truthfulness, that he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. You cannot tell how concerned I am for some of you, that this broad wall should be kept up; for I detect in some of you at times a desire to make it very narrow, and, perhaps, to pull it down altogether. Brethren, beloved in the Lord, you may depend upon it that nothing worse can happen to a church than to be conformed unto this world. Write "Ichabod" upon her walls then; for the sentence of destruction has gone out against her. But, if you can keep yourselves as—
"A garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,"—

you shall have your Master's company; your graces shall grow; you shall be happy in your own souls; and Christ shall be honored in your lives.

II. Secondly; the broad wall round about Jerusalem INDICATED SAFETY.

In the same way, a broad wall round Christ's church indicates her safety too. Consider who they are that belong to the church of God. A man does not become a member of Christ's church by baptism, nor by birthright, nor by profession, nor by morality. Christ is the door into the sheepfold; every one who believes in Jesus Christ is a member of the true church. Being a member of Christ, he is a member, consequently, of the body of Christ, which is the church. Now, around the church of God—the election of grace, the redeemed by blood, the peculiar people, the adopted, the justified, the sanctified—around the church there are bulwarks of stupendous strength, munitions which guard them safely. When the foe came to attack Jerusalem, he counted the towers and bulwarks, and marked them well; but after he had seen the strength of the Holy City, he fled away. How could he hope ever to scale such ramparts as those? Brethren, Satan often counts the towers and bulwarks of the New Jerusalem. Anxiously does he desire the destruction of the saints, but it shall never be. He that rests in Christ is saved. He who hath passed through the gate of faith to rest in Jesus Christ may sing, with joyful confidence—

"The soul that on Jesus hath lean'd for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

"I will be," saith Jehovah, "a wall of fire round about thee." Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.

The Christian is surrounded by the broad wall of God's power. If God be omnipotent, Satan cannot defeat him. If God's power be on my side, who, then, shall hurt me? "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The Christian is surrounded by the broad wall of God's love. Who shall prevail against those whom God loves? I know that it is vain to curse

those whom God hath not cursed, or to defy those whom the Lord hath not defied; for whomsoever he blesseth is blessed indeed. Balak, the son of Zippor, sought to curse the beloved people, and he went first to one hill-top and then to another, and looked down upon the chosen camp. But, aha! Balaam, thou couldst not curse them, though Balak sought it! Thou couldst only say, "They are blessed, yea, and they shall be blessed!"

God's law is a broad wall around us, and so is his justice too. These once threatened our destruction, but now the justice of God demands the salvation of every believer. If Christ has died instead of me, it would not be justice if I had to die also for my sin. If God has received the full payment of the debt from the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, then how can he demand the debt again? He is satisfied, and we are secure.

The immutability of God, also, surrounds his people like a broad wall. "I am God, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." As long as God is the same, the rock of our salvation will be our secure hiding-place.

Upon this delightful truth, we might linger long, for there is much to cheer us in the strong security which God has given in covenant to his people. They are surrounded by the broad wall of electing love. Doth God choose them, and will he lose them? Did he ordain them to eternal life, and shall they perish? Did he engrave their names upon his heart, and shall those names be blotted out? Did he give them to his Son to be his heritage, and shall his Son lose his portion? Did he say, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels," and shall he part with them? Has he who maketh all things obey him no power to keep the people whom he has formed for himself to be his own peculiar heritage? God forbid that we should doubt it. Electing love, like a broad wall, surrounds every heir of grace.

And oh, how broad is the wall of redeeming love. Will Jesus fail to claim the people he bought with so great a price? Did he shed his blood in vain? How can he revive enmity against those whom he hath once reconciled unto God, not imputing their transgressions unto them? Having obtained eternal redemption for them, will he adjudge them to everlasting perdition? Has he purged their sins by sacrifice, and will he then leave

them to be the victims of satanic craft? By the blood of the everlasting covenant, every Christian may be assured that he cannot perish, neither can any pluck him out of Christ's hand. Unless the cross were all a peradventure, unless the atonement were a mere speculation, those for whom Jesus died are saved through his death. Therefore he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

As a broad wall which surrounds the saints of God is the work of the Holy Spirit. Does the spirit begin and not finish the operations of his grace? Ah no? Does he give life which afterwards dies out? Impossible! Hath he not told us that the Word of God is the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever? And shall the powers of hell or the evil of our own flesh destroy what God has pronounced immortal, or cause dissolution to that which God says is incorruptible? Is not the Spirit of God given us to abide with us for ever, and shall he be expelled from that heart in which he has taken up his everlasting dwelling place? Brethren, we are not of their mind, who are led by fear of fallacy to hazard such conjectures. We rejoice to say with Paul, "I am persuaded that he who hath begun a good work in you will carry it on." We like to sing—

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows or from sins;
The work that wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

Almost every doctrine of grace affords us a broad wall, a strong bastion, a mighty bulwark, a grand munition of defence. Take, for instance, Christ's suretyship engagements. He is surety to his Father for his people. When he brings home the flock, think you he will have to report that some of them are lost? At his hands will they be required. Not so!

"I know that safe with him remains,
Protect by his power,
What I've committed to his hands,
Till the decisive hour."

"Here am I," will he say, "and the children whom thou hast given me, of all whom thou hast given me I have lost none." He will keep all the saints even to the end. The honor of Christ is involved. If Christ loses one soul that leans upon him, the integrity of his crown is gone; for if there should

be one believing soul in hell, the prince of darkness would hold up that soul and say—"Aha! Thou couldst not save them all! Aha! Thou Captain of Salvation, thou wast defeated here! Here is one poor little Benjamin, one Ready-to-Halt, that thou couldst not bring to glory, and I have him to be my prey for ever!" But it shall not be. Every gem shall be in Jesu's crown. Every sheep shall be in Jesu's flock. He shall not be defeated in any way, or in any measure; but he shall divide the spoil with the strong, he shall establish the cause he undertakes, he shall eternally conquer; glory be unto his great and good name!

Thus I have tried to show you the broad walls which are round about believers. They are saved, and they may say to their enemies, "the virgin daughter of Zion hath shaken her head at them, and laughed them to scorn! Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that hath risen again from the dead; who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us! For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

III. The idea of a broad wall, and with this I close, SUGGESTS ENJOYMENT.

The walls of Ninevah and Babylon were broad; so broad that there was found room for several chariots to pass each other. Here men walked at sunset, and talked and promoted good fellowship. If you have ever been in the city of York you will know how interesting it is to walk around the broad walls there. But our figure is drawn from the Orientals. They were accustomed to come out of their houses and walk on the broad walls. They used them for rest from toil, and for the manifold pleasures of recreation. It was very delightful when the sun was going down, and all was cool, to walk on those broad walls. And so, when a believer comes to know the deep things of God, and to see the defences of God's people, he walks along them and he rests. "Now," saith he, "I am at rest and peace; the destroyer cannot molest me; I am delivered from the noise of archers in the place of the drawing of water, and here I can exercise myself in

prayer and meditation! Now that salvation is appointed for walls and bulwarks, I will sing a song unto him who hath done these great things for me; I will take my rest and be quiet for he that believeth hath entered into rest; there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Broad walls, then, are for rest, and so are our broad walls of salvation.

Those broad walls were also for communion. Men came there and talked with one another. They leaned over the wall and whispered their loving words, conversed of their business, comforted one another, related their troubles and their joys. So, when believers come unto Christ Jesus they commune with one another, with the angels, with the spirits of just men made perfect, and with Jesus Christ their Lord, who is best of all. Oh! on those broad walls, when the banner of love waves over them, they sometimes rejoice with a joy unspeakable, in fellowship with him who loved them and gave himself for them. It is a blessed thing in the Church when you get such a knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel that you can have the sweetest communion with all the Church of the living God.

And then the broad walls were also intended for prospects and outlooks. The citizen came up on the broad wall, and looked away from the smoke and dirt of the city within, right across to the green fields, and the gleaming river, and the far off mountains, delighted to watch the mowing of hay, or the reaping of corn, or the setting sun beyond the distant hills. It was one of the common enjoyments of the citizen of any walled city, to come to the top of the wall in order to take views afar. So, when a man once gets into the altitudes of gospel doctrines, and has learned to understand the love of God in Christ Jesus, what views he can take! How he looks down upon the sorrows of life! How he looks beyond that narrow little stream of death! How, sometimes, when the weather is bright and his eye is clear enough to let him use the telescope, he can see within the gates of pearl, and behold the joys which no mortal eye hath seen, and hear the songs which no mortal ear hath heard, for these are things, not for eyes and ears, but for hearts and spirits! Blessed is the man who dwelleth in the Church of God, for he can find on her broad walls places from which he can see the king in his beauty, and the land which is very far off!

Ah! dear friends, I wish that these things had to do with you all, but I am afraid they have not; for many of you are outside the wall, and when the destroyer comes none will be safe but those who are inside the wall of Christ's love and mercy. I would go to God that you would escape to the gate at once, for it is open. It will be shut—it will be shut one day, but it is open now. When night comes, the night of death, the gate will be shut, and you will come then and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But, the answer will be—

"Too late, too late!

Ye cannot enter now."

But it is not too late yet. Still Christ saith, "Behold, I set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Oh! that thou hadst the will to come and put thy trust in Jesus; for if thou dost so, thou shalt be saved. I cannot speak to some of you about security, for there are no broad walls to defend you. You have run away from the security. Perhaps you have been patching up with some untempered mortar a righteousness of your own, which will all be thrown down as a bowing wall and as a tottering fence. Oh! that you would trust in Jesus! Then would you have a broad wall which all the battering-rams of hell shall never be able to shake. When the storms of eternity shall beat against that wall, it shall stand fast for aye.

I cannot speak to some of you about rest, and enjoyment, and communion, for you have sought rest where there is none; you have got a peace which is no peace, you have found a comfort which will be your destruction. God make you to be distressed, and constrain you by sore stress to flee to the Lord Jesus and get true peace, the only peace, for "he is our peace." Oh! that you would close in with Christ and trust him, then you would rejoice in the present happiness which faith would give you; but, the sweetest thing of all would be the prospect which should then unfold to you of the eternal happiness which Christ has prepared for all those who put their trust in him.

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The Church of Christ

And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. - Ezekiel 34:26

The chapter (Ezekiel 34) that I read at the commencement of the service is a prophetic one; and, I take it, it has relation, not to the condition of the Jews during the captivity and their subsequent happiness when they should return to their land, but to a state into which they should they should fall after they had been restored to their country under Nehemiah and Ezra, and in which state they still continue to the present day. The prophet tells us that the shepherds then, instead of feeding the flock, fed themselves; they trod the grass, instead of allowing the sheep to eat it, and they fouled the waters with their feet. That is an exact description of the state of Judea after the captivity; for then there arose the Scribes and Pharisees, who took the key of knowledge, and would not enter themselves, nor allow others to enter; who laid heavy burdens on men's shoulders, and would not touch them with one of their fingers; who made religion to consist entirely in sacrifices and ceremonies, and imposed such a burden on the people, that they cried out, "What a weariness it is!" That same evil has continued with the poor Jews to the present day; and should you read the nonsense of the Talmud and the Gemara, and see the burdens they laid upon them you would say, "Verily they have idle shepherds;" they give the sheep no food; they trouble them with fanciful superstitions and silly views, and instead of telling them that the Messiah is already come, they delude them with the idea that there is a Messiah yet to come, who shall restore Judea, and raise it to its glory. The Lord pronounces a curse upon these Pharisees and Rabbis, these who "thrust

with side and with shoulder," those evil shepherds who will not suffer the sheep to lie down, neither will feed them with good pasture. But, after having described this state, he prophesies better times for the poor Jew. The day is coming when the careless shepherds shall be as naught; when the power of the Rabbis shall cease, when the traditions of the Mishna and the Talmud shall be cast aside. The hour is approaching, when the tribes shall go up to their own country; when Judea, so long a howling wilderness, shall once more blossom like the rose; when, if the temple itself be not restored, yet on Zion's hill shall be raised some Christian building, where the chants of solemn praise shall be heard as erst of old the Psalms of David were sung in the tabernacle. Not long shall it be ere they shall come - shall come from distant lands wher'er they rest or roam; and she who has been the offscouring of all things, whose name has been a proverb and a byword, shall become the glory of all lands. Dejected Zion shall raise her head, shaking herself from dust, and darkness, and the dead. Then shall the Lord feed his people, and make them and the places round about his hill a blessing. I think we do not attach sufficient importance to the restoration of the Jews. We do not think enough of it. But certainly, if there is anything promised in the Bible, it is this. I imagine that you cannot read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is to be an actual restoration of the children of Israel. "Thither they shall go up; they shall come with weeping unto Zion, and with supplications unto Jerusalem." May that happy day soon come! For when the Jews are restored, then the fulness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in; and as soon as they return, then Jesus will come upon Mount Zion to reign with his ancients gloriously, and the halcyon days of the Millennium shall then dawn; we shall then know every man to be a brother and a friend; Christ shall rule, with universal sway.

This, then, is the meaning of the text; that God would make Jerusalem and the places round about his hill a blessing. I shall not, however, use it so this morning, but I shall use it in a more confined sense - or, perhaps, in a more enlarged sense - as it applies to the church of Jesus Christ, and to this particular church with which you and I stand connected. "I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing."

There are two things here spoken of. First, Christ's church is to be a blessing; secondly, Christ's church is to be blessed. These two things you will find in the different sentences of the text.

I. First, CHRIST'S CHURCH IS TO BE A BLESSING. "I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing." The object of God, in choosing a people before all worlds, was not only to save that people, but through them to confer essential benefits upon the whole human race. When he chose Abraham, he did not elect him simply to be God's friend, and the recipient of peculiar privileges; but he chose him to make him, as it were, the conservator of truth. He was to be the ark in which the truth should be hidden. He was to be the keeper of the covenant in behalf of the whole world; and when God chooses any men by his sovereign, electing grace, and makes them Christ's, he does it not only for their own sake, that they may be saved, but for the world's sake. For, know ye not that "ye are the light of the world;" - "A city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid?" "Ye are the salt of the earth;" and when God makes you salt, it is not only that ye may have salt in yourselves, but that like salt ye may preserve the whole mass. If he makes you leaven, it is that, like the little leaven, you may leaven the whole lump. Salvation is not a selfish thing; God does not give it for us to keep to ourselves, but that we may thereby be made the means of blessing to others; and the great day shall declare that there is not a man living on the surface of the earth but has received a blessing in some way or other through God's gift of the gospel. The very keeping of the wicked in life, and granting of the reprieve, was purchased with the death of Jesus; and through his sufferings and death, the temporal blessings which both we and they enjoy are bestowed on us. The gospel was sent that it might first bless those that embrace it, and then expand, so as to make them a blessing to the whole human race.

In thus speaking of the church as a blessing, we shall notice three things. First, here is divinity - "I will make them a blessing;" secondly, here is personality of religion - "I will make them a blessing;" and thirdly, here is the development of religion" - "and the places round about my hill."

1. First, with regard to this blessing which God will cause his church to be,

here is divinity. It is God the everlasting Jehovah speaking: he says, "I will make them a blessing." None of us can bless others unless God has first blessed us. We need divine workmanship. "I will make them a blessing by helping them, and by constraining them." God makes his people a blessing by helping them. What can we do without God's help? I stand and preach to thousands, or it may be hundreds; what have I done, unless a greater than man has been in the pulpit with me? I work in the Sabbath Schools; what can I do, unless the Master is there, teaching the children with me? We want God's aid in every position; and once give us that assistance, and there is no telling with how little labor we may become a blessing. Ah! a few words sometimes will be more of a blessing than a whole sermon. You take some little prattler on your knee; and some few words that you say to him he remembers, and makes use of in after tears. I knew a gray-headed old man, who was in the habit of doing this. He once took a boy to a certain tree, and said, "Now, John, you kneel down at that tree, and I will kneel down with you." He knelt down and prayed, and asked God to convert him and save his soul. "Now," said he, "perhaps you will come to this tree again; and if you are not converted, you will remember that I asked under this tree that God would save your soul." That young man went away, and forgot the old man's prayer; but it chanced as God would have it that he walked down that field again, and saw a tree. It seemed as if the old man's name was cut in the bark. He recollected what he prayed for, and that the prayer was not fulfilled; but he dare not pass the tree without kneeling down to pray himself; and there was his spiritual birthplace. The simplest observation of the Christian shall be made a blessing, if God help him. "His leaf also shall not wither" - the simplest word he speaks shall be treasured up; "and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

But there is constraint here. "I will make them a blessing." I will give them to be a blessing; I will constrain them to be a blessing. I can say myself, that I never did anything which was a blessing to my fellow-creatures, without feeling compelled to do it. I thought of going to a Sabbath School to teach. On a certain day, some one called - asked me - begged me - prayed me to take his class. I could not refuse to go; and there I was held, hand and foot, by the superintendent, and was compelled to go on. I was asked to address the children; I thought I could

not, but no one else was there to do it, so I stood up and stumbled out a few words. And I recollect the first occasion on which I attempted to preach to the people - I am sure I had no wish to do it - but there was no one else in the place, and the congregation must go away without a single word of warning or address. How could I suffer it? I felt forced to address them. And so it has been with whatever I have laid my hand to. I have always felt a kind of impulse which I could not resist; but, moreover, felt placed by Providence in such a position, that I had no wish to avoid the duty, and if I had desired it, could not have helped myself. And so it is with God's people. If they will go through their lives, wherever they have been made a blessing, they will find that God seems to have thrust them into the vineyard. Such-and-such a man was once rich. What good was he in the world? He did but loll in his carriage; he did but little good, and was of little service to his fellow-creatures. Says God, "I will make him a blessing;" so he strips away his riches, and brings him into low circumstances. He is then brought into association with the poor, and his superior education and intellect make him a blessing to them. God makes him a blessing. Another man was naturally very timid; he would not pray at the prayer-meeting, he would hardly like to join the church; soon he gets into a position in which he cannot help himself. "I will make him a blessing." And as sure as ever you are a servant of God, he will make you a blessing. He will have none of his gold in the lump; he will hammer it out, and make it a blessing. I verily believe there are some in my congregation to whom God has given power to preach his name; they do not know it, perhaps, but God will make it known by-and-by. I would have every man look and see, whether God is making him do a certain thing; and when once he feels the impulse, let him by no means ever check it. I am somewhat of a believer in the doctrine of the Quakers, as to the impulses of the Spirit, and I fear lest I should check one of them. If a thought crosses my mind, "Go to such a person's house," I always like to do it, because I do not know but what it may be from the Spirit. I understand this verse to mean something like that. "I will make them a blessing." I will force them to do good. If I cannot make a sweet scent come from them in any other way, I will pound them in the mortar of affliction. If they have seed, and the seed cannot be scattered in any other way, I will send a rough wind to blow the downy seed everywhere. "I will make them a blessing." If you have never been made a blessing to any

one, depend upon it you are not a child of God; for Jehovah says, "I will make them a blessing."

2. But notice, next, the personality of the blessing. "I will make them a blessing." "I will make each member of the church a blessing." Many people come up to the house of prayer, where the church assembles; and you say, "Well, what are you doing at such-and-such a place where you attend?" "Well, we are doing so-and-so." "How do you spell we?" "It is a plain monosyllable," say you. "Yes, but do you put I in 'we?'" "No." There are a great many people who could easily spell "we" without an I in it; for though they say, "We have been doing so-and-so," they do not say, "How much have I done? Did I do anything in it? Yes; this chapel has been enlarged; what did I subscribe? Twopence!" Of course it is done. Those who paid the money have done it. "We preach the gospel." Do we, indeed? "Yes, we sit in our pew and listen a little, and do not pray for a blessing. We have got such a large Sunday School." Did you ever teach in it? "We have got a very good working society." Did you ever go to work in it? That is not the way so spell "we." It is, "I will make them a blessing." When Jerusalem was built, every man began nearest his own house. That is where you must begin to build or do something. Do not let us tell a lie about it. If we do not have some share in the building, if we neither handle the trowel nor the spear, let us not talk about our church; for the text says, "I will make them a blessing," every one of them.

"But, sir, what can I do? I am nothing but a father at home; I am so full of business, I can only see my children a little." But in your business, do you ever have any servants? "No; I am a servant myself." You have fellow-servants? "No; I work alone." Do you work alone, then, and live alone, like a monk in a cell? I don't believe that. But you have fellow-servants at work; cannot you say a word to their conscience? "I don't like to intrude religion into business." Quite right, too; so say I; when I am at business, let it be business; when you are at religion, let it be religion. But do you never have an opportunity? Why, you cannot go into an omnibus, or a railway carriage, but what you can say something for Jesus Christ. I have found it so, and I don't believe I am different from other people. Cannot do anything? Cannot you put a tract in your hat, and drop it where you go? Cannot you speak a word to a child? Where does this man come from,

that cannot do anything? There is a spider on the wall; but he taketh hold on kings' palaces, and spinneth his web to rid the world of noxious flies. There is a nettle in the corner of the churchyard; but the physician tells me it has its virtues. There is a tiny star in the sky; but that is noted in the chart, and the mariner looks at it. There is an insect under water; but it builds a rock. God made all these things for something; but here is a man that God made, and gave him nothing at all to do! I do not believe it. God never makes useless things; he has no superfluous workmanship. I care not what you are; you have somewhat to do. And oh! may God show you what it is, and then make you do it, by the wondrous compulsion of his providence and his grace.

3. But we have to notice, in the third place, the development of gospel blessing. "I will make them a blessing;" but it does not end there. "And the places round about my hill." Religion is an expansive thing. When it begins in the heart, at first it is like a tiny grain of mustard seed; but it gradually increases, and becomes a great tree, so that the birds of the air lodge in the branches thereof. A man cannot be religious to himself. "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." You have heard a score of times, that if you do but drop a pebble in a brook, it causes a small ring at first, then another outside of that, and then another, and then another, till the influence of the pebble is perceptible over the entire bosom of the water. So it is when God makes his people a blessing. "I will make a minister a blessing to one or two; I will then make him a blessing to a hundred; I will then make him a blessing to thousands; and then I will make those thousands a blessing. I will make each one individually a blessing, and when I have done that, I will make all the places round about a blessing." "I will make them a blessing." I hope we shall never be satisfied, as members of Park Street, until we are a blessing, not only to ourselves, but to all the places round about our hill. What are the places round about our hill? I think they are, first, our agencies; secondly, our neighborhood; thirdly, the churches adjacent to us.

First, there are our agencies. There is our Sabbath School; how near that is to our hill. I speak a great deal about this, because I want it to be brought into notice. I intend to preach a practical sermon this morning, to move some of you to come and teach in the Sabbath School; for there

we require some suitable men, to "come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Therefore I mention the Sabbath School as a place very near to the hill; it ought to be just at the very foot of it; yea, it ought to be so near the hill that very many may pass from it to the church. Then there is our Visiting and Christian Instruction Society, which we have for the visiting of this neighborhood. I trust that has been made a blessing. God has sent among us a man who labors zealously and earnestly in visiting the sick. I have, as the superintendent of my beloved brother, the missionary, a regular account of his labors; his report has most highly gratified me, and I am able to bear testimony to the fact, that he is very sufficiently laboring around us. I want that society to have all you sympathy and strength. I consider him as a Joshua, with whom you are to go forth by hundreds to those who live in the neighborhood. Do you know what dark places there are? Walk down a street a little to the right. See the shops open on a Sunday. Some, thank God, that used to open them, now come and worship with us. We shall have more yet; for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," and why should not we have it? My brethren, as you visit the sick, or distribute tracts from door to door, make this your prayer - that his society, being one of the places round about our hill, may be made a blessing! Let me not forget any agency connected with this church. There are several more which are places round about our hill; and the Lord has just put it into my heart to fashion other societies, which shall be made a blessing to this hill, and in a little while you shall hear thereof. We have several brethren in this congregation to whom God has given a mouth of utterance; these are about to form themselves into a society for proclaiming the Word of God. Where God has so blessed his church, and made us to be so noted and named amongst the people, why should we not keep on? We have been brought up to a great pitch of fervency and love; now is the time for doing something. While the iron is hot, why not strike and fashion it? I believe we have the materials, not only for making a church here that shall be the glory of the Baptist Churches in London, but for making churches everywhere throughout the metropolis; and we have more schemes on hand, which, matured by sober judgment, and backed by prudence, shall yet make this metropolis more honored than it has been by the sound of the pure gospel and the proclamation of the pure Word of God. May God make all our agencies - the places round about our hill - a blessing.

But next, there is the neighborhood. I am paralyzed sometimes, when I think that we are of so little service to the neighborhood, though this is a green oasis in the midst of a great spiritual desert. Just at the back of us we could find you hundreds of Roman Catholics and men of the very worst character; and it is sad to think that we cannot make this place a blessing to them. It is made a great blessing to you, my hearers, but you do not come from this district; you come from anywhere and nowhere, some of you, I suppose. People say, "There is something doing in that chapel; look at the crowd; but we cannot get in!" This one thing I ask - never come here to gratify your curiosity. You that are members of other congregations, just consider it your duty to stay at home. There are many stray sheep about. I would rather have them than you. Keep your own place. I do not want to rob other minister. Do not come here from charity. We are much obliged to you for your kindly intentions; but we would rather have your room than your company, if ye are members of other churches. We want sinners to come - sinners of every sort; but do not let us have that sort of men whose ears are everlastingly itching for some new preacher; who are saying, "I want something else, I want something else." Oh! do, I beseech you, for God's sake, be of some good; and if you are running about from one place to another, you can never expect to be. Do ye know what is said of rolling stones? Ah! ye have heard of that. They "gather no moss." Now, don't be rolling stones, but keep at home. God, however, so help us, as to make us a blessing to the neighborhood! I long to see something done for the people around. We must open our arms to them; we must go out into the open air to them; we must and will preach God's gospel to them. Let, then, the people around listen to the word of the gospel; and may it be said, "That place is the cathedral of Southwark!" So it is now. Out of it goes a blessing; God is pouring out a blessing upon it.

What else do we mean by the places round about our hill? We mean, the churches adjacent. I cannot but rejoice in the prosperity of many churches around us; but as our beloved brother, Mr. Sherman, said, last Thursday morning, "It is not invidious to say, that there are very few churches that are in a prosperous state, and that, taking the churches at large, they are in a deplorable condition. It is only here and there," said

he, "that God is pouring out his Spirit; but most of the churches are lying, like barges at Blackfriar's Bridge when the tide is down - right in the mud; and all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot pull them off, till the tide comes and sets them afloat." Who can tell, then, what good may be done by this church? If there is a light in this candlestick, let others come and light their candles by it. If there is a flame here, let the flame spread, until all the neighboring churches shall be lit up with the glory. Then, indeed, shall we be made the rejoicing of the earth; for there is never a revival in one spot, but it shall affect others. Who shall tell, then, where it shall end?

"Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel;
Win and conquer, never cease."

And it never will cease, when God once makes the places round about his hill a blessing.

II. The second point is, that God's people are not only to be a blessing, but **THEY ARE TO BE BLESSED**. For read the second part of the verse. "And I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." It is somewhat singular, as a prognostication of the showers of blessings we hope to receive here, that God sent us showers on the first day of opening. If I were a believer in omens, I should pray, that as it rained the first day, so may it rain every day since. When it stops, may the chapel be shut up; for we only want it open so long as showers of grace continue to descend.

First, here is sovereign mercy. Listen to these words; "I will give them the shower in its season." Is it not sovereign, divine mercy; for who can say, "I will give them showers," except God? Can the false prophet who walks amongst the benighted Hottentots? He says he is a rain-maker, and can give them showers; but can he do it? Is there an imperial monarch, or the most learned man on earth, who can say, "I will give them the showers in their season?" No; there is only one fist wherein all the clouds are held; there in only one hand in which all the channels of the mighty ocean above the firmament are contained; there is only one voice that can speak to the clouds, and bid them beget the rain. "Out of whose womb came the

ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?" "Who sendeth down the rain upon the earth? who scattereth the showers upon the green herb? Do not I, the Lord?" Who else could do it? Is not rain in God's power? and who could send it, except him? We know that Catholics pretend that they can get grace without getting it from God directly; for they believe that God puts all his grace into the pope, and then that runs down into smaller pipes, called cardinals and bishops, through which it runs into the priests; and, by turning the tap with a shilling, you can get as much grace as you like. But it is not so with God's grace. He says, "I will give them showers." Grace is the gift of God, and is not to be created by man.

Notice, next, it is needed grace. "I will give them showers." What would the ground do without showers? You may break the clods, you may sow your seeds; but what can you do without the rain? Ah! you may prepare your barn, and sharpen your sickles; but your sickles will be rusted before you have any wheat, unless there are showers. They are needed. So is the divine blessing.

"In vain Apollos sow the seed,
And Paul may plant in vain;

In vain you come here, in vain you labor, in vain you give you money.

"Till God the plenteous shower bestows,
And sends salvation down."

Then, next, it is plenteous grace. "I will send them showers." It does not say, "I will send them drops," but "I will send them showers." "It seldom rains but it pours." So it is with grace. If God gives a blessing, he usually gives it in such a measure that there is not room enough to receive it. Where are we going to hold God's blessing that we have obtained already? I told the people on Thursday that God had promised us, that if we brought the tithes into the storehouse, he would send us such a blessing that we would not have room to hold it. We have tried it, and the promise has been fulfilled, as it always will be as long as we rely upon it. Plenteous grace! Ah! we shall want plenteous grace, my friends; plenteous grace to

keep us humble, plenteous grace to make us prayerful, plenteous grace to make us holy, plenteous grace to make us zealous, plenteous grace to make us truthful, plenteous grace to preserve us through this life, and at last to land us in heaven. We cannot do without showers of grace. How many are there here that have been dry in a shower of grace? Why, there is a shower of grace here; but how is it that it does not fall on some of the people? It is because they put up the umbrella of their prejudice; and though they sit here, even as God's people sit, even when it rains, they have such a prejudice of God's Word, they do not want to hear it, they do not want to love it, and it runs off again. Nevertheless, the showers are there; and we will thank god for them where they do fall.

Again, it is seasonable grace. "I will give them the shower in its season." There is nothing like seasonable grace. There are fruits, you know, that are best in their season, and they are not good at any other time; and there are graces that are good in their season, but we do not always require them. A person vexes and irritates me; I want grace just at that moment to be patient; I have not got it, and I get angry; ten minutes after I am ever so patient; but I have not had grace in its season. The promise is, "I will give them the shower in its season." Ah! poor waiting soul, what is thy season this morning? Is it the season of drought? Then that is the season for showers. Is it a season of great heaviness and black clouds? Then that is the season for showers. What is your season this morning, business man? Lost money all the week, have you? Now is the season to ask for showers. It is night-time; now the dew falls. The dew does not fall in the day - it falls in the night; the night of affliction, trial, and trouble. There stands the promise; only go and plead it. "I will give them the shower in its season."

We have one thought more, and then we have done. Here is a varied blessing. "I will give thee showers of blessing." The word is in the plural. All kinds of blessings God will send. The rain is all of one kind when it comes; but grace is not all of one kind, or it does not produce the same effect. When God sends rain upon the church, he "sends showers of blessing." There are some ministers who think, that if there is a shower on their church, God will send a shower of work. Yes, but if he does, he will send a shower of comfort. Others think that God will send a shower

of gospel truth. Yes, but if he sends that, he will send a shower of gospel holiness. For all God's blessings go together. They are like the sweet sister graces that danced hand in hand. God sends showers of blessings. If he gives comforting grace, he will also give converting grace; if he makes the trumpet blow for the bankrupt sinner, he will also make it sound a shout of joy for the sinner that is pardoned and forgiven. He will send "showers of blessing."

Now, then, there is a promise in that Bible. We have tried to explain and enlarge upon it. What shall we do with it?

"In that book there hidden lies
A pearl of price unknown."

Well, we have examined this rich promise; we as a church are looking at it; we are saying, "Is that ours?" I think most of the members will say, "It is; for God has poured out upon us showers of blessing in their season." Well, then, if the promise is ours, the precept is ours, as much as the promise. Ought we not to ask God to continue to make us a blessing? Some say I did so-and-so when I was a young man; but supposing you are fifty, you are not an old man now. Is there not something you can do? It is all very well to talk about what you have done; but what are you doing now? I know what it is with some of you; you shined brightly once, but your candle has not been snuffed lately, and so it does not shine so well. May God take away some of the worldly cares, and snuff the candles a little! You know there were snuffers and snuffer-trays provided in the temple for all the candles, but no extinguishers; and if there should be a poor candle here this morning, with a terrific snuff, that has not given a light for a long while, you will have no extinguisher from me, but I hope you will always have a snuffing. I thought the first time when I came to the lamps this morning it would be to snuff them. That has been the intention of my sermon - to snuff you a little - to set you to work for Jesus Christ. O Zion, shake thyself from the dust! O Christian, raise thyself from thy slumbers! Warrior, put on thy armor! Soldier, grasp thy sword! The captain sounds the alarm of war. O sluggard! why sleepest thou? O heir of heaven, has not Jesus done so much for thee, that thou shouldst live to him? O beloved brethren, purchased with redeeming mercies, girt

about with loving-kindness and with tenderness,

"Now for a shout of sacred joy."

and after that, to the battle! The little seed has grown to this; who knoweth what it shall be? Only let us together strive, without variance. Let us labor for Jesus. Never did men have so fair an opportunity, for the last hundred years. "There is a tide that, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." Shall you take it at the flood? Over the bar, at the harbor's mouth! O ship of heaven, let thy sails be out; let not thy canvas be furled; and the wind will blow us across the seas of difficulty that lie before us. O! that the latter day might have its dawning even in this despised habitation! O my God! from this place cause the first wave to spring, which shall move another, and then another, till the last great wave shall sweep over the sands of time, and dash against the rocks of eternity, echoing as it falls, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

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A Solemn Warning for All Churches

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy."—Revelation 3:4.

My learned and eminently pious predecessor, Dr. Gill, is of opinion that the different churches spoken of in the Book of Revelation are types of different states through which the church of God shall pass until it comes into the Philadelphia state, the state of love, in which Jesus Christ shall reign in its midst, and afterwards, as he thinks, shall pass into the state of Laodicea, in which condition it shall be when suddenly the Son of Man shall come to judge the world in righteousness and the people in equity. I do not go with him in all his suppositions with regard to these seven churches as following each other in seven periods of time; but I do think he was correct when he declared that the church in Sardis was a most

fitting emblem of the church in his days, as also in these. The good old doctor says, "When we shall find any period in which the church was more like the state of Sardis as described here, than it is now?" And he points out the different particulars in which the church of his day (and I am sure it is yet more true of the church at the present day) was exactly like the church in Sardis. I shall use the church in Sardis as a figure of what I conceive to be the sad condition of Christendom at the present moment. My first point will be general defilement—there were but "a few names" in Sardis who had not "defiled their garments;" secondly, special preservation—there were a few who had not defiled their garments; and thirdly, a peculiar reward—"And they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy."

I. GENERAL DEFILEMENT. The holy apostle, John, said of the church in Sardis, "These things saith he that hath the Seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou has a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou has received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."

The first charge of general defilement he brings against the church in Sardis was that they had a vast deal of open profession, and but little of sincere religion. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." That is the crying sin of the present age. I am not inclined to be morbid in my temperament, or to take a melancholy view of the church of God. I would wish at all times to exhibit a liberality of spirit, and to speak as well as I can of the church at large; but God forbid that any minister should shrink from declaring what he believes to be the truth. In going up and down this land, I am obliged to come to this conclusion, that throughout the churches there are multitudes who have "a name to live, and are dead." Religion has become fashionable. The shopkeeper could scarcely succeed in a respectable business if he were not united with a church. It is reckoned to be reputable and honorable to attend a place of worship; and hence men are made religious in shoals.

And especially now that parliament itself doth in some measure sanction religion, we may expect that hypocrisy will abound yet more and more, and formality everywhere take the place of true religion. You can scarcely meet with a man who does not call himself a Christian, and yet it is equally hard to meet with one who is in the very marrow of his bones thoroughly sanctified to the good work of the kingdom of heaven. We meet with professors by hundreds; but we must expect still to meet with possessors by units. The whole nation appears to have been Christianized in an hour. But is this real? Is this sincere? Ah! we fear not. How is it that professors can live like other men? How is it that there is so little distinction between the church and the world? Or, that if there is any difference, you are frequently safer in dealing with an ungodly man than with one who is professedly righteous? How is it that men who make high professions can live in worldly conformity, indulge in the same pleasures, live in the same style, act from the same motives, deal in the same manner as other do? Are not these days when the sons of God have made affinity with the sons of men? And may we not fear that something terrible may yet occur unless God shall send a voice, which shall say, "Come out of them, my people, lest ye be partakers of their plagues?" Take our churches at large—there is no lack of names, but there is a lack of life. Else, how is it that our prayer-meetings are so badly attended? Where is the zeal or the energy shown by the apostles? Where is the Spirit of the living God? Is he not departed? Might not "Ichabod" be written on the walls of many a sanctuary? They have a name to live, but are dead. They have their piety? Where is sincere religion? Where is practical godliness? Where is firm, decisive, puritanical piety? Thank God, there are a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; but charity itself will not allow us to say that the church generally possesses the Spirit of God.

Then the next charge was, that there was a want of zeal throughout the church of Sardis. He says, "Be watchful." He looked on the church and saw the bishops slumbering, the elders slumbering, and the people slumbering; they were not, as once they were, watchful for the faith, striving together and earnestly contending for it, not wrestling against the enemy of souls, labouring to spread their Master's kingdom, but the apostle saw sleepiness, coldness, lethargy; therefore he said, "Be

watchful." Oh! John, if from thy grave thou couldst start up, and see the church as thou didst at Sardis, having thine eyes anointed by the Spirit, thou wouldst say it is even so now. Ah! we have abundance of cold, calculating Christians, multitudes of professors; but where are the zealous ones? where are the leaders of the children of God? where are your heroes who stand in the day of battle? where are your men who "count not their lives dear unto them," that they might win Christ, and be found in him? where are those who have an impassioned love for souls? How many of our pulpits are filled by earnest, enthusiastic preachers? Alas! look, at the church. She has builded herself fine palaces, imitating popery; she hath girded herself with vestments; she has gone astray from her simplicity; but she has lost the fire and the life which she once had. We go into our chapels now, and we see everything in good taste: we hear the organ play; the psalmody is in keeping with the most correct ear; the gown and the noble vestments are there, and everything is grand and goodly, and we think that God is honored. Oh for the days when Whitfields would preach on tubs once more, when their pulpits should be on Kennington Common, and their roofs the ceiling of God's sky. Oh for the time when we might preach in barns again, or in catacombs either, if we might but have the life of God that once they had in such places. What is the use of garnishing the shell when you have lost the kernel. Go and whitewash, for the life is gone. Garnish the outside of your cups and platters; but ye have lost the pure word of God. Ye have it not for a piece of bread; they flinch to speak the whole truth, or if they seem to speak it, it is with cold, meaningless, passionless words, as if it were nothing whether souls were damned or saved, whether heaven were filled or heaven depopulated, or whether Christ should see of the travail of his would and be satisfied. Do I speak fierce things? I can say as Irving once did, I might deserve to be broken on the wheel if I did not believe what I say to be the truth; for the utterance of such things I might deserve the stake; but God is my witness, I have endeavoured to judge and to speak impartially. With all that universal cant of charity now so prevalent I am at arm's length; I care not for it. Let us speak of things as we find them. WE do believe that the church has lost her zeal and her energy. But what do men say of us? "Oh! you are too excited." Good God! excited! when men are being damned; Excited! When we have the mission of heaven to preach to dying souls. EXCITED! preaching too much! when souls are

lost. Why should it come to pass that one man should be perpetually labouring all the week, while others are lolling upon their couches, and preach only upon the Sabbath-day? Can I bear to see the laziness, the slothfulness, the indifference of ministers, and of churches, without speaking. No! there must be a protest entered, and we enter it now. Oh! Church of God, thou has a name to live, and art dead; thou art not watchful. Awake! awake! arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

The third charge which John brought against Sardis was that they did not "look to the things that remained and were ready to die." I take it that this may related to the poor feeble saints, the true children of God, who were sorrowing, mourning, and groaning in their midst, who were so oppressed with sorrow on account of the state of Sardis, that they were "ready to die." And what does the church do now? Do the shepherds go after those that are wounded and sick, and those that are weary? Do they carry the lambs in their bosom, and gently lead those that are with young? Do they see to poor distressed consciences, and speak to those who feel their deadness in trespasses and sins? Yes, but how do they speak? They tell them to do things they cannot do—to perform impossible duties—instead of "strengthening the things that remain and are ready to die" In how much contempt are the truly new-born children of God held in these times! They are called peculiar men, scouted as Antinomians, hissed at as being oddities, high doctrine men who have departed from the usual mode of pulling down God's word to men's fancies; they are called bigots, narrow-minded souls, and their creed is set down as dry, hard, rough, severe Calvinism. God's gospel called hard, rough, and severe! The things for which our fathers died are not called infamous things! Mark whether, if ye stand out prominently in the truth, you will not be abhorred and scouted. If you go into a village, and hear of poor people who are said to be doing a deal of mischief, are they not the people who understand most of the gospel? Go and ask the minister who are the persons that he most dislikes? and he will say, "We have a nasty lot of Antinomians here." What does he mean by that? Men who love the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and will have it, and are therefore called a nasty set of Antinomians. Ah! we have lost what once we had. We do not now "strengthen the things that remain and are ready

to die;" they are not looked after as they ought to be, not beloved, not fostered. The salt of the earth are now the offscouring of all things; men whom God has loved, and who have attained a high standing in godliness—these are the men who will not bow the knee to Baal, and who therefore are cast into the fiery furnace of persecution and slander. O Sardis! Sardis! I see thee now. Thou hast defiled thy garments. Thank God, there are a few who have not followed the multitude to do evil, and who shall "walk in white, for they are worthy."

Another charge which God has brought against the church is, that they were careless about the things which they heard. He says, "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast; and repent." If I am wrong upon other points, I am positive that the sin of this age is impurity of doctrine, and laxity of faith. Now you know you are told every Sunday that it does not signify what you believe; that all sects and denominations will be saved; that doctrines are unimportant things; that as to the doctrines of God's grace, they are rather dangerous than otherwise, and the less you inquire about them the better; they are very good things for the priests, but you common people cannot understand them. Thus they keep back a portion of the gospel with cautious reserve; but having studied in the devil's new Jesuitical college, they understand how to call themselves particular Baptists, and then preach general doctrines, to call themselves Calvinists, and preach Arminianism, telling the people that it does not signify whether they preach damnable heresies instead of the truth of God. And what do the congregations say? "Well, he is a wise man, and ought to know." So you are going back into as bad a priestcraft as ever. Presbyter has become priest written large, and minister has become priest in many a place because persons do not search for themselves and endeavour to get hold of the truth of God. It is everywhere proclaimed that we are all right; that though one says God loved his people from before the foundation of the world, and the other that he did not; though one says that God is changeable and turns away from his people, and the other, that he will hold them fast to the end; though the one says that the blood of Christ avails for all for whom it was shed and the other, that it is inefficacious for a large number of those for whom he died; though one says that the works of the law are in some measure necessary, or at any rate that we must endeavour to improve

what we have, and then we shall get more, while the other says, that "by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God," yet both are right. A new age this, when falsehood and truth can kiss each other! New times these when fire and water can become friendly! Glorious times these when there is an alliance between hell and heaven, though God knows, we are of vastly different families. Ah! now, who cares for truth except a few narrow-minded bigots as they are called. Election—horrible! Predestination—awful! Final perseverance—desperate! Yet, turn to the pages of the Puritans, and you will see that these truths were preached every day. Turn to the Fathers; read Augustine, and you will see that these were the truths for which he would have bled and died. Read the Scriptures, and if every page is not full of them I have not read them aright, or any child of God either. Ay, laxity of doctrine is the great fault now; we solemnly protest against it. You may fancy that I am raising an outcry about nothing at all. Ah! no; my anxious spirit sees the next generation—what will that be. This generation—Arminianism. What next? Pelagianism. And what next? Popery. And what next? I leave you to guess. The path of error is always downward. We have taken one step in the wrong direction; God knows where we shall stop. If there had not been sturdy men in ages gone by, the Lord would not have left to us a remnant even now; all grace must have died, and we had become like unto Gomorrah and unto Sodoma. Oh, church of the living God, awake! awake! Once more write truth upon thy banner; stamp truth upon thy sword; and for God and for his word, charge home. Ye knights of truth, and truth alone, shall sit king over the whole world!

But now I have lifted up the whip, I must have another lash. Look on any section of the church you like to mention, not excepting that to which I belong; and let me ask you whether they have not defiled their garments. Look at the church of England. Her articles are pure and right in most respects; yet see how her garments are defiled. She hath made the Queen her Head instead of God; she bows before the state, and worships the golden calf that is set up before her. Look at her abominations, her pluralities, her easy living bishops doing nothing; look at her ungodly clergymen in the country, living in sin. The churchman who does not know that his church has defiled her garments is partial to his mother, as indeed he ought to be, but he is too partial to speak the truth. But good

churchmen themselves weep, because what I say is true. Then look at John Wesley's body; have not they defiled their garments? See how they have lately been contending with a despotism as accursed as any that ever brooded over the slaves in America? See how they have been rent in sunder, and how imperfect in doctrine they are too after all, professedly at least, not holding the truth of God. Look into what denomination you please, Independent, or Baptist, or any other—have they not all defiled their garments in some way or other? Look at the churches around, and see how they have defiled their garments by giving baptism to those whom it was never intended, and degrading a holy church ordinance to become a mere sop with which they feed their babes. And see how they have taken away Christ's honor, how they have taken the bread that was meant for the children, and cast it to ungodly persons. Look at our own denomination: see how it has deserted the leading truths of the gospel. For a proof hereof, I refer you to hundreds of our pulpits. Oh church of God! I am but a voice crying in the wilderness, but I must cry still, "How art thou fallen from heaven, thou son of the morning! how art thou fallen!" "Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." If thou dost not watch, thy Master will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know in what hour he will come unto thee.

II. But now we come to far easier work; not because we would shun what we conceive to be our duty, even at the expense of offending many now present, but because we always delight to speak well if we can. "Thou has a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments." He we have SPECIAL PRESERVATION. Mark, "Thou hast a few names." Only a few; not so few as some think, but not as many as others imagine! A few compared with the mass of professors; a few compared even with the true children of God, for many of them have defiled their garments. They were but a few, and those few were even I Sardis. There is not a church on earth that is so corrupt but has "a few." You who are always fighting so much for your denomination, you think other denominations are Sardis; but there are a few even in Sardis. Even if the denomination is the worst of all Protestant sections, there are a few in Sardis; and perhaps that is as much as we can say of our denomination: so we will treat them all alike. There are a few in Sardis—mark that. Not in what you conceive to be Philadelphia, your own blessed church, but in Sardis—there are a few

there. Where there is heresy and false doctrine, where there are many mistakes about rites and ceremonials, there are a few there; and even where they cringe before the state, there are a few there—ay, and a goodly few too, a few whom we love, with whom we can hold communion. This makes us severe against the whole body, but it makes us very loving towards all the dear people of God everywhere. There are a few even in Sardis. Well, when I meet a brother who lives in Sardis, I will hope he is one of the few; and when you meet such, do you say, "Ah! well, I know my brother comes out of a bad church, but there are a few in Sardis, and very likely he is one of them." That is the kind of charity God loves; not the universal charity which says Sardis is all right, but that which says, some in her are sincere. We stand this morning like old Elijah, when he stood before God and said, "I, only I, am left, and they seek my life." But God whispers, "I have yet reserved unto myself seventy thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal." Take heart, Christian, there are a few in Sardis—do not forget that—who have not defiled their garments. Take heart. It is not all rotten yet; there is a soundness in the core after all; there is "a remnant according to the election of grace;" there is "salt," and for the sake of that salt, many who have defiled their garments in a measure will be saved. They will enter into heaven even as these few will; but unto the few there will be special honor and special blessing. Take heart then; and whenever you go to your chamber and mourn over the sad condition of the church, think you hear that good old woman in her closet groaning and crying; think you hear that minister faithfully dispensing the word; think you see that valiant deacon standing up for God's truth; think you see that young man strong in the midst of temptation; think of these few in Sardis, and they will cheer you. Do not be quite downcast. Some heroes have not turned their backs in the day of battle; some mighty men still fight for the truth. Be encouraged; there are a few in Sardis. But be careful, for perhaps you are not one of the few. Since there are but a few, there ought to be great searchings of heart. Let us look to our garments and see whether they be defiled. If they be not, we shall walk in white, for we are worthy through Jesus. Be active; be prayerful. The fewer the workmen to do the work the greater reason is there that you should be active. Be instant in season and out of season, because there are so few. Oh! if we had hundreds behind us, we might say, "Let them do the work;" but if we stand with only a few, how should

each of those few rush hither and thither! A city is besieged: it is full of inhabitants; half of them are asleep; the others watch the walls, and thus they relieve each other. Another city has but a few defenders: see how that champion rushes first to that breach and routs the enemy; now he brings his might to another place; a bastion is assaulted, and he is there; now a postern is attacked—there he is with all his force behind him; he is here, he is there, he is everywhere, because he feels there is but a handful of men who can gather round him. Take courage, take heart; stir yourselves up to the sternest activity, for verily there are but a few in Sardis who have not defiled their garments. Above all, be prayerful. Put up your earnest cries to God that he would multiply the faithful, that he would increase the number of chosen ones who stand fast, that he would purify the church with fire in a furnace seven times heated, so that he might bring out her third part through the fire; cry unto God that the day may come when the much fine gold shall be no longer dim, when the glory shall again return unto Zion. Beg of God to remove the cloud, to take away "the darkness that may be felt." Be doubly prayerful, for there are but a few in Sardis who have not defiled their garments.

III. This brings us to the third point, which is a PECULIAR REWARD. "They shall walk in white, for they are worthy." The attentive reader will observe, that in quoting the passage just now, I left out two of the sweetest words in the passage. It reads: "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." That is the very pith of the honor; if the rest of it be gold this is the jewel. "They shall walk with me in white." That is to say, communion with Christ on earth shall be the special reward of those who have not defiled their garments. Now, I must say a very hard thing again, but it is a true one. Go into what company you please, do you meet with many men who hold communion with Christ? Though they may be godly men, upright men, ask them if they hold communion with Christ, and will they understand you? If you give them some of those sweetly spiritual books, that those who hold fellowship love to read, they will say they are mystical, and they do not love them. Ask them whether they can spend an hour in meditation upon Christ, whether they ever rise to heaven and lay their head on the breast of the Saviour, whether they ever know what it is to enter into rest and get into Canaan; whether they understand how he has raised us up together and made us sit together in

heavenly places in Christ Jesus; whether they can often say,
Abundant sweetness while I sing
Thy love, my ravish'd heart o'erflows;
Secure in thee my God and King
Of glory that no period knows."

Ask them that, and they will say, "We don't comprehend you." Now, the reason of it is in the first part of my sermon—they have defiled their garments, and therefore Christ will not walk with them. He says, "Those that have not defiled their garments shall walk with me." Those who hold fast the truth, who take care to be free from the prevailing sins of the times, "These," he says, "shall walk with me; they shall be in constant fellowship with me; I will let them see that I am bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh: I will bring them into the banqueting-house; my banner over them shall be love; they shall drink wine on the lees well refined; they shall have the secrets of the Lord revealed unto them, because they are the people who truly fear me: they shall walk with me in white." Oh, Christian! if thou wouldst have communion with Christ, the special way to win it is by not defiling thy garments, as the church has done.

But we must dwell on the rest of the passage. "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." A good old author says there is a reference here to that fact, that the rabbis allowed persons to walk in white who could trace their pedigree without a flaw; but if they found any blot on their escutcheon, and could not trace their birth up to Abraham, they were not allowed to walk in white on certain days. Well, he says he thinks the passage means that those who have not defiled their garments will be able to prove their adoption, and will walk in white garments as being sure they are the sons of God. If we would be certain that we are the people of God, we must take care that we have no blots on our dress, for each one of those splatterings of the mire of this earth will cry out, and say "Perhaps you are not a child of God." Nothing is such a father of doubts as sin; sin is the very mother of our distress. He who is covered with sin must not expect to enjoy full assurance, but he who liveth close to his God, and keeps his garments unspotted from the world—he shall walk in white, knowing that his adoption is sure.

But chiefly we should understand this to refer to justification. "They shall walk in white;" that is, they shall enjoy a constant sense of their own justification by faith; they shall understand that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them, that they have

A matchless robe which far exceeds

What earthly princes wear;"

that they have been washed and make whiter than snow,
and purified and made more cleanly than wool.

Again, it refers to joy and gladness: for white robes were holiday dresses among the Jews. They that have not defiled their garments, shall have their faces always bright; they shall understand what Solomon meant when he said, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. Let thy garments be always white, for God hath accepted thy works." He who is accepted of God shall wear white garments, being received by the Father—garments of joy and gladness. Whence so many doubts, so much distress, and misery, and mourning? It is because the church has defiled her garments; they do not here below walk in white, because they are not worthy.

And lastly, it refers to walking in white before the throne of God. Those who have not defiled their garments here, shall most certainly walk in white up yonder, where the white-robed hosts sing perpetual hallelujahs to the Most High. If thou hast not defiled thy garments, thou mayest say, "I know whom I have believed;" not for my works, not by way of merit, but as the reward of grace. If there be joys inconceivable, happiness beyond a dream, bliss which imagination knoweth not, blessedness which even the stretch of desire hath not reached, thou shalt have all these: thou shalt walk in white, since thou art worthy. Christ shall say to thee "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

But what shall be done with such persons as live in the church, but are not of it having a name to live, but are dead? What shall be done with mere professors who are not possessors? What shall become of those who are only outwardly religious but inwardly are in the gall of bitterness? We answer, as good Calvin did once: "They shall walk in black, for they are unworthy." They shall walk in black—the blackness of God's destruction. They shall walk in black—the blackness of hopeless despair. They shall

walk in black—the blackness of incomparable anguish. They shall walk in black—the blackness of damnation. They shall walk in black for ever, because they were found unworthy. O professors, search yourselves. O ministers, search yourselves. O ye, who make a profession of religion now, put your hands within your hearts, and search your souls. You live in the sight of a rein-trying God. Oh! try your own reins, and search your own hearts. It is not a matter of half-importance for which I plead, but a matter of double importance. I beseech you, examine and cross-examine your own souls, and see whether ye be in the path, for it will go ill with you if ye shall find at last that ye were in the church, but not of it, that ye make a profession of religion, but it was only a cloak for your hypocrisy—if ye should have entered into his courts below, and be shut out of the courts above. Remember, the higher the pinnacle of profession the direr your fall of destruction. Beggared kings, exile princes, crownless emperors, are always subjects of pity. Professor, what wilt thou think of thyself when thy robes are taken from thee, when thy crown of profession is taken from thy head, and thou standest the hiss of even vile men, the scoff of blasphemers, the jeer of those who, whatever they were, were not hypocrites, as thou art? They will cry to thee, "Art thou become like one of us? Thou professor, thou high-flying man, art thou become like one of us?" And ye will hide your guilty heads in the dark pit of perdition, but all in vain, for you never will be able to avoid that hiss which shall ever greet you. "What! thou!" the drunkard whom you told to drink no more will say "Art thou become like one of us?" And the harlot whom you scorned, and the young debauched man whom you warned, will stare you in the face, and say, "What! you! You who talked of religion. A pretty fellow you were! Art thou become one of us?" Oh! I think I hear them saying in hell, "Here's a parson, come here; here's a deacon; here's a church member; here's a man who has had the sacramental wine within his lips; here's a man that has had the baptismal water on his garments." Ah! take care. There are but a few names in Sardis who shall walk in white. Be ye of that few. May God give you grace that ye be not reprobates, but may be accepted of the Lord in that day! May he give you mercy, that when he severs the chaff from the wheat, you may abide as the good corn, and may not be swept away into unquenchable fire! The Lord in mercy bless this warning, and hear our supplication, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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Israel in Egypt

"And they sang the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."—Revelation 15:3.

At the outset, let us remark the carefulness of the Holy Spirit in guarding the honor of our blessed Lord. This verse is often quoted as if it runs thus—"They sang the song of Moses and the Lamb." This mistake has led many weak minds to wonder at the expression, for they have imagined that it divided the honor of the song of heaven between Moses and the Redeemer. The clause—"the servant of God"—is doubtless inserted by the Holy Spirit to prevent any error upon this point, and therefore it should be carefully included in the quotation. I take it that the song of Moses is here united with the song of the Lamb, because the one was a type and picture of the other. The glorious overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea shadowed forth the total destruction of Satan and all his host in the day of the great battle of the Lord; and there was in the song of Moses the expression of the same feelings of triumph which will pervade the breasts of the redeemed when they shall triumph with their Captain.

May God the Holy Spirit enable me to exhibit the parallel which exists between the condition of Israel when passing through the sea, and the position of the church of Christ at the present day. Next, we shall compare the triumph of the Lord at the Red Sea with the victory of the Lamb in the great and terrible day of the Lord. And lastly, I shall point out certain prominent features of the song of Moses, which will doubtless be as prominent in the song of the Lamb.

I. First, it is our business to regard THE POSITION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS EMBLEMATICAL OF OUR OWN. And here we observe that, like the church of God, the vast host of Israel had been delivered from bondage. We, my brethren, who constitute a part of the Israel of

God, were once the slaves of sin and Satan; we served with hard bondage and rigor while in our natural state; no bondage was ever more terrible than ours; we indeed made bricks without straw, and labored in the very fire; but by the strong hand of God we have been delivered. We have come forth from the prison-house; with joy we beheld ourselves emancipated—the Lord's free men. The iron yoke is taken from our necks; we no longer serve our lusts, and pay obedience to the tyrant sin. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, our God has led us forth from the place of our captivity, and joyfully we pursue our way through the wilderness.

But with the children of Israel it was not all joy; they were free, but their master was at their heels. Pharaoh was loth to lose so valuable a nation of servants; and therefore with his chosen captains, his horsemen, and his chariots, he pursued them in angry haste. Affrighted Israel beheld her infuriated oppressor close at her rear, and trembled for the issue—the hearts of the people failed them while they saw their hopes blighted and their joys ended by the approach of the oppressor; even so it is with some of you; you think you must be driven back again like dumb cattle, into Egypt, and once more become what you were. "Surely," you say, "I can not hold on my way with such a host seeking to drive me back; I must again become the slave of my iniquities." And thus dreading apostacy, and feeling that you would rather die than become what you were, you this morning are filled with trepidation. You are saying, "Alas for me! Better that I had died in Egypt than that I should have come out into this wilderness to be again captured." You have tasted for a moment the joys of holiness and the sweets of liberty; and now again to go back to endure the bondage of a spiritual Egypt, would be worse than before. This is the position of the sacramental host of God's elect; they have come out of Egypt, and they are pursuing their way to Canaan. But the world is against them; the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his people, saying, "Let us scatter them; let us utterly destroy them." From the fiery days of the stakes of Smithfield even until now, the world's black heart has hated the church, and the world's cruel hand and laughing lip have been for ever against us. The host of the mighty are pursuing us, and are thirsty for our blood, and anxious to cut us off from the earth. Such is our position unto this hour,

and such must it be until we are landed on the other side of Jordan, and until our Maker comes to reign on the earth.

But once more: the children of Israel were in a position more wonderful than this. They came to the edge of the Red Sea; they feared their enemies behind; they could not fly on either hand, for they were flanked by mountains and stupendous rocks; one course only was open to them, and that course was through the sea. God commands them to go forward. The rod of Moses is outstretched, and the affrighted waters divide; a channel is left while the floods stand up right, and the waters are congealed in the heart of the sea. The priests, bearing the ark, march forward; the whole host of Israel follow. And now behold the wondrous pilgrimage. A wall of alabaster is on either side, and myriads are in the pebbly depths. Like a wall of glass the sea stands on either side of them, frowning with beetling cliffs of foam; but still on they march; and until the last of God's Israel is safe the water stands still and firm, frozen by the lips of God. Such, my hearers, is the position of God's church now. You and I are marching through a sea, the floods of which are kept upright only by the sovereign power of God. This world is a world which is suddenly to be destroyed; and our position in it is just the position of the children of Israel, for whose sake the floods refused to meet until they were safely landed. O church of God! thou art the salt of the earth: when thou art removed this earth must putrify and decay. O living army of the living God! ye, like Israel, keep the floods of providence still standing fast; but when the last of you shall be gone from this stage of action, God's fiery wrath and tremendous anger shall dash down upon the ground whereon you now are standing, and your enemies shall be overwhelmed in the place through which you now walk safely. Let me put my thoughts as plainly as I can. Naturally, according to the common order, the Red Sea should have flowed on in a level and even manner, constant in its waves, and unbroken in its surface. By the might of God the Red Sea was divided into two parts, and the floods stood back. Now mark. Naturally, according to the common course of justice, this world, which groaneth and travaileth until now, ought, if we only consider the wicked, to be utterly destroyed. The only reason why the Red Sea afforded a safe passage for the host was this—that Israel marched through it; and the only reason why this world stands, and the only reason why it is not destroyed by fire, as it is to be at

the last great day, is because God's Israel are in it; but when once they shall have passed through, the parted floods shall meet their hands, and embrace with eager joy to clasp the adverse host within their arms. The day is coming when this world shall reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man. Every Christian may say, with due reverence to God, "The earth is dissolved; I bear up the pillars thereof." Let all the Christians that are in the world die, and the pillars of the earth would fall, and like a wreck and a vision all this universe of ours would pass away, never to be seen again. We are to-day, I say, passing through the floods, with enemies behind, pursuing us who are going out of Egypt up to Canaan.

III. And now the TRIUMPH OF MOSES was a picture of the ultimate triumph of the Lamb. Moses sang a song unto the Lord by the sea of Egypt. If you will turn to holy Scripture you will find that my text was sung by the holy spirits who had been preserved from sin and from the contamination of the beast; and it is said that they sung this song upon "a sea of glass mingled with fire." Now the song of Moses was sung by the side of a sea, which was glassy, and still; for a little season the floods had been disturbed, divided, separated, congealed, but in a few moments afterward, when Israel had safely passed the flood, they became as glassy as ever, for the enemy had sunken to the bottom like a stone, and the sea re. turned to its strength when the morning appeared. Is there ever a time, then, when this great sea of Providence, which now stands parted to give a passage to God's saints shall become a level surface? Is there a day when the now divided dispensations of God, which are kept from following out their legitimate tendency to do justice upon sin—when the two seas of justice shall commingle, and the one sea of God's providence shall be "a sea of glass mingled with fire?" Yes, the day is drawing nigh when God's enemies shall no longer make it necessary for God's providence to be apparently disturbed to save his people, when the great designs of God shall be accomplished, and therefore when the walls of water shall roll together, while in their inmost depths the everlasting burning fire shall still consume the wicked. O, the sea shall be calm upon the surface; the sea upon which God's people shall walk shall seem to be a sea that is clear, without a weed, with-out an impurity; while down in its hollow bosom, far beyond all mortal ken, shall be the horrid depths where the wicked must for ever dwell in the fire which is mingled with the glass.

Well, I now want to show you why it was that Moses triumphed, and why it is that by-and-by we shall triumph. One reason why Moses sung his song was because all Israel were safe. They were all safely across the sea. Not a drop of spray fell from that solid wall until the last of God's Israel had safely planted his foot on the other side of the flood. That done, immediately the floods dissolved into their proper place again, but not till then. Part of that song was, "Thou hast led thy people like a flock through the wilderness." Now, in the last time, when Christ shall come upon earth, the great song will be—"Lord, thou hast saved thy people; thou hast led them all safely through the paths of providence, and not one of them has fallen into the hands of the enemy." O, it is my strong belief, that in heaven there shall not be a vacant throne. I rejoice that all who love the Lord below, must at last attain to heaven. I do not believe with some that men may start on the road to heaven, and be saved, and yet fall by the hand of the enemy. God forbid, my friends!

"All the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of his grace,
And make his glories known."

Part of the triumph of heaven will be, that there is not one throne that is unoccupied. As many as God hath chosen, as many as Christ hath redeemed, as many as the Spirit hath called, as many as believe, shall arrive safe across the stream. We are not all safely landed yet:

"Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

The vanguard of the army have already reached the shore. I see them yonder;

"I greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon th' eternal shore."

And you and I, my brethren, are marching through the depths. We are at this day following hard after Christ, and walking through the wilderness. Let us be of good cheer: the rearguard shall soon be where the vanguard already is; the last of the chosen shall soon have landed; the last of God's elect shall have crossed the sea, and then shall be heard the song of triumph, when all are secure. But O! if one were absent—oh! if one of his chosen family should be cast away—it would make an everlasting discord

in the song of the redeemed, and cut the strings of the harps of Paradise, so that music could never be distilled from them again.

But, perhaps, the major part of the joy of Moses lay in the destruction of all the enemies of God. He looked upon his people the day before.

"He looked upon his people,
And the tear was in his eye;
He looked upon the foeman
And his glance was stern and high."

And now to-day he looks upon his people, and he says, "Blessed art thou, O Israel, safely landed on the shore;" and he looks not upon the foeman, but upon the foeman's tomb; he looks where the living were protected by the shield of God from all their enemies; and he sees—what? A mighty sepulcher of water; a mighty tomb in which were engulfed princes, monarchs, potentates. "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Pharaoh's chariots also are drowned therein. And soon, my hearers, you and I shall do the same. I say that now we have to look abroad on hosts of enemies. What with the wild beasts of Rome, what with the antichrist of Mohammed, what with the thousands of idolatries and false gods, what with infidelity in all its myriad shapes, many are the enemies of God, and mighty are the hosts of hell. Lo, you see them gathered together this day; horseman upon horseman, chariot upon chariot, gathered together against the Most High. I see the trembling church, fearing to be over-thrown; I mark her leaders bending their knees in solemn prayer, and crying, "Lord, save thy people, and bless thy heritage." But mine eye looks through the future with telescopic glance, and I see the happy period of the latter days, when Christ shall reign triumphant. I shall ask them where is Babel? where is Rome? where is Mohammed? and the answer shall come—where? Why they have sunk into the depths; they have sunk to the bottom as a stone. Down there the horrid fire devours them, for the sea of glass is mingled with the fire of judgment. To-day I see a battle-field; the whole earth is torn by the hoofs of horses; there is the rumble of cannon and the roll of drum. "To arms! to arms!" both hosts are shouting. But you wait awhile, and you shall walk across this plain of battle, and say, "Seest thou that colossal system of error dead? There lies another, all frozen, in ghastly death, in motionless stupor. There lieth infidelity; there sleepeth secularism and

the secularist; there lie those who defied God. I see all this vast host of rebels lying scattered upon the earth. "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; Jehovah has gotten unto himself the victory, and the last of his enemies are destroyed." Then shall be the time when shall be sung "the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

III. Now, turning to the song of Moses, I shall conclude my address to you by noticing some interesting particulars in the song which will doubtless have a place in the everlasting orchestra of the redeemed, when they shall praise the Most High. O! my brethren, I could but wish that I had stood by the Red Sea, to have heard that mighty shout, and that tremendous roar of acclamation! Methinks one might well have borne a servitude in Egypt, to have stood in that mighty host who sung such mighty praise. Music hath charms; but never had it such charms as it had that day when fair Miriam led the women, and Moses led the men, like some mighty leader, beating time with his hand. "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done gloriously." Methinks I see the scene; and I anticipate the greater day, when the song shall be sung again, "as the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

Now, just notice this song. In the 15th chapter of Exodus you find it, and in divers of the Psalms you will see it amplified. The first thing I would have you notice in it is, that from beginning to end it is a praise of God, and of nobody else but God. Moses, thou hast said nothing of thyself. O great lawgiver, mightiest of men, did not thine hand grasp the mighty rod that split the sea—that burned its fair breast, and left a sear for awhile upon its bosom? Didst not thou lead the hosts of Israel? Didst not thou marshal their thousands for battle, and like a mighty commander led them through the depths? Is there not a word for thee? Not one. The whole strain of the song is, "I will sing unto the Lord," from beginning to end. It is all praise of Jehovah; there is not one word about Moses, nor a single word in praise of the children of Israel. Dear friends, the last song in this world, the song of triumph, shall be full of God, and of no one else. Here you praise the instrument; to-day you look on this man and on that, and you say, "Thank God for this minister, and for this man?" To-day you say, "Blessed be God for Luther, who shook the Vatican, and thank God for Whitefield, who stirred up a slumbering church;" but in that day you

shall not sing of Luther, nor of Whitefield, nor of any of the mighty ones of God's hosts; forgotten shall their names be for a season, even as the stars refuse to shine when the sun himself appeareth. The song shall be unto Jehovah, and Jehovah only; we shall not have a word to say for preachers nor bishops, not a syllable to say for good men and true; but the whole song from first to last shall be, "unto him that loved us and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

And next will you please to note, that this song celebrated something of the fierceness of the enemy! Do you observe how, when the songster describes the attack of Pharaoh, he says, "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." A song is made out of the wrath of Pharaoh. And it shall be so at the last. "The wrath of man shall praise God. I believe the last song of the redeemed, when they shall ultimately triumph, will celebrate in heavenly stanzas the wrath of man overcome by God. Sometimes after great battles, monuments are raised to the memory of the fight; and of what are they composed? They are composed of weapons of death and of instruments of war which have been taken from the enemy. Now, to use that illustration as I think it may be properly used, the day is coming when fury, and wrath, and hatred, and strife, shall all be woven into a song; and the weapons of our enemies, when taken from them, shall serve to make monuments to the praise of God. Rail on, rail on, blasphemer! Smite on, smite on, tyrant! Lift thy heavy hand, O despot; crush the truth, which yet thou canst not crush; knock from his head the crown—the crown that is far above thy reach—poor puny impotent mortal as thou art! Go on, go on! But all thou doest shall but increase his glories. For aught we care, we bid you still proceed with all your wrath and malice. Though it shall be worse for you, it shall be more glorious for our Master; the greater your preparations for war, the more splendid shall be his triumphal chariot, when he shall ride through the streets of heaven in pompous array. The more mighty your preparations for battle, the more rich the spoil which he shall divide with the strong. O! Christian, fear not the foe! Remember the harder his blows, the sweeter thy song; the greater his wrath, the more splendid thy triumph; the more he rages, the more shall Christ be honored in the day

of his appearing. They sung the song of 'Moses and the Lamb.

And then will ye note, in the next place, how they sang the total overthrow of the enemy. There is one expression in this song, which ought to be and I believe is, when set to music, very frequently repeated. It is that part of the song, as recorded in the Psalms, where it is declared that the whole host of Pharaoh were utterly destroyed, and there was not one of them left. When that great song was sung by the side of the Red Sea, there was, no doubt, a special emphasis laid upon that expression, "not one." I think I hear the hosts of Israel. When the words were known by them, they began and they proceeded thus—"There is not one of them left;" and then in various parts the words were repeated, "Not one, not one." And then the women with their sweet voices sang, "Not one, not one." I believe that at the last, a part of our triumph will be the fact, that there is not one left. We shall look abroad throughout the earth, and see it all a level sea; and not one foeman pursuing us—"not one, not one!" Raise thyself never so high, O thou deceiver, thou canst not live; for not one shall escape. Lift thy head never so proudly, O despot, thou canst not live; for not one shall escape. O heir of heaven, not one sin shall cross the Jordan after thee; not one shall pass the Red Sea to overtake thee; but this shall be the summit of thy triumph—"Not one, not one! not one of them is left."

Just let us note again, and I will not detain you too long, lest I weary you. One part of the song of Moses consisted in praising the ease with which God destroyed his enemies. "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters." If we had gone to work to destroy the hosts of Pharaoh, what a multitude of engines of death should we have required. If the work had been committed to us, to cut off the hosts, what marvelous preparations, what thunder, what noise, what great activity there would have been. But mark the grandeur of the expression. God did not even lift himself from his throne to do it: he saw Pharaoh coming; he seemed to look upon him with a placid smile; he did just blow with his lips, and the sea covered them. You and I will marvel at the last how easy it has been to over-throw the enemies of the Lord.. We have been tugging and toiling all our life-time to be the means of overthrowing systems of error; it will astonish the church, when her

Master shall come, to see how, as the ice dissolveth before the fire, all error and sin shall be utterly destroyed in the coming of the Most High. We must have our societies and our machinery, our preachings and our gatherings, and rightly too; but God will not require them at the last. The destruction of his enemies shall be as easy to him as the making of a world. In passive silence unmoved he sat; and he did but break the silence with "Let there be light; and light was." So shall he at the last, when his enemies are raging furiously, blow with his winds, and they shall be scattered; they shall melt even as wax, and shall be burned like tow; they shall be as the fat of rams; into smoke shall they consume, yea, into smoke shall they consume away.

Furthermore, in this song of Moses, you will notice there is one peculiar beauty. Moses not only rejoiced for what had been done, but for the future consequences of it. He says—"The people of Canaan, whom we are about to attack, will now be seized with sudden fear; by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone." O! I think I hear them singing that too, sweetly and softly—"as still as a stone." How would the words come full, like gentle thunder heard in the distance—"as still as a stone!" And when we shall get on the other side the flood, see the triumph over our enemies, and behold our Master reigning, this will form a part of our song, that they must henceforth be "as still as a stone." There will be a hell, but it will not be a hell of roaring devils, as it now is. They shall be "as still as a stone." There will be legions of fallen angels, but they shall no longer have courage to attack us or defy God: they shall be "as still as a stone." O how grand will that sound, when the hosts of God's redeemed, looking down on the demons chained, bound, silenced, struck dumb with terror, shall sing exultingly over them! They must be "as still as a stone;" and there they must lie, and bite their iron bands. The fierce despiser of Christ can no more spit in his face; the proud tyrant can no more lift his hands to oppress the saints; even Satan can no more attempt to destroy. They shall be "as still as a stone."

And last of all, the song concludes by noticing the eternity of God's reign; and this will always make a part of the triumphant song. They sang, "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Then I can suppose the whole band broke out into their loudest strain of music. "The Lord shall reign for ever

and ever." Part of the melody of heaven will be—"The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." That song has cheered us here—"The Lord reigneth; blessed be my Rock!" And that song shall be our exultation there. "The Lord reigneth for ever and ever." When we shall see the placid sea of providence, when we shall behold the world all fair and lovely, when we shall mark our enemies destroyed, and God Almighty triumphant, then we shall shout the song—

"Hallelujah! for the Lord
God Omnipotent shall reign;
Hallelujah! let the word
Echo round the earth and main."

O! may we be there to sing it!

I have one remark to make, and I have done. You know, my friends, that as there is something in the song of Moses which is typical of the song of the Lamb, there was another song sung by the waters of the Red Sea which is typical of the song of hell. "What mean you, sir, by that dread thought?" O! shall I use the word music? Shall I profane the heavenly word so much as to say, It was doleful music which came from the lips of Pharaoh and his host? Boldly and pompously, with roll of drum and blast of trumpet they had entered into the sea. On a sudden their martial music ceased ; and ah! ye heavens and ye floods what was it? The sea was coming down upon them, utterly to devour them. O! may we never hear that shriek, that awful yell of hideous agony, that seemed to rend the sky, and then was hushed again, when Pharaoh and his mighty men were swallowed up, and went down quick into hell! Ah! stars, if ye had heard it, if the black pall of waters had not shut out the sound from you, ye might have continued trembling unto this hour, and mayhap ye are trembling now; mayhap your twinklings by night are on account of that terrible shriek ye heard; for sure it were enough to make you tremble on for ever. That dreadful shriek, that hideous moan, that horrible howl, when a whole army sank into hell at once when the waters swallowed them up!

Take heed, my friends, take heed, lest you should have to join in that terrible miserere; take heed, lest that horrible howl should be yours, instead of the song of the redeemed. And remember, so must it be, unless ye be born again, unless ye believe in Christ, unless ye repent of sin and renounce it wholly, and with trembling hearts put your confidence in the

man of sorrows, who is soon to be crowned the King of kings and Lord of lords. May God bless you, and give you all to taste of his salvation, that you may stand upon the sea of glass, and not have to feel the terrors of the mingled fire in the lower depths thereof! God Almighty bless this vast assembly, for Jesus' sake.

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The Vanguard and Rear Guard of the Church

"The Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward."—Isaiah 52:12.

The Church of Christ is continually represented under the figure of an army; yet its Captain is the Prince of Peace; its object is the establishment of peace, and its soldiers are men of a peaceful disposition. The spirit of war is at the extremely opposite point to the spirit of the gospel. Yet nevertheless, the church on earth has, and until the second advent must be, the church militant, the church armed, the church warring, the church conquering. And how is this? It is in the very order of things that so it must be. Truth could not be truth in this world if it were not a warring thing, and we should at once suspect that it were not true if error were friends with it. The spotless purity of truth must always be at war with the blackness of heresy and lies. I say again, it would cast a suspicion upon its own nature; we should feel at once that it was not true, if it were not an enmity with the false. And so at this present time, the church of Christ, being herself the only incarnation of truth left upon this world, must be at war with error of every kind of shape; or if she were not, we should at once conclude that she was not herself the church of the living God. It is but a rule of nature that holiness must be at enmity with sin. That would be but a mock purity which could lie side by side with iniquity and claim its kinship. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" Shall Christ and Belial walk together? Shall the holy be linked with the unholy? If it were so, beloved, we might then not only suspect that the church was

not the holy, universal and apostolic church; we might not only suspect it, but we might beyond suspicion pronounce a verdict upon her, "Thou art no more Christ's bride; thou art an antichrist, an apostate. Reprobate silver shall men call thee, because thou hast not learned to distinguish between the precious and the vile." Thus, you see, if the church be a true church, and a holy church, she must be armed: there are so many untrue things and unholy things, that she must be perpetually with her sword in her hand, carrying on combat against them. And every child of God proveth by experience that this is the land of war. We are not yet come to the time when every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, none daring to make him afraid. The mountains do not bring peace to the people, nor the little hills righteousness. On the contrary, the children of God hear the sound of war; the shrill clarion is constantly sounding in their ears; they are compelled to carry with them the sword and the shield, and constantly to gird their armor on, for they are not yet come to the land of peace; they are in an enemy's country, and every day will convince them that such is their position. Now, how comforting is this text to the believer who recognizes himself as a soldier, and the whole church as an army! The church has its van-guard: "Jehovah will go before you." The church is also in danger behind; enemies may attack her in her hinder part, "and the God of Israel shall be her rereward." So that the army is safe from enemies in front—and God alone knoweth their strength and it is also perfectly secure from any foes behind, however malicious and powerful they may be; for Jehovah is in the van, and the covenant God of Israel is behind: therefore the whole army is safe.

I shall first consider this as it respects the church of God; and then, in the second place, I shall endeavour to consider it as it respects us, as individual believers. May God comfort our hearts while considering this precious truth!

I. First, consider THE WHOLE CHURCH OF GOD AS AN ARMY. Remember that part of the host have crossed the flood; a large part of the army are standing this day upon the hills of glory; having overcome and triumphed. As for the rear, it stretches far into the future; some portions are as yet uncreated; the last of God's elect are not perhaps yet in existence. The rear-guard will be brought up in that day when the last

vessel of mercy is full to the brim of grace, the last prodigal is restored to his Father's house, and the last of Christ's redeemed ones redeemed by power, as they were of old redeemed by blood. Now, cast your eyes forward to the front of the great army of God's elect, and you see this great truth coming up with great brilliance before you: "Jehovah shall go before you." Is not this true? Have you never heard of the eternal counsel and of the everlasting covenant? Did that not go before the church? Yea, my brethren, it went before manhood's existence, before the creation of this world that was to be the stage whereon the church should play its part, before the formation of the universe itself, when as yet all things that we now behold were unborn, when God lived alone in solitary majesty without a fellow, when there were no creatures. If there were such an eternity, an eternity filled with the Creator, and not one creature with him, even then it was, that God determined in his mind that he would form a people to himself who should show forth his praise; it was then that he settled how men should be redeemed; it was then the council of peace was held between the three divine persons, and it was determined that the Father should give the Son, that the Son should give himself, that the Holy Spirit should be the active agent to fetch out all the lost sheep, and restore them to the fold. Oh! think, beloved, of that great text which says, "His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting." Do not think that the gospel is a new thing; it is older than your hoary mountains, nay, it is older than the firstborn sons of light. Before that "beginning," when God created the heavens and the earth, there was another "beginning," for "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And assuredly, the Gospel was ever in the Word, for Jesus was set up front everlasting as the great head of the covenant of grace. Behold, then, the glorious Jehovah in the Trinity of his persons, treading the pathless depths of eternity, that a way for his elect might be prepared herein. He has gone before us.

Take another view of the case. Jehovah shall go before you. Has he not gone before his church in act and deed? Perilous has been the journey of the church from the day when first it left Paradise even until now. When the church left Paradise, I say, for I believe that Adam and Eve were in the church of God, for I believe that both of them were redeemed souls, chosen of God, and precious. I see God give the promise to them before

they leave the garden, and they go out from the garden, the church of God. Since that time, what a path has the church had to tread, but how faithfully hat Jehovah led the way. We see the floods gather round about her, but even then she floats safely in the ark which Jehovah had provided for her beforehand, for the Lord had gone before her. I see the church going out from Ur of the Chaldees. It is but a little church, with the patriarch Abraham at its head. I see that little church dwelling in an enemy's country, moving to and fro; but I observe how the Lord is its constant leader—"When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." I see the church afterwards going down to the land of the cruel Pharaohs. It was a black part of her pilgrimage, for she was going to the lash of the taskmaster and to the heat of the burning fiery furnace; but I see Joseph going down before, Jehovah's great representative; Joseph goeth down into Egypt, and he saith, "God sent me before you to provide a place for you in the time of famine." So sings the Psalmist, "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom. Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham." But now the church has to come up out of Egypt, and God goes before her still; "But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And he led them on safely so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies." The Red Sea is before them; Jehovah goes in front and dries up the sea. The desert must then be trodden; Jehovah marches in front, and scatters manna with both his hands; he splits the rock, and sends out a living stream. For forty years the church wanders there; Jehovah is with them; the fiery cloud-pillar leads them all their journey through. And now they come to the banks of Jordan; they are about to enter into the promised land; Jehovah goes before them and the Jordan is driven back, and the floods are dry. They came into the country of the mighty ones, the sons of Anak, men that were of the race of giants; but Jehovah had gone before them; the hornet was sent and the

pestilence, so that when they came they said it was a land that did eat up the inhabitants thereof, for God himself with the sword and the pestilence was mowing down their foes that they might be an easier victory. "And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents."

But why need I go through all the pages of the history of the church of God in the days of the old dispensation? Hath it not been true from the days of John the Baptist until now? Brethren, how can ye account for the glorious triumphs of the church if ye deny the fact that God has gone before her? I see the church emerge, as it were, from the bowels of Christ. Twelve fishermen—what are these to do? Do? Why they are to shake the world, to uproot old systems of paganism that have become venerable, and whose antiquity seems a guarantee that men will never renounce them. These men are to blot out the name of Jupiter; they are to cast Venus from her licentious throne; they are to pull down the temple of Delphos, scatter all the oracles, and disrobe the priests: these men are to overthrow a system and an empire of error that has stood for thousands of years—a system which has brought in to its help all the philosophy of learning and all the pomp of power;—these twelve fishermen are to do it. And they have done it, they have done it. The gods of the heathens are cast clown; they only remain among us as memorials of men's folly; but who bows down to Jupiter now? Where is the worshipper of Ashtaroth? Who calls Diana a divinity? The twelve fishermen have done it; they have erased from the world the old system of superstition; it seemed old as the eternal hills, yet have they dug up its foundations and scattered them to the winds. Could they have accomplished it unless Jehovah had been in the van and led the way? No, beloved, if ye read the history of the church, ye will be compelled to confess that whenever she went forward she could discern the footsteps of Jehovah leading the way. Our missionaries in these later times tell us that, when they went to the South Seas to preach the gospel, there was an evident preparedness in the minds of the people for the reception of the truth, and I believe that at this time, if the church were true to herself, there are nations and people and tribes that are just in the condition of the ancient Canaanites: the hornet is among them

making way for the Lord's army to win an easy conquest. But sure I am that never minister ascends the pulpit, if he be a true minister of Christ; never missionary crosses the sea, never Sunday school teacher goes to his work, but that Jehovah goes before him to help him if he goes in earnest prayer and constant faith. If I were a poet I think I have a subject that might suggest a grand epic poem—the march of the church through the world, with Jehovah in her fore front. See, when first she comes forth, "the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed." Alas, poor church, what is now thy fate? But I hear a voice ahead. What is it? It is a laugh. Who laughs? Why the leader of the army laughs. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them. The Lord shall have them in derision." And shall we that are behind be mourning? Shall the church tremble? Let her call to mind the days of old, and comfort herself, that the Breaker has gone up before her, and the King at the head of her. But the enemy approaches. They bring out the rack, the bloody sword, the burning faggot. The march of the church lies through the flames, the floods must be forded, torments must be endured. Did the church ever stop a moment in its march for all the martyrdoms that fell upon her like the drops of a fiery shower? Never, never did the church seem to march on with feet so ready, never were her steps so firm as when she dipped her foot each time in blood, and every moment passed through the fire. It was the marvel of those days that men were better Christians then, and more willing to make a profession of Christ than they are even now. And whereas this seems to be the day of cravens, the time of persecution was the age of heroes, the time of the great and the bold. And why? Because God had gone beforehand with his church, and provided stores of grace for stores of trouble, shelter and mercy for tempests and persecution, abundance of strength for a superfluity of trial. Happy is the church because God has gone before her. Whether it were over the tops of the mountains, where her pastors fell frozen by cold, or whether it were in the depths of the dungeon where her confessors expired upon the rack, whether it were in the flame or at the block, everywhere God went before his church, and she came forth triumphant because her great vanguard had cleared the way.

And now, beloved, we have come to the sweet part of the text, which

saith, "And the God of Israel shall be the rereward." The original Hebrew is, "God of Israel shall gather you up." Armies in the time of war diminish by reason of stragglers, some of whom desert, and others of whom are overcome by fatigue; but the army of God is "gathered up;" none desert from it if they be real soldiers of the cross, and none drop down upon the road. The God of Israel gathers them up. He who goes before, like a shepherd before the flock, providing pasture for them, comes behind that he may gather the lambs in his arms—that he may gently lead those that are with young. "The God of Israel is your rereward." Now the church of Christ has been frequently attacked in the rear. It often happens that the enemy, tired of opposing the onward march by open persecution, attempts to malign the church concerning something that has either been taught, or revealed, or done in past ages. Now, the God of Israel is our rereward. I am never at trouble about the attacks of infidels or heretics, however vigorously they may assault the doctrines of the Gospel, I will leave them alone; I have no answer for their logic; if they look to be resisted by mere reason, they look in vain; I have the simple answer of an affirmation, grounded upon the fact that God had said it. It is the only warfare I will enter into with them. If they must attack the rear let them fight with Jehovah himself. If the doctrines of the Gospel be as base as they say they are, let them cast discredit upon God, who revealed the doctrines; let them settle the question between God's supreme wisdom and their own pitiful pretensions to knowledge. It is not for Christian men to fear about the rear of the church. The doctrines of the Gospel, which are like the heavy baggage carried in the rear, or like the great guns kept behind against the time when they are wanted in the hour of battle, these are quite safe. The Amalekites may fall upon the stuff, or the Philistines may attack the ammunition, all is safe, for God is in the rereward; and let them but appear against our rear, and they shall instantly be put to the rout.

But I am thinking that perhaps the later trials of the church may represent the rereward. There are to come, perhaps, to the church, in days that are approaching, fiercer persecutions that she has ever known. We cannot tell, we are no pretenders to prophecy, but we know that it always has been so with the church—a time of prosperity and then a period of persecution. She has a Solomon, and she reigns in all her glory

under his shadow; but in after years Antiochus oppresses her, and she needs a Judas Maccabæus to deliver her. Perhaps we are living in an age too soft for the church. The Capuan holidays that ruined the soldiers of Hannibal may rob the church now; ease and lack of persecution may put us off our guard. Perhaps, there may come yet fiercer times for us. I know not what is meant by the battle of Armageddon, but sometimes I fear we are to expect trial and trouble in years to come; but certain I am, however fierce those troubles shall be, that God, who has gone before his church in olden times, will gather up the rear, and she who has been Ecclesia victrix—the church, the conqueror, will still be the same, and her rear shall constitute at last a part of the church triumphant, even as already glorified.

Can you now conceive the last great day when Jehovah, the rewarder shall gather up his people? The time is come; the last of the salt is about to be removed; the church of God is now about to be carried up to dwell with her husband. Do you see the church moving upwards towards heaven? Behind her she leaves a world in flames; she sees the earth destroyed, God removes it as a shepherd's tent; the inhabitants thereof are gone, and the tent must be folded up; as a vesture shall they be folded up, and they shall be changed. But between the church and a blazing world, between the church and the terrible destruction of hell, there is the bright pillar of God's presence—black to his enemies behind, but bright to his church in front. The close of the great dispensation of the Mediator shall be that the God of Israel shall be all in all, his church shall be completely safe; he shall have gathered up all things in one, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth. Then shall the sonnet of the poet be more than fulfilled to the rejoicing and perfected church.

"Daughter of Zion, awake from thy sadness,
Awake, for thy foes shall oppress thee no more;
Bright o'er thy hills dawns the day-star of gladness:
Arise, for the night of thy sorrow is o'er.
Strong were thy foes, but the arm that subdued them,
And scatter'd their legions, was mightier far;
They fled, like the chaff, from the scourge that pursued them,
Vain were their steeds, and their chariots of war.
Daughter of Zion, the power that hath saved thee

Extoll'd with the harp and the timbrel should be:
Shout, for the foe is destroy'd that enslaved thee,
The oppressor is vanquish'd, and Zion is free."

II. Let us turn to the second part of the sermon. We are now come to the last Sabbath of the year. Two troubles present themselves, the future and the past. We shall soon launch into another year, and hitherto we have found our years, years of trouble. We have had mercies, but still we find this house of our pilgrimage is not an abiding city, not a mansion of peace and comfort. Perhaps we are trembling to go forward. Foreseeing trouble, we know not how we shall be able to endure to the end. We are standing here and pausing for a while, sitting down upon the stone of our Ebenezer to rest ourselves, gazing dubiously into the future, saying, "Alas! what shall I do? Surely, I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy." Brother, arise, arise; anoint your head, and wash your face, and fast no longer; let this sweet morsel now cheer you; put this bottle to your lips, and let your eyes be enlightened: "The Lord Jehovah will go before you." He has gone before you already. Your future path has all been marked out in the great decrees of his predestination. You shall not tread a step which is not mapped out in the great chart of God's decree. Your troubles have been already weighed for you in the scales of his love; your labour is already set aside for you to accomplish by the hand of his wisdom. Depend upon it.

"Your times of trial and of grief,
Your times of joy and sweet relief,
All shall come and last and end
As shall please your heavenly Friend."

Remember, you are not a child of chance. If you were, you might indeed fear. You will go nowhere next year except where God shall send you. You shall be thrust into the hot coals of the fire, but God shall put you there. You shall perhaps be much depressed in spirit, but that heaviness shall be for your good, and shall come from your Father; you shall have the rod, but it shall not be the rod of the wicked—it shall be in God's hand. Oh! how comfortable the thought that everything is in the hand of God, and that all that may occur to me during the future years of my life is fore-ordained and overruled by the great Jehovah, who is my Father and my

friend! Now stop, Christian, a moment, and realize the idea that God has gone before, mapping the way; and then let me ask you if you could now this morning be allowed to draw a fresh map, would you do it? If he should condescend to say, "Now your circumstances next year shall be just what you like; you shall have your own way, and go your own route to heaven, would you dare, even with God's permission, to draw a new chart?" If you should have that presumption, I know the result: you would find that you had gone the wrong way; you would soon be glad enough to retrace your step, and with many tears you would go to your heavenly Father, and say, "My Father, I have had enough to do with the helm of this ship; it is hard work to hold it; do what thou wilt with it; steer which way thou pleasest, though it be through the deepest floods and the hottest flame. I am weary, I sleep at the tiller, I cannot guide the ship, my tears fall fast from my eyes, for when I think to be wise I find myself to have committed folly; when I thought I was promoting my own advantage in my scheme, I find I am rushing into a sea of losses." God, then, has gone before you in the decree of his predestination.

And recollect, God has gone before you in all your future journey in the actual preparations of his providence.

I do not think I am capable this morning, for my mind seems to wander far more than I could desire, of sketching how it is, but so it is, that God always makes a providence beforehand ready for his people when they get to the place. My God does not hastily erect a tent over me when I come to a certain spot. No; he builds an inn of mercy, and before I get there he provides a bed of comfort, and stores up the old wines of grace, that I may feast upon them. And all this is done long before I come to the actual necessity. None of us can tell how the future leans on the past, how a simple act of to-day shall bring about a grand event in a hundred years. We do not know how the future lies in the bowels of the past, and how what is to be is the child of that which is. As all men spring from their progenitors, so the providence of to-day springs from the providence of a hundred years past. The events of next year have been forestalled by God in what he has done this year and years before. I am certain of this, that on the road I am to travel during the next year, everything is ready for me. I am not going a road of hills and deep valleys, but I have heard the

voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." "And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." I say again, you are not going through a land that God has not prepared for you. O Israel, there is a well of Elim made for you long before you came out of Egypt, and there are palm trees that have been growing there that they might just come to the fruit-bearing state, and have fruit upon them, when you come there. O Israel, God is not going to extemporize a Canaan for you; it is ready made, it is even now flowing with milk and honey; the vines that are to bear you grapes of Eshcol are already there and coming to perfection. God has forestalled your trials and troubles for the next year. The Lord Jehovah has gone before you.

There is also another phase of this subject. Jehovah has gone before us in the incarnation of Christ. As to our future troubles for next year and the remnant of our days, Jesus Christ has borne them all before. As for temptation, he "has been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." As for trials and sorrows, he has felt all we can possibly feel, and infinitely more. As for our difficulties, Christ has trodden the road before. We may rest quite sure that we shall not go anywhere where Christ has not gone. The way of God's people in providence is the exact track of Christ himself. The footsteps of the flock are identical with the footsteps of the shepherd, so far as they follow the leading and guidings of God.

And there is this reflection also, that, inasmuch as Christ has gone before us, he has done something in that going before, for he has conquered every foe that lies in his way. Cheer up now thou faint-hearted warrior. Not only has Christ travelled the road, but he has slain thine enemies. Dost thou dread sin? he has nailed it to his cross. Dost thou dread death?

he has been the death of Death. Art thou afraid of hell? he has barred it against the advent of any of his children; they shall never see the gulf of perdition. Whatever foes may be before the Christian, they are all overcome. There are lions, but their teeth are broken; there are serpents, but their fangs are extracted; there rivers but they are bridged or fordable; there are flames, but we have upon us that matchless garment which renders us invulnerable to fire. The sword that has been forged against us is already blunted; the instruments of war which the enemy is preparing have already lost their point. God has taken away in the person of Christ all the power that anything can have to hurt us. Well then, the army may safely march on and you may go joyously along your journey, for all your enemies are conquered beforehand. What shall you do but march on to take the prey? They are beaten, they are vanquished; all you have to do is to divide the spoil. Your future life shall be only the dividing of the spoil. You shall, it is true, often dread combat; and you shall sometimes have to wield the spear, but your fight shall be with a vanquished foe. His head is broken; he may attempt to injure you, but his strength shall not be sufficient for his malicious design. Your victory shall be easy, and your treasure shall be beyond all count. Come boldly on then, for Jehovah shall go before you. This shall be our sweet song when we come to the river of death: Black are its streams, and there are terrors there of which I cannot dream. But shall I fear to go through the dark stream if Jehovah goes before me? There may be goblins of frightful shape, there may be horrors of a hellish hue, but thou, Jehovah, shalt clear the way, thou shalt bid each enemy begone, and each fiend shall flee at thy bidding. I may march safely on. So confident would I feel in this great vanguard, that shouldst thou bid me go through hell itself, I need not fear all the terrors of the place of doom; for if Jehovah went before, he would tread out even to the last spark the fire; he would quench even to the last flame that burning; and the child of God might march safely through the flame that had been quenched and the ashes that were extinguished. Let us therefore never be troubled about the future. It is all safe, for Jehovah has gone before.

Now I hear one say, "The future seldom troubles me, sir; it is the past—what I have done and what I have not done—the years that are gone—how I have sinned, and how I have not served my master as I ought. These

things grieve me, and sometimes my old sins start up in my recollection and accuse me; 'What! shalt THOU be saved?' say they, 'Remember us.' And they spring up in number like the sands of the sea. I cannot deny that I have committed all these sins, nor can I say that they are not the most guilty of iniquities. Oh! it is the rereward that is most unsafe. I dead most the sins of the past." O beloved, the God of Israel shall be your rereward. Notice the different titles. The first is "the Lord," or properly "Jehovah"—"Jehovah will go before you." That is the I am, full of omniscience and omnipotence. The second title is "God of Israel," that is to say, the God of the Covenant. We want the God of the Covenant behind, because it is not in the capacity of the I am, the omnipotent, that we require him to pardon sin, to accept our persons, to blot out the past, and to remove iniquity by the blood of Christ; it is as the God of the Covenant that he does that. He goes behind; here he finds that his child has left a black mark, and he takes that away; he finds here a heap of rubbish, a mass of broken good works, and here another load of evil, of filth, and he carefully removes all, so that in that track of his children there is not a spot or a blemish; and though they have trodden the road the most observant of their foes at the last great day shall not be able to find that they have done any mischief on the journey, or one wrong thing in all their march, for the God of Israel hath so swept the way that he has taken away their iniquities and cast their sins behind his back.

Now let me always think, that I have God behind me as well as before me. Let not the memories of the past, though they cause me grief, cause me despair. Let me never bemoan because of past trial or past bereavement; let me never be cast down on account of past sin; but let me look to Christ for the pardon of the past, and to God for the sanctification of my past troubles. Let me believe that he who has cleared the way before me, has removed all enemies from behind me, that I am and must he perpetually safe. And now, are there any here to-day whose hearts God hath touched, who desire to join this great army? Have I one here who has been enlisted in the black army of the devil, and has long been fighting his way against God and against right? I pray that he may be compelled this day to ground his arms, and surrender at discretion to God. Sinner, if the Lord inclines thine heart this day to yield up thyself to him, the past shall all be blotted out; God shall be thy rereward. As for thy innumerable sins, leave

them to Christ; he will make short work of them; by his blood he will slay them all; they shall not be mentioned against thee for ever. And as for the future, thou chief of sinners, if now thou enlistest into the army of Christ by faith, thou shalt find the future shall be strewn with the gold of God's grace, and the silver of his temporal mercies; thou shalt have enough and to spare, from this day forth even to the end, and at the last thou shalt be gathered in by the great arms of God, that constitute the rear guard of his heavenly army. Come ye chief of sinners, come away to Christ. He now invites you to come to him; he asks nothing of you as a preparation. Christ's regiment is made up of men that are in debt and are discontented: the rag-tag of the world Christ will take; the scum, the dross, the offal of the universe Christ loves; the sweepings of our dens of iniquity, the very leavings of the devil's mill Christ is willing to receive, the chief of sinners, those who have been ministers in guilt, abortions of iniquity. Come to him; lay hold of him by faith; look to him as he hangs upon the tree; believe in his merits, and then shalt this promise be yours with innumerable others that are rich beyond all estimation; and you shall rejoice that Jehovah is gone before you, and that the God of Israel shall be your rereward.

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Supposing Him to be the Gardener

"Supposing him to be the gardener."—John 20:15.

I was sitting about a fortnight ago in a very lovely garden, in the midst of all kinds of flowers which were blooming in delightful abundance all around. Screening myself from the heat of the sun under the overhanging boughs of an olive, I cast my eyes upon palms and bananas, roses and camellias, oranges and aloes, lavender and heliotrope. The garden was full of color and beauty, perfume and fruitfulness. Surely the gardener, Whoever he might be, who had framed, and fashioned, and kept in order that lovely spot, deserved great commendation. So I thought, and then it came to me to meditate upon the church of God as a garden, and to suppose the Lord Jesus to be the gardener, and then to think of what

would most assuredly happen if it were so. "Supposing him to be the gardener," my mind conceived of a paradise where all sweet things flourish and all evil things are rooted up. If an ordinary worker had produced such beauty as I then saw and enjoyed on earth, what bounty and glory must surely be brought forth "supposing him to be the gardener"! You know the "him" to whom we refer, the ever-blessed Son or God, whom Mary Magdalene in our text mistook for the gardener. We will for once follow a saint in her mistaken track; and yet we shall find ourselves going in a right way. She was mistaken when she fell into "supposing him to be the gardener"; but if we are under his Spirit's teaching we shall not make a mistake if now we indulge ourselves in a quiet meditation upon our ever-blessed Lord, "supposing him to be the gardener."

It is not an unnatural supposition, surely; for if we may truly sing
"We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,"

that enclosure needs a gardener. Are we not all the plants of his right hand planting? Do we not all need watering and tending by his constant and gracious care? He says, "I am the true vine: my Father is the husbandman," and that is one view of it; but we may also sing, "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine"—that is to say, he acted as gardener to it. Thus has Isaiah taught us to sing a song of the Well-beloved touching his vineyard. We read of our Lord just now under these terms—"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice." To what purpose does he dwell in the vineyards but that he may see how the vines flourish and care for all the plants? The image, I say, is so far from being unnatural that it is most pregnant with suggestions and full of useful teaching. We are not going against the harmonies of nature when we are "supposing him to be the gardener."

Neither is the figure unscriptural; for in one of his own parables our Lord makes himself to be the dresser of the vineyard. We read just now that parable so full of warning. When the "certain man" came in and saw the

fig tree that it brought forth no fruit, he said unto the dresser of his vineyard, "Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?" Who was it that intervened between that profitless tree and the axe but our great Intercessor and Interposer? He it is who continually comes forward with "Let it alone this year also till I shall dig about it and dung it." In this case he himself takes upon himself the character of the vine-dresser, and we are not wrong in "supposing him to be the gardener."

If we would be supported by a type, our Lord takes the name of "the Second Adam," and the first Adam was a gardener. Moses tells us that the Lord God placed the man in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. Man in his best estate was not to live in this world in a paradise of indolent luxury, but in a garden of recompensed toil. Behold, the church is Christ's Eden, watered by the river of life, and so fertilized that all manner of fruits are brought forth unto God; and he, our second Adam, walks in this spiritual Eden to dress it and to keep it; and so by a type we see that we are right in "supposing him to be the gardener." Thus also Solomon thought of him when he described the royal Bridegroom as going down with his spouse to the garden when the flowers appeared on the earth and the fig tree had put forth her green figs; he went out with his beloved for the reservation of the gardens, saying, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." Neither nature, nor Scripture, nor type, nor song forbids us to think of our adorable Lord Jesus as one that careth for the flowers and fruits of his church. We err not when we speak of him, "supposing him to be the gardener." And so I sat me still, and indulged the suggested line of thought, which I now repeat in your hearing, hoping that I may open many roads of meditation for your hearts also. I shall not attempt to think out such a subject thoroughly, but only to indicate in which direction you may look for a vein of precious ore.

I. "Supposing him to be the gardener," we have here **THE KEY TO MANY WONDERS** in the garden of his church.

The first wonder is that there should be a church at all in the world; that there should be a garden blooming in the midst of this sterile waste. Upon a hard and flinty rock the Lord has made the Eden of his church to

grow. How came it to be—here an oasis of life in a desert of death? how came faith in the midst of unbelief, and hope where all is servile fear, and love where hate abounds? "Ye are of God, little children, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Whence this being "of God" where all beside is fast shut up in the devil? How came there to be a people for God, separated, and sanctified, and consecrated, and ordained to bring forth fruit unto his name? Assuredly it could not have been so at all if the doing of it had been left to man. We understand its existence, "supposing him to be the gardener," but nothing else can account for it. He can cause the fir tree to flourish instead of the thorn, and the myrtle instead of the briar; but no one else can accomplish such a change. The garden in which I sat was made on the bare face of the rock, and almost all the earth of which its terraces were composed had been brought up there, from the shore below, by hard labor, and so upon the rock a soil had been created. It was not by its own nature that the garden was found in such a place; but by skill and labor it had been formed: even so the church of God has had to be constructed by the Lord Jesus, who is the author as well as the perfecter of his garden. Painfully, with wounded hands, has he built each terrace, and fashioned each bed, and planted each plant. All the flowers have had to be watered with his bloody sweat, and watched by his tearful eyes the nail-prints in his hands, and the wound in his side are the tokens of what it cost him to make a new Paradise. He has given his life for the life of every plant that is in the garden, and not one of them had been there on any other theory than "supposing him to be the gardener."

Besides, there is another wonder. How comes the church of God to flourish in such a clime? This present evil world is very uncongenial to the growth of grace, and the church is not able by herself alone to resist the evil influences which surround her. The church contains within itself elements which tend to its own disorder and destruction if left alone; even as the garden has present in its soil all the germs of a tangled thicket of weeds. The best church that ever Christ had on earth would within a few years apostatise from the truth if deserted by the Spirit of God. The world never helps the church; it is all in arms against it; there is nothing in the world's air or soil that can fertilise the church even to the least degree. How is it, then, that notwithstanding all this, the church is a fair garden unto God, and there are sweet spices grown in its beds, and lovely

flowers are gathered by the Divine hand from its borders? The continuance and prosperity of the church can only be accounted for by "supposing him to be the gardener." Almighty strength is put to the otherwise impossible work of sustaining a holy people among men; almighty wisdom exercises itself upon this otherwise insuperable difficulty. Hear ye the word of the Lord, and learn hence the reason for the growth of his church below. "I, the Lord, do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." That is the reason for the existence of a spiritual people still in the midst of a godless and perverse generation. This is the reason for an election of grace in the midst of surrounding vice, and worldliness, and unbelief. "Supposing him to be the gardener," I can see why there should be fruitfulness, and beauty, and sweetness even in the center of the wilderness of sin.

Another mystery is also cleared up by this supposition. The wonder is that ever you and I should have been placed among the plants of the Lord. Why are we allowed to grow in the garden of his grace? Why me, Lord? Why me? How is it that we have been kept there, and borne with in our barrenness, when he might long ago have said, "Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?" Who else would have borne with such waywardness as ours? Who could have manifested such infinite patience? Who could have tended us with such care, and when the care was so ill-rewarded who would have renewed it so long from day to day, and persisted in designs of boundless love? Who could have done more for his vineyard? who could or would have done so much? An mere man would have repented of his good intent, provoked by our ingratitude. None but God could have had patience with some of us! That we have not long ago been slipped off as fruitless branches of the vine; that we are left still upon the stem, in the hope that we may ultimately bring forth fruit, is a great marvel. I know not how it is that we have been spared, except upon this ground—"supposing him to be the gardener"—for Jesus is all gentleness and grace, so slow with his knife, so tardy with his axe, so hopeful if we do but show a bud or two, or, perchance, yield a little sour berry—so hopeful, I say, that these may be hopeful prognostics of something better by-and-by. Infinite patience! Immeasurable longsuffering! where are ye to be found save in the breast of the Well-beloved? Surely the hoe has spared many of us simply and only because

he who is meek and lowly in heart is the gardener.

Dear friends, there is one mercy with regard to this church which I have often had to thank God for, namely, that evils should have been shut out for so long a time. During the period in which we have been together as pastor and people, and that is now some twenty-nine years, we have enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity, going from strength to strength in the work of the Lord. Alas! we have seen many other churches that were quite as hopeful as our own rent with strife, brought low by declension, or overthrown by heresy. I hope we have not been apt to judge their faults severely; but we must be thankful for our own deliverance from the evils which have afflicted them. I do not know how it is that we have been kept together in love, helped to abound in labor, and enabled to be firm in the faith, unless it be that special grace has watched over us. We are full of faults; we have nothing to boast of; and yet no church has been more divinely favored: I wonder that the blessing should have lasted so long, and I cannot make it out except when I fall into "supposing him to be the gardener." I cannot trace our prosperity to the pastor, certainly; nor even to my beloved friends the elders and deacons, nor even to the best of you with your fervent love and holy zeal. I think it must be that Jesus has been the gardener, and he has shut the gate when I am afraid I have left it open; and he has driven out the wild boar of the wood just when he had entered to root up the weaker plants. He must have been about at nights to keep off the prowling thieves, and he must have been here, too, in the noontide heat to guard those of you who have prospered in worldly goods, from the glare of too bright a sun. Yes, he has been with us, blessed be his name! Hence all this peace, and unity, and enthusiasm. May we never grieve him so that he shall turn away from us; but rather let us entreat him, saying, "Abide with us. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, let this be one of the gardens in which thou dost deign to dwell until the day break and the shadows flea away." Thus our supposition is a key to many wonders.

II. Let your imaginations run along with mine while I say that "supposing him to be the gardener" should be A SPUR TO MANY DUTIES.

One of the duties of a Christian is joy. That is a blessed religion which

among its precepts commands men to be happy. When joy becomes a duty, who would wish to neglect it? Surely it must help every little plant to drink in the sunlight when it is whispered among the flowers that Jesus is the gardener. "Oh," you say, "I am such a little plant; I do not grow well; I do not put forth so much leafage, nor are there so many flowers on me as on many round about me!" It is quite right that you should think little of yourself: perhaps to droop your head is a part of your beauty: many flowers had not been half so lovely if they had not practiced the art of hanging their heads. But supposing him to be the gardener," then he is as much a gardener to you as he is to the most lordly palm in the whole domain. In the Mentone garden right before me grew the orange and the aloe, and others of the finer and more noticeable plants; but on a wall to my left grew common wallflowers and saxifrages, and tiny herbs such as we find on our own rocky places. Now, the gardener had cared for all of these, little as well as great; in fact, there were hundreds of specimens of the most insignificant growths all duly labelled and described. The smallest saxifrage could say, "He is my gardener just as surely as he is the gardener of the Gloire de Dijon or Mar,chal Neil." Oh feeble child of God, the Lord taketh care of you! Your heavenly Father feedeth ravens, and guides the flight of sparrows: should he not much more care for you, oh ye of little faith? Oh little plants, you will grow rightly enough. Perhaps you are growing downward just now rather than upward. Remember that there are plants of which we value the underground root much more than we do the hull above ground. Perhaps it is not yours to grow very fast; you may be a slow-growing shrub by nature, and you would not be healthy if you were to run to wood. Anyhow, be this your joy, you are in the garden of the Lord, and, "supposing him to be the gardener," he will make the best of you. You cannot be in better hands.

Another duty is that of valuing the Lord's presence, and praying for it. We ought whenever the Sabbath morning dawns to pray our Well-beloved to come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits. What can we do without him? All day long our cry should go up to him, "O Lord, behold and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand has planted." We ought to agonize with him that he would come and manifest himself to us as he does not unto the world. For what is a garden if the gardener never comes near it? What is the difference between it and the wilderness if he to

whom it belongs never lifts up spade or pruning-hook upon it? So that it is our necessity that we have Christ with us, "supposing him to be the gardener;" and it is our bliss that we have Christ walking between our beds and borders, watching every plant, training, tending, maturing all. "Supposing him to be the gardener," it is well, for from him is our fruit found. Divided from him we are nothing; only as he watches over us can we bring forth fruit. Let us have done with confidence in man, let us forego all attempts to supply facts of his spiritual presence by routine or rant, ritualism or rowdyism; but let us pray our Lord to be ever present with us, and by that presence to make our garden grow.

"Supposing him to be the gardener," there is another duty, and that is, let each one of us yield himself up entirely to him. A plant does not know how it ought to be treated; it knows not when it should be watered or when it should be kept dry: a fruit-tree is no judge of when it needs to be pruned, or digged, or dunged. The wit and wisdom of the garden lieth not in the flowers and shrubs, but in the gardener. Now, then, if you and I are here to-day with any self-will and carnal judgment about us, let us seek to lay it all aside that we may be absolutely at our Lord's disposal. You might not be willing to put yourself implicitly into the hand of any mere man (pity that you should); but, surely, thou plant of the Lord's right-hand planting, thou mayest put thyself without a question into his dear hand. "Supposing him to be the gardener," thou mayest well say, "I would neither have will, nor wish, nor wit, nor whim, nor way, but I would be as nothing in the gardener's hands, that he may be to me my wisdom and my all. Here, kind gardener, thy poor plant bows itself to thy hand; train me as thou wilt. Depend upon it, happiness lives next door to the spirit of complete acquiescence in the will of God, and it will be easy to exercise that perfect acquiescence when we suppose the Lord Jesus to be the gardener. If the Lord hath done it; what has a saint to say? Oh thou afflicted one, the Lord hath done it: wouldest thou have it otherwise? Nay, art thou not thankful that it is even so, because so is the will of him in whose hand thy life is, and whose are all thy ways? The duty of submission is very plain, "supposing him to be the gardener."

One more duty I would mention, though others suggest themselves. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then let us bring forth fruit to him. I

do not address a people this morning who feel no care as to whether they serve God or not. I believe that most of you do desire to glorify God; for being saved by grace, you feel a holy ambition to show forth his praises who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. You wish to bring others to Christ, because you yourselves have been brought to life and liberty in him. Now, let this be a stimulus to your fruitbearing, that Jesus is the gardener. Where you have brought forth a single cluster, bring, forth a hundred! "supposing him to be the gardener." If he is to have the honor of it, then labor to do that which will give him great renown. If our spiritual state were to be attributed to ourselves, or to our minister, or to some of our fellow Christians, we might not feel that we were tinder a great necessity to be fruitful; but if Jesus be the gardener, and is to bear the blame or the honor of what we produce, then let us use up every drop of sap and strain every fibre, that, to the utmost of which our manhood is capable, we may produce a fair reward for our Lord's travail. Under such tutorship and care we ought to become eminent scholars. Doth Christ train us? Oh let us never cause the world to think meanly of our Master. Students feel that their alma mater deserves great things of them, so they labor to make their university renowned. And so, since Jesus is tutor and university to us, let us feel that we are bound to reflect credit upon so great a teacher, upon so divine a name. I do not know how to put it, but surely we ought to do something worthy of such a Lord. Each little flower in the garden of the Lord should wear its, brightest hues, and pour forth its rarest perfume, because Jesus cares for it. The best of all possible good should be yielded by every plant in our Father's garden, supposing Jesus to be the gardener.

Thus much, then, on those two points—a key to many wonders, and a spur to many duties.

III. Thirdly, I have found in this supposition A RELIEF FROM CRUSHING RESPONSIBILITY. One has a work given him of God to do, and if he does it rightly he cannot do it carelessly. The first thing when he wakes he asks, "How is the work prospering?" and the last thought at night is, "What can I do to fulfill my calling?" Sometimes the anxiety even troubles his dreams, and he sighs, "O Lord, send now prosperity!" How is the garden prospering which we are set to tend? Are we broken-hearted

because, nothing appears to flourish? Is it a bad season? or is the soil lean and hungry? It is a very blessed relief to an excess of care if we can fall into the habit of "supposing him to be the gardener." If Jesus be the Master and Lord in all things it is not mine to keep all the church in order. I am not responsible for the growth of every Christian, nor for every backslider's errors, nor for every professor's faults of life. This burden must not lie on me so that I shall be crushed thereby. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then, the church enjoys a better oversight than mine; better care is taken of the garden than could be taken by the most vigilant watchers, even though by night the frost devoured them, and by day the heat. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then all must go well in the long run. He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep; we need not fret and despond. I beg you earnest workers, who are becoming depressed, to think this out a little. You see it is yours to work under the Lord Jesus; but it is not yours to take the anxiety of his office into your souls as though you were to bear his burdens. The under-gardener, the work-man in the garden, needs not fret about the whole garden as though it were all left to him. No, no; let him not take too much upon himself. I pray you, bound your anxiety by the facts of the case. So you have a number of young people around you, and you are watching for their souls as they that must give account. This is well; but do not be worried and wearied; for, after all, the saving and the keeping of those souls is not in your hands, but it rests with One far more able than yourself. Just think that the Lord is the gardener. I know it is so in matters of providence. A certain man of God in troublous times became quite unable to do his duty because he laid to heart so much the ills of the age; he became depressed and disturbed, and he went on board a vessel, wanting to leave the country, which was getting into such a state that he could no longer endure it. Then one said to him, Mr. Whitelock, are you the manager of the world? No, he was not quite that. "Did not God get on pretty well with it before you were born, and don't you think he will do very well with it when you are dead?" That reflection helped to relieve the good man's mind, and he went back to do his duty. I want you thus to perceive the limit of your responsibility: you are not the gardener himself; you are only one of the gardener's boys, set to run on errands, or to do a bit of digging, or to sweep the paths. The garden is well enough managed even though you are not head manager in it.

While this relieves us of anxiety it makes labor for Christ very sweet, because if the garden does not seem to repay us for our trouble we say to ourselves, "It is not, my garden after all. 'Supposing him to be the gardener,' I am quite willing to work on a barren piece of rock, or tie up an old withered bough, or dig a worthless sod; for, if it only pleases Jesus, the work is for that one sole reason profitable to the last degree. It is not mine to question the wisdom of my task, but to set about it in the name of my Master and Lord. 'Supposing him to be the gardener,' lifts the ponderous responsibility of it from me, and my work becomes pleasant and delightful."

In dealing with the souls of men, we meet with cases which are extremely difficult. Some persons are so timid and fearful that you do not know how to comfort them; others are so fast and presumptuous that you hardly know how to help them. A few are so double-faced that you cannot understand them, and others so fickle that you cannot hold them. Some flowers puzzle the ordinary gardener: we meet with plants which are covered with prickles, and when you try to train them they wound the hand that would help them. These strange growths would make a great muddle for you if you were the gardener; but "supposing him to be the gardener," you have the happiness of being able to go to him constantly, saying, "Good Lord, I do not understand this singular creature; it is as odd a plant as I am myself. Oh, that thou wouldest manage it, or tell me how. I have come to tell thee of it."

Constantly our trouble is that we have so many plants to look after that we have not time to cultivate any one in the best manner, because we have fifty more all wanting attention at the time; and then before we have done with the watering-pot we have to fetch the hoe and the rake and the spade, and we are puzzled with these multitudinous cares, even as Paul was when he said, "That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Ah, then, it is a blessed thing to do the little we can do and leave the rest to Jesus, "supposing him to be the gardener."

In the church of God there is a discipline which we cannot exercise. I do not think it is half so hard to exercise discipline as it is not to be able to

exercise it when yet you feel that it ought to be done. The servants of the householder were perplexed when they might not root up the tares. "Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?" "An enemy hath done this." "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" "Not so," said he, "lest ye root, up the wheat with them." This afflicts the Christian minister when he must not remove a pestilent, hindering weed. Yes, but "supposing him to be the gardener," and it is his will to let that weed remain, what have you and I to do but to hold our peace? He has a discipline more sure and safe than ours, and in due time the tares shall know it. In patience let us possess our souls.

And then, again, there is that succession in the garden which we can not keep up. Plants will die down, and others must be put into their places or the garden will grow bare, but we know not where to find these fresh flowers. We say, "When yonder good man dies who will succeed him?" That is a question I have heard many a time, till I am rather weary of it. Who is to follow such a man? Let us wait till he is gone and needs following. Why sell the man's coat when he can wear it himself? We are apt to think when this race of good brethren shalt die of it that none will arise worthy to unloose the latchets of their shoes. Well, friend, I could suppose a great many things, but this morning my text is, "Supposing him to be the gardener," and on that supposition I expect that the Lord has other plants in reserve which you have not yet, seen, and these wilt exactly fit into our places when they become empty, and the Lord will keep up the true apostolical succession till the day of his second advent. In every time of darkness and dismay, when the heart sinks and the spirits decline, and we think it is all over with the church of God, let us fall back on this, "Supposing him to be the gardener," and expect to see greater and better things than these. We are at the end of our wits, but he is not at the beginning of his yet: we are nonplussed, but he never will be; therefore let us wait and be tranquil, "supposing him to be the gardener."

IV. Fourthly, I want you to notice that this supposition will give you A DELIVERANCE FROM MANY GLOOMY FEARS. I walked down the garden, and I saw a place where all the path was strewn with leaves and broken branches, and stones, and I saw the earth upon the flower-beds, tossed about, and roots lying quite out of the ground: all was in disorder.

Had a dog been amusing himself? or had a mischievous child been at work? If so, it was a great pity. But no: in a minute or two I saw the gardener come back, and I perceived that he had been making all this disarrangement. He had been cutting, and digging, and hacking, and mess-making; and all for the good of the garden. It may be it has happened to some of you that you have been a good deal clipped lately, and in your domestic affairs things have not been in so fair a state as you could have wished: it may be in the Church we have seen ill weeds plucked up, and barren branches lopped, so that everything is en deshabelle. Well, if the Lord has done it out, gloomy fears are idle. "Supposing him to be the gardener," all is well.

As I was talking this over with my friend, I said to him—"Supposing him to be the gardener," then the serpent will have a bad time of it. Supposing Adam to be the gardener, then the serpent gets in and has a chat with his wife, and mischief comes of it; but supposing Jesus to be the gardener, woe to thee, serpent: there is a blow for thy head within half a minute if thou dost but show thyself within the boundary. So, if we are afraid that the devil should get in among us let us always in prayer entreat that there may be no space for the devil, because the Lord Jesus Christ fills all, and keeps out the adversary. Other creatures besides serpents intrude into gardens; caterpillars and palmerworms, and all sorts of destroying creatures are apt to devour our churches. How can we keep them out? The highest wall cannot exclude them: there is no protection except one, and that is, "supposing him to be the gardener." Thus it is written, "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

I am sometimes troubled by the question, What if roots of bitterness should spring up among us to trouble us? We are all such fallible creatures, supposing some brother should permit the seed of discord to grow in his bosom, then there may be a sister in whose heart the seeds will also spring up, and from her they will fly to another sister, and be blown about till brethren and sisters are all bearing rue and wormwood in their hearts. Who is to prevent this? Only the Lord, Jesus by his Spirit. He can keep out this evil, "supposing him to be the gardener." The root

which beareth wormwood will grow but little where Jesus is. Dwell with us, Lord, as a church and people: by thy Holy Spirit reside with us and in us, and never depart from us, and then no root of bitterness shall spring up to trouble us.

Then comes another fear. Suppose the living waters of God's Spirit should not come to water the garden, what then? We cannot, make them flow, for the Spirit is a sovereign, and he flows where he pleases. Ah, but the Spirit of God will he in our garden, "supposing our Lord to be the gardener." There is no fear of our not being watered when Jesus undertakes to do it. "He will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." But what if the sunlight of his love should not shine on the garden? If the fruits should never ripen, if there should be no peace, no joy in the Lord? That cannot happen "supposing him to be the gardener;" for his face is the sun, and his countenance scatters those health-giving beams, and nurturing warmths, and perfecting influences which are needful for maturing the saints in all the sweetness of grace to the glory of God. So, "supposing him to be the gardener" at this the close of the year, I fling away my doubts and fears, and invite you who bear the church upon your heart to do the same. It is all well with Christ's cause because it is in his own hands. He shall not fail nor be discouraged. The pleasure of the, Lord shall prosper in his hands.

V. Fifthly, here is A WARNING FOR THE CARELESS, "supposing him to be the gardener." In this great congregation many are to the church what weeds are to a garden. They are not planted by God; they are not growing under his nurture, they are bringing forth no fruit to his glory. My dear friend, I have tried often to get at you, to impress you, but I cannot. Take heed; for one of these days, "supposing him to be the gardener," he will reach you, and you shall know what that word meaneth, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath, not planted shall be rooted up." Take heed to yourselves, I pray.

Others among us are like the branches of the vine which bear no fruit. We have often spoken very sharply to these, speaking honest truth in unmistakable language, and yet we have not touched their consciences. Ah, but "supposing him to be the gardener," he will fulfill that sentence:

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." He will get at you, if we cannot. Would God, ere this old year were quite dead, you would turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart; so that instead of being a weed you might become a choice flower; that instead of a dry stick, you might be a sappy, fruit-bearing, branch of the vine. The Lord make it to be so; but if any here need the caution, I pray them to take it to heart at once. "Supposing him to be the gardener," there will be no escaping from his eye; there will be no deliverance from his hand. As "he will thoroughly purge his floor, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," so he will thoroughly cleanse his garden and cast out every worthless thing.

VI. Another set of thoughts may well arise as A QUIETUS TO THOSE WHO COMPLAIN, "Supposing him to be the gardener." Certain of us have been made to suffer much physical pain, which often bites into the spirits, and makes the heart to stoop: others have suffered heavy temporal losses, having had no success in business, but, on the contrary, having had to endure privation, perhaps even to penury. Are you ready to complain against the Lord for all this? I pray you, do not so. Take the supposition of the text into your mind this morning. The Lord has been pruning you sharply, cutting off your best boughs, and you seem to be like a thing despised that is constantly tormented with the knife. Yes, but "supposing him to be the gardener," suppose that your loving Lord has wrought it all, that from his own hand all your grief has come, every cut, and every gash, and every slip: does not this alter the case? Hath not the Lord done it? Well, then, if it be so, put your finger to your lip and be quiet, until you are able from your heart to say, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." I am persuaded that the Lord hath done nothing amiss to any one of his people; that no child of his can rightly complain that he has been whipped with too much severity; and that no one branch of the vine can truthfully declare that it has been pruned with too sharp an edge. No; what the Lord has done is the best that could have been done, the very thing that you and I, if we could have possessed infinite wisdom and love, would have wished to have done; therefore let us stop each thought of murmuring, and say, "The Lord hath done it," and be glad.

Especially I speak to those who have suffered bereavement. I can hardly express to you how strange I feel at this moment when my sermon revives a memory so sweet dashed with such exceeding bitterness. I sat with my friend and secretary in that garden some fifteen days ago, and we were then in perfect health, rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord. We returned home, and within five days I was smitten with disabling pain; and worse, far worse than that, he was called upon to lose his wife. We said to one another as we sat there reading the word of God and meditating, "How happy we are! Dare we think of being so happy? Must it not speedily end?" I little thought I should have to say for him, "Alas, my brother, thou art brought very low, for the delight of thine eyes is taken from thee." But here is our comfort: the Lord hath done it. The best rose in the garden is gone. Who has taken it? The gardener came this way and gathered it. He planted it and watched over it, and now he has taken it. Is not this most natural? Does anybody weep because of that? No; everybody knows that it is right, and according to the order of nature that he should come and gather the best in the garden. If you are sore troubled by the loss of your beloved, yet dry your grief by supposing him to be the gardener." Kiss the hand that has wrought you such grief? Brethren beloved, remember the next time the Lord comes to your part of the garden, and he may do so within the next week, he will only gather his own flowers, and would you prevent his doing so even if you could?

VII. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then there is AN OUTLOOK FOR THE HOPEFUL. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then I expect to see in the garden where he works the best possible prosperity: I expect to see no flower dried up, no tree without fruit: I expect to see the richest, rarest fruit, with the daintiest bloom upon it, daily presented to the great Owner of the garden. Let us expect that in this church, and pray for it. oh, if we have but faith we shall see great things. It is our unbelief that straitens God. Let us believe great things from the work of Christ by his Spirit in the midst of his people's hearts, and we shall not be disappointed.

"Supposing him to be the gardener," then, dear friends, we may expect divine intercourse of unspeakable preciousness. Go back to Eden for a minute. When Adam was the gardener, what happened? The Lord God

walked in the garden in the cool of the day. But "supposing him to be the gardener," then we shall have the Lord God dwelling among us, and revealing himself in all the glory of his power, and the plenitude of his Fatherly heart; making us to know him, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. What joy is this!

One other thought. "Supposing him to be the gardener," and God to come and walk among the trees of the garden, then I expect he will remove the whole of the garden upward with himself to fairer skies; for he rose, and his people must rise with him. I expect a blessed transplantation of all these flowers below to a clearer atmosphere above, away from all this smoke and fog and damp, up where the sun is never clouded, where flowers never wither, where fruits never decay. Oh, the glory we shall then enjoy up yonder, on the hills of spices in the garden of God. "Supposing him to be the gardener" what a garden will he form above, and how shall you and I grow therein, developing beyond imagination." It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Since he is the author and finisher of our faith, to what perfection will he conduct us, and to what glory will he bring us! Oh, to be found in him! God grant we may be! To be plants in his garden, "Supposing him to be the gardener," is all the heaven we can desire. Amen.

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A Sermon for the Time Present

"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden."—Zephaniah 3:16-18.

Holy Scripture is wonderfully full and abiding in its inner sense. It is a springing well, wherewith you may draw, and draw again; for as you draw, it springs up for ever new and fresh. It is a well of water springing up everlastingly. The fulfillment of a divine promise is not the exhaustion of it. When a man gives you a promise, and he keeps it, there is an end of the promise; but it is not so with God. When he keeps his word to the full, he has but begun: he is prepared to keep it, and keep it, and keep it for ever and ever. What would you say of a man who had wheat upon his barn floor, and threshed it until he had beaten out the last golden grain; but the next day he went and threshed again, and brought back as much as the day before; and on the day after, again taking his flail, he went to the same threshing, and again brought back his measure as full as at the first, and so on for all the days of the year? Would it not seem to you as a fairy tale? It would certainly be a surprising miracle. But what should we say if, throughout a long life, this miracle could be prolonged? Yet we have continued to thresh the promises ever since faith was given us, and we have carried away our full portion every day. What shall we say of the glorious fact that the saints in all generations, from the first day until now, have done the same; and of that equal truth, that as long as there is a needy soul upon earth, there will be upon the threshing floor of the promises the same abundance of the finest of the wheat as when the first man filled his measure and returned rejoicing? I will not dwell upon the specific application of the text before us: I do not doubt that it was specially fulfilled as it was intended; and if there still remains some special piece of history to which this passage alludes, it will again be fulfilled in due time; but this I know, that those who have lived between whiles have found this promise true to them. Children of God have used

these promises under all sorts of circumstances, and have derived the utmost comfort from them; and this morning I feel as if the text had been newly written for the present occasion, for it is in every syllable most suitable to the immediate crisis. If the Lord had fixed his eye upon the condition of his church just now, and had written this passage only for this year of grace 1887, it could scarcely have been more adapted to the occasion. Our business shall be to show this; but I would aim at much more. Let our prayer be that we, may enjoy this marvellous portion of the sacred word, and take intense delight in it. As God rests in his love, so may we rest in it this morning; and as he joys over us with singing, so may we break forth into joyous psalms to the God of our salvation.

I am going to begin with the last verse of the text, and work my way upwards. The first; head is, a trying day for God's people. They are sorrowful because a cloud is upon their solemn assembly, and the reproach thereof is a burden. Secondly, we will note a glorious ground of consolation. We read in the seventeenth verse, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." And, thirdly, here is a brave conduct suggested thereby: "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack."

I. Beginning at the eighteenth verse, we notice A TRYING DAY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE. The solemn assembly had fallen under reproach. The solemn assemblies of Israel were her glory: her great days of festival and sacrifice were the gladness of the land. To the faithful their holy days were their holidays. But a reproach had fallen upon the solemn assembly, and I believe it is so now at this present moment. It is a, sad affliction when in our solemn assemblies the brilliance of the gospel light is dimmed by error. The clearness of the testimony is spoiled when doubtful voices are scattered among the people, and those who ought to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, are telling out for doctrines the imaginations of men, and the inventions of the age. Instead of revelation, we have philosophy, falsely so-called; instead of divine infallibility, we have surmises and larger hopes. The gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is taught as the production of progress, a growth, a thing to be amended and corrected

year by year. It is an ill day, both for the church and the world, when the trumpet does not give a certain sound; for who shall prepare himself for the battle?

If added to this we should see creeping over the solemn assembly of the church a lifelessness, an indifference, and a lack of spiritual power, it is painful to a high degree. When the vitality of religion is despised, and gatherings for prayer are neglected, what are we coming to? The present period of church history is well portrayed by the church of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot, and therefore to be spewed out of Christ's mouth. That church gloried that she was rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, while all the while her Lord was outside, knocking at the door, a door closed against him. That passage is constantly applied to the unconverted, with whom it has nothing to do: it has to do with a lukewarm church, with a church that thought itself to be in an eminently prosperous condition, while her living Lord, in the doctrine of his atoning sacrifice, was denied an entrance. Oh, if he had found admission—and he was eager to find it—she would soon have flung away her imaginary wealth, and he would have given her gold tried in the furnace, and white raiment with which she might be clothed. Alas! she is content without her Lord, for she has education, oratory, science, and a thousand other baubles. Zion's solemn assembly is under a cloud indeed, when the teaching of Jesus and his apostles is of small account with her.

If in addition to this, worldly conformity spreads in the church, so that the vain amusements of the world are shared in by the saints, then is there reason enough for lamentation, even as Jeremiah cried: "How is the gold become dim!" Her Nazarites, who were purer than snow and whiter than milk, have become blacker than a coal. "All our enemies have opened their mouths against us." If no longer there is a clear distinction between the church and the world, but professed followers of Jesus have joined hands with unbelievers, then may we mourn indeed! Woe worth the day! An ill time has happened to the church and to the world also. We may expect great judgments, for the Lord will surely be avenged on such a people as this. Know ye not of old that when the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they were joined unto them, then the flood came and swept them all away? I need not pursue this

subject further, lest our burdens take from us the time which is demanded for consolation.

It appears from the text that there were some to whom the reproach was a burden. They could not make sport of sin. True, there were many who said that the evil did not exist at all, and others who declared that it was not present in any great degree. Yes, and more hardened spirits declared that what was considered to be a reproach was really a thing to be boasted of, the very glory of the century. Thus they huffed the matter, and made the mourning of the conscientious to be a theme for jest. But there was a remnant to whom the reproach of it was a burden; these could not bear to see such a calamity. To these the Lord God will have respect, as he said by the prophet:—"Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." The many drank wine in bowls and anointed themselves with their chief ointments, but they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph (Amos 6:6); but these were pressed in spirit and bore the cross, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. God's people cannot bear that Christ's atoning sacrifice should be dishonored; they cannot endure that his truth should be trodden as mire in the streets. To true believers prosperity means the Holy Ghost blessing the word to the conversion of sinners and the building up of saints; and if they do not see this, they hang their harps upon the willows. True lovers of Jesus fast when the Bridegroom is not with his church: their glow is in his glory, and in nothing else. The wife of Phinehas, the son of Eli, cried out in her dying agony, "The glory has departed," and the reason that she gave was once because of the death of her husband and his father, but twice because "the ark of God is taken." For this she named her new-born child Ichabod—. "The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken." The bitterest pain of this godly woman was for the church, and for the honor of our God. So it is with God's true people: they lay it much to heart that the truth is rejected.

This burdened spirit, is a token of true love to God: those who love the Lord Jesus are wounded in his woundings, and vexed with the vexings of his Spirit. When Christ is dishonored his disciples are dishonored. Those

who have a tender heart towards the church can say with Paul, "Who is offended, and I burn not?" The sins of the church of God are the sorrows of all living members of it. This also marks a healthy sensibility, a vital spirituality. Those who are unspiritual care nothing for truth or grace: they look to finances, and numbers, and respectability. Utterly carnal men care for none of these things; and so long as the political aims of Dissenters are progressing, and there is an advance in social position, it is enough for them. But men whose spirits are of God would sooner see the faithful persecuted than see them desert the truth, sooner see churches in the depths of poverty full of holy zeal than rich churches dead in worldliness. Spiritual men care for the church even when she is in an evil case, and cast down by her adversaries: "thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof." The house of the Lord is to many of us our own house, his family is our family. Unless the Lord Jesus be extolled, and his gospel conquer, we feel that our own personal interests are blighted, and we ourselves are in disgrace. It is no small thing to us: it is our life.

Thus have I dwelt upon the fact that it is an ill day for God's people when the solemn assembly is defiled: the reproach thereof is a burden to those who are truly citizens of the New Jerusalem, and because of this they are seen to be sorrowful. The Lord here says, "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly." They may well be sorrowful when such a burden is laid on their hearts. Moreover, they see in a hundred ways the ill effect of the evil which they deplore. Many are lame and halting; this is hinted at in the promise of the nineteenth verse: "I will save her that halteth." Pilgrims on the road to Zion were made to limp on the road because the prophets were "light and treacherous persons." When the pure gospel is not preached, God's people are robbed of the strength which they need in their life-journey. If you take away the bread, the children hunger. If you give the flock poisonous pastures, or fields which are barren as the desert, they pine and they become lame in their daily following of the shepherd. The doctrinal soon affects the practical. I know many of the people of God living in different parts of this country to whom the Sabbath is very little of a day of rest, for they hear no truth in which rest is to be found, but they are worried and wearied with novelties which neither glorify God nor benefit the souls of men. In many a place

the sheep look up and are not fed. This causes much disquietude and breeds doubts and questionings, and thus strength is turned to weakness, and the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope are all kept in a halting state. This is a grievous evil, and it is all around us. Then, alas! many are "driven out," of whom the nineteenth verse says, "I will gather her that was driven out." By false doctrine many are made to wander from the fold. Hopeful ones are made to stray from the path of life, and sinners are left in their natural distance from God. The truth which would convince men of sin is not preached, while other truths which would lead seekers into peace are beclouded, and souls are left in needless sorrow. When the doctrines of grace and the glorious atoning sacrifice are not set clearly before men's minds, so that they may feel their power, all sorts of evils follow. It is terrible to me that this dreadful blight should come upon our churches; for the hesitating are driven to destruction, the weak are staggered, and even the strong are perplexed. The false teachers of these days would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. This makes our hearts very sorrowful. How can we help it?

Yet, beloved, all the time that the people of God are in this evil case, they are not without hope; for close upon all this comes the promise of the Lord to restore his wandering ones. We have the sense twice over: "I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame." "I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord. "The adversaries cannot silence the eternal testimony. They hanged our Lord himself upon a tree; they took down his body and buried it in a tomb in the rock; and they set their seal upon the stone which they rolled at the mouth of the sepulcher. Surely now there was an end of the Christ and his cause. Boast not, ye priests and Pharisees! Vain the watch, the stone, the seal! When the appointed time had come, the living Christ came forth. He could not be holden by the cords of death. How idle their dreams! "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord doth have them in derision." Beloved, the reproach will yet be rolled away from the solemn assembly: the truth of God will yet again be proclaimed as with trumpet tongue, the Spirit of God will revive his church, and converts as many as the sheaves of the harvest shall yet be gathered in. How will the faithful rejoice! Those who were burdened and sorrowful shall then put

on their garments of joy and beauty. Then shall the ransomed of the Lord return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The conflict is not doubtful. The end of the battle is sure and certain. Methinks I even now hear the shout, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

II. Secondly, let us think of something which shines like a star amid the darkness. The second verse of the text presents A GLORIOUS GROUND OF CONSOLATION. Here is a rich text indeed. This passage is like a great sea, while I am as a little child making pools in the sand which skirts its boundless flood. A series of discourses might well be founded on this one verse: I mean the seventeenth.

Our great consolation in the worst times lies in our God. The very name of our covenant God—"the Lord thy God"—is full of good cheer. That word, "the Lord," is really JEHOVAH, the self-existent One, the unchangeable One, the ever-living God, who cannot change or be moved from his everlasting purpose. Children of God, whatever you have not got, you have a God in whom you may greatly glory. Having God you have more than all things, for all things come of him; and if all things were blotted out, he could restore all things simply by his will. He speaketh, and it is done; he commandeth, and it stands fast. Blessed is the man that hath the God of Jacob for his trust, and whose hope Jehovah is. In the Lord Jehovah we have righteousness and strength; let us trust in him for ever. Let the times roll on, they cannot affect our God. Let troubles rush upon us like a tempest, but they shall not come nigh unto us now that he is our defense. Jehovah, the God of his church, is also the God of each individual member of it, and each one may therefore rejoice in him. Jehovah is as much your God, my brother, as if no other person in the universe could use that covenant expression. O believer, the Lord God is altogether and wholly your God! All his wisdom, all his foresight, all his power, all his immutability—all himself is yours. As for the church of God, when she is in her lowest estate she is still established and endowed in the best possible sense—established by the divine decree, and endowed by the possession of God all-sufficient. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Let us exult in our possession. Poor as we are, we are infinitely rich in having God; weak as we are, there is no limit to our strength, since the Almighty Jehovah is ours. "If God be for us, who can

be against us?" If God be ours, what more can we need? Lift up thy heart, thou sorrowful one, and be of good cheer. If God be thy God, thou hast all thou canst desire: wrapped up within his glorious name we find all things for time and eternity, for earth and heaven. Therefore in the name of Jehovah we will set up our banners, and march onward to the battle. He is our God by his own purpose, covenant, and oath; and this day he is our God by our own choice of him, by our union with Christ Jesus, by our experience of his goodness, and by that spirit of adoption whereby we cry "Abba, Father."

To strengthen this consolation, we notice next, that this God is in the midst of us. He is not a long way off, to be sought with difficulty, if haply we may find him. The Lord is a God nigh at hand, and ready to deliver his people. Is it not delightful to think that we cry not to God across the ocean, for he is here? We look not up to him from afar, as though he dwelt beyond the stars, neither do we think of him as hidden in the fathomless abyss; but the Lord is very near. Our God is "Jehovah in the midst of thee." Since that bright night in which a babe was born at Bethlehem, and unto us a Son was given, we know God as "Emmanuel, God with us." God is in our nature, and therefore very near unto us. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Though his bodily presence is gone, yet we have his spiritual presence with us evermore; for he saith, "Lo, I am with you alway." He walketh among the golden candlesticks. We have also the immediate presence of God the Holy Spirit. He is in the midst of the church to enlighten, convince, quicken, endow, comfort, and clothe with spiritual power. The Lord still works in the minds of men for the accomplishment of his purposes of grace. Let us think of this when we are going forth to Christian service: "The Lord of hosts is with us." When you call your class together in the Sabbath school, say to your Lord, "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." Ah, friends! if we have God with us, we can bear to be deserted by men. What a word that is, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them!" Shall not the army shout when the King himself is in their ranks! Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered! When he is with us they that hate him must flee before him. Be it our concern so to live that we may never grieve away the Spirit of God. Beloved, there is such abundant consolation in the fact of the presence of God with us, that if we

could only feel the power of it at this moment, we should enter into rest, and our heaven would begin below.

Let us go a step further, and note that our consolation is largely to be found in the fact that this God in the midst of us is full of power to save. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save." That is to say, "Jehovah, thy God, is mighty to save." His arm is not shortened, he is still "a just God and a Savior." Nor is he merely able to save, but he will display that ability; "he will save." Come, my brother, we see around us this and that to discourage us; let us, like David, encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. We may very well forget all difficulties, since the God who is in the midst of us is mighty to save. Let us pray, then, that he will save; that he will save his own church from lukewarmness and from deadly error; that he will save her from her worldliness and formalism; save her from unconverted ministers and ungodly members. Let us lift up our eyes and behold the power which is ready to save; and let us go on to pray that the Lord may save the unconverted by thousands and millions. Oh, that we might see a great revival of religion! This is what we want before all things. This would smite the enemy upon the cheek-bone, and break the teeth of the adversary. If tens of thousands of souls were immediately saved by the sovereign grace of God, what a rebuke it would be to those who deny the faith! Oh, for times such as our fathers saw when first Whitefield and his helpers began to preach the life-giving word! When one sweet voice was heard clear and loud, all the birds of paradise began to sing in concert with him, and the morning of a glorious day was heralded. Oh, if that were to happen again, I should feel like Simeon when he embraced the heavenly babe! Then would the virgin daughter of Zion shake her head at the foe, and laugh him to scorn. It may happen; yea, if we are importunate in prayer it must happen: "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." Let us not seek power of rhetoric, much less of wealth; but let us look for the power which saves. This is the one thing I crave. Oh, that God would save souls! I say to myself, after being badgered and worried through the week by the men of modern thought: "I will go my way and preach Christ's gospel, and win souls." One lifting up of Jesus Christ crucified is more to me than all the cavillings of the men who are wise above what is written. Converts are our unanswerable arguments. "Happy is the man," saith the Psalm,

"that hath his quiver full of them: they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." Blessed is the man who has many spiritual children born to God under his ministry; for his converts are his defense. Beholding the man who was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them. If souls are saved by the gospel, the gospel is proved in the surest manner. Let us care more about conversions than about organizations. If souls are brought into union with Christ, we may let other unions go.

We go yet further, and we come to great deeps: behold God's joy in his people. "He will rejoice over thee with joy." Think of this! Jehovah, the living God, is described as brooding over his church with pleasure. He looks upon souls redeemed by the blood of his dear Son, quickened by his Holy Spirit, and his heart is glad. Even the infinite heart of God is filled with an extraordinary joy at the sight of his chosen. His delight is in his church, his Hephzibah. I can understand a minister rejoicing over a soul that he has brought to Christ; I can also understand believers rejoicing to see others saved from sin and hell; but what shall I say of the infinitely-happy and eternally-blessed God finding, as it were, a new joy in souls redeemed? This is another of those great wonders which cluster around the work of divine grace! "He will rejoice over thee with joy." Oh, you are trembling for the ark of the Lord; the Lord is not trembling, but rejoicing. Faulty as the church is, the Lord rejoices in her. While we mourn, as well we may, yet we do not sorrow as those that are without hope; for God does not sorrow, his heart is glad, and he is said to rejoice with joy—a highly emphatic expression. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, imperfect though they be. He sees them as they are to be, and so he rejoices over them, even when they cannot rejoice in themselves. When your face is blurred with tears, your eyes red with weeping, and your heart heavy with sorrow for sin, the great Father is rejoicing over you. The prodigal son wept in his Father's bosom, but the Father rejoiced over his son. We are questioning, doubting, sorrowing, trembling; and all the while he who sees the end from the beginning knows what will come out of the present disquietude, and therefore rejoices. Let us rise in faith to share the joy of God. Let no man's heart fail him because of the taunts of the enemy. Rather let the chosen of God rouse themselves to courage, and participate in that joy of God which never ceaseth, even though the

solemn assembly has become a reproach. Shall we not rejoice in him when he, in his boundless condescension, deigns to rejoice in us? Whoever despairs for the cause, he does not; wherefore let us be of good courage.

It is added, "He will rest in his love." I do not know any Scripture which is more full of wonderful meaning than this. "He shall rest in his love," as if our God had in his people found satisfaction. He comes to an anchorage: he has reached his desire. As when a Jacob, full of love to Rachel, has at length ended the years of his service, and is married to his well-beloved, and his heart is at rest; so is it spoken in parable of the Lord our God. Jesus sees of the travail of his soul when his people are won to him; he has been baptized with his baptism for his church, and he is no longer straitened, for his desire is fulfilled. The Lord is content with his eternal choice, content with his loving purposes, satisfied with the love which went forth from everlasting. He is well pleased in Jesus—well pleased with all the glorious purposes which are connected with his dear Son, and with those who are in him. He has a calm content in the people of his choice, as he sees them in Christ. This is a good ground for our having a deep satisfaction of heart also. We are not what we would be; but then we are not what we shall be. We advance slowly; but then we advance surely. The end is secured by omnipotent grace. It is right that we should be discontented with ourselves, yet this holy restlessness should not rob us of our perfect peace in Christ Jesus. If the Lord hath rest in us, shall we not have rest in him? If he rests in his love, cannot we rest in it?

My heart is comforted as I plainly see in these words love unchanging, love abiding, love eternal: "he will rest in his love." Jehovah changes not. Being married to his people, "he hateth putting away." Immutability is written on his heart. The turtle-dove, when he has once chosen his mate, remains faithful throughout life, and if the beloved dies, he will, in many cases, pine away with grief for her, for his life is wrapped up in hers. Even so our Lord hath made his choice of his beloved, and he will never change it: he died for his church, and so long as he lives he will remember his own love, and what it cost him: "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" "He will rest in his love."

The love of God to us is undisturbed: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding," dwells with his love: he is not disquieted about it, but peacefully loves, and is never moved. The calm of God is wonderful to contemplate: his infallible knowledge and infinite power put him beyond fear or question. He sees no cause of alarm as to his redeemed, nor as to the cause of truth and the reign of righteousness. As to his true church, he knows that she is right, or that he will make her right. She is being transformed into the image of Jesus, and he rests in the full assurance that the image will ere long be complete. He can carry out his own purposes in his own way and time. He can see the harvest as well as the sowing; therefore he doth "rest in his love." You have seen a mother wash her child, and as she washes its face the child perhaps is crying, for it does not for the present enjoy the cleansing operation. Does the mother share the child's grief? Does she also cry? Oh, no! she rejoices over her babe, and rests in her love, knowing that the light affliction of the little one will work its real good. Often our griefs are no deeper than the cry of a child because of the soap in its eyes. While the church is being washed with tribulations and persecutions, God is resting in his love. You and I are wearying, but God is resting.

"He shall rest in his love." The Hebrew of this line is, "He shall be silent in his love." His happiness in his love is so great, that he does not express it, but keeps a happy silence. His is a joy too deep for words. No language can express the joy of God in his love; and therefore he uses no words. Silence in this case is infinitely expressive. One of the old commentators says, "He is deaf and dumb in his love," as if he heard no voice of accusation against his chosen, and would not speak a word of upbraiding to her. Remember the silence of Jesus, and expound this text thereby.

Sometimes also the Lord does not speak to his people: we cannot get a cheering word from him; and then we sigh for a promise, and long for a visit of his love; but if he be thus silent, let us know that, he is only silent in his love. It is not the silence of wrath, but of love. His love is not changed, even though he does not comfort us.

"His thoughts are high, his love is wise,
His wounds a cure intend;
And though he does not always smile,

He loves unto the end."

When he does not answer our prayers with his hand, he yet hears them with his heart. Denials are only another form of the same love which grants our petitions. He loves us, and sometimes shows that love better by not giving us what we ask than he could do if he spoke the sweetest promise which the ear has ever heard. I prize this sentence: "He shall rest in his love." My God, thou art perfectly content with thy church after all, because thou knowest what she is to be. Thou seest how fair she will be when she comes forth from the washing, having put on her beautiful garments. Lo, the sun goes down, and we mortals dread the endless darkness; but thou, great God, seest the morning, and thou knowest that in the hours of darkness dews will fall which shall refresh thy garden. Ours is the measure of an hour, and thine the judgment of eternity, therefore we will correct our short-sighted judgment by thine infallible knowledge, and rest with thee.

The last word is, however, the most wonderful of all: "He will joy over thee with singing." Think of the great Jehovah singing! Can you imagine it? Is it possible to conceive of the Deity breaking into a song: Father, Son and Holy Ghost together singing over the redeemed? God is so happy in the love which he bears to his people that he breaks the eternal silence, and sun and moon and stars with astonishment hear God chanting a hymn of joy. Among Orientals a certain song is sung by the bridegroom when he receives his bride: it is intended to declare his joy in her, and in the fact that his marriage has come. Here, by the pen of inspiration, the God of love is pictured as married to his church, and so rejoicing in her that he rejoices over her with singing. If God sings, shall not we sing? He did not sing when he made the world. No; he looked upon it, and simply said that it was good. The angels sang, the sons of God shouted for joy: creation was very wonderful to them, but it was not much to God, who could have made thousands of worlds by his mere will. Creation could not make him sing; and I do not even know that Providence ever brought a note of joy from him, for he could arrange a thousand kingdoms of providence with ease. But when it came to redemption, that cost him dear. Here he spent; eternal thought, and drew up a covenant with infinite wisdom. Here he gave his Only-begotten Son, and put him to grief

to ransom his beloved ones. When all was done, and the Lord saw what became of it in the salvation of his redeemed, then he rejoiced after a divine manner. What must the joy be which recompenses Gethsemane and Calvary! Here we are among the Atlantic waves. The Lord God receives an accession to the infinity of his joy in the thought of his redeemed people. "He shall rejoice over thee with singing." I tremble while I speak of such themes, lest I should say a word that should dishonor the matchless mystery; but still we are glad to note what is written, and we are bound to take comfort from it. Let us have sympathy with the joy of the Lord, for this will be our strength.

III. I close with a brief word upon THE BRAVE CONDUCT SUGGESTED THEREBY. Let us not sorrow under the burdens which we bear, but rejoice in God, the great Burden-bearer, upon whom this day we roll our load. Here it is—"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack."

There are three things for God's people to do. The first is, to be happy. Read verse fourteen—"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem." Any man can sing when his cup is full of delights; the believer alone has songs when waters of a bitter cup are wrung out to him. Any sparrow can chirp in the daylight; it is only the nightingale that can sing in the dark. Children of God, whenever the enemies seem to prevail over you, whenever the serried ranks of the foe appear sure of victory, then begin to sing. Your victory will come with your song. It is a very puzzling thing to the devil to hear saints sing when he sets his foot on them. He cannot make it out: the more he oppresses them, the more they rejoice. Let us resolve to be all the merrier when the enemy dreams that we are utterly routed. The more opposition, the more we will rejoice in the Lord: the more discouragement, the more confidence. Splendid was the courage of Alexander when they told him that there were hundreds of thousands of Persians. "Yet," he said, "one butcher fears not myriads of sheep." "Ah!" said another, "when the Persians draw their bows, their arrows are so numerous that they darken the sun." "It will be fine to fight in the shade." cried the hero. O friends, we know whom we have believed, and we are sure of triumph! Let us not think for a single second, if the odds against

us are ten thousand to one, that this is a hardship; rather let us wish that they were a million to one, that the glory of the Lord might be all the greater in the conquest which is sure. When Athanasius was told that everybody was denying the Deity of Christ, then he said, "I, Athanasius, against the world": Athanasius contra mundum became a proverbial expression. Brethren, it is a splendid thing to be quite alone in the warfare of the Lord. Suppose we had half-a-dozen with us. Six men are not much increase to strength, and possibly they may be a cause of weakness, by needing to be looked after. If you are quite alone, so much the better: there is the more room for God. When desertions have cleaned the place out, and left you no friend, now every corner can be filled with Deity. As long as there is so much that is visible to rely upon, and so much to hope in, there is so much the less room for simple trust in God: but now our song is of the Lord alone; "for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

The next duty is fearlessness: "Fear thou not." What! not a little? No, "Fear thou not." But surely I may show some measure of trembling? No, "Fear thou not." Tie that knot tight about the throat of unbelief. "Fear thou not": neither this day, nor any day of thy life. When fear comes in, drive it away; give it no space. If God rests in his love, and if God sings, what canst thou have to do with fear? Have you never known passengers on board ship, when the weather was rough, comforted by the calm behavior of the captain? One simple-minded soul said to his friend, "I am sure there is no cause for fear, for I heard the captain whistling." Surely, if the captain is at ease, and with him is all the responsibility, the passenger may be still more at peace. If the Lord Jesus at the helm is singing, let us not be fearing. Let us have done with every timorous accent. O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. "Your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you."

Lastly, let us be zealous: "Let not thine hands be slack." Now is the time when every Christian should do more for God than ever. Let us plan great things for God, and let us expect great things from God. "Let not thine hands be slack." Now is the hour for redoubled prayers and labors. Since the adversaries are busy, let us be busy also. If they think they shall make a full end of us, let us resolve to make a full end of their falsehoods and

delusions. I think every Christian man should answer the challenge of the adversaries of Christ by working double tides, by giving more of his substance to the cause of God, by living more for the glory of God, by being more exact in his obedience, more earnest in his efforts, and more importunate in his prayers. "Let not thine hands be slack" in any one part of holy service. Fear is a dreadful breeder of idleness; but courage teaches us indomitable perseverance. Let us go on in God's name. I would stir up the members of this church, and all my brethren, to intense zeal for God and the souls of men. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Would God that all were on Christ's side out of this great assembly! Oh, that you would come to Jesus, and trust him, and then live for him in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation! The Lord be with us. Amen.

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The Tabernacle of the Most High

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."—Ephesians 2:22.

Under the old Mosaic dispensation God had a visible dwelling-place among men. The bright shekinah was seen between the wings of the cherubim which overhadowed the mercy-seat; and in the tabernacle while Israel journeyed in the wilderness, and in the temple afterwards, when they were established in their own land, there was a visible manifestation of the presence of Jehovah in the place which was dedicated to his service. Now, everything under the Mosaic dispensation was but a type, a picture, a symbol of something higher and nobler. That form of worship was, as it were, a series of shadow-pictures, of which the gospel is the substance. It is a sad fact, however, that there is so much

Judaism in all our hearts, that we frequently go back to the old beggarly elements of the law, instead of going forward and seeing in them a type of something spiritual and heavenly, to which we ought to aspire. It is disgraceful to the present century to hear some men talk as they do. They had better at once espouse the Jewish creed. I mean it is disgraceful to hear some men speak as they do with regard to religious edifices. I remember to have heard a sermon once upon this text—"If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy." And the first part of the sermon was occupied with a childish anathema against all who should dare to perform any unhallowed act in the churchyard, or who should lean the pole of a tent during the fair of the coming week against any part of that edifice, which, it seemed to me, was the god of the man who occupied the pulpit. Is there such a thing as a holy place anywhere? Is there any spot wherein God now particularly dwells? I know not. Hear ye the words of Jesus, "Believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Remember, again, the saying of the apostle at Athens, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

When men talk of holy places they seem to be ignorant of the use of language. Can holiness dwell in bricks and mortar? Can there be such a thing as a sanctified steeple? Can it possibly happen that there can be such a thing in the world as a moral window or a godly door post? I am lost in amazement, utterly lost, when I think how addled men's brains must be when they impute moral virtues to bricks and mortar, and stones, and stained glass. Pray how deep doth this consecration go, and how high? Is every crow that flies over the edifice at that time in solemn air? Certainly it is as rational to believe that, as to conceive that every worm that is eating the body of an Episcopalian is a consecrated worm, and therefore there must necessarily be a brick wall, or a wide gravel-path to protect the bodies of the sanctified from any unhallowed worms that might creep across from the Dissenters' side of the cemetery. I say again, such child's play, such Popery, such Judaism, is a disgrace to the century. And yet, notwithstanding, we all find ourselves at divers times and

seasons indulging in it. That at which you have just now smiled is but pushing the matter a little further, an error into which we may very readily descend; it is but an extravaganza of an error into which we all of us are likely to fall. We have a reverence for our plain chapels; we feel a kind of comfort when we are sitting down in the place which somehow or other we have got to think must be holy.

Now let us if we can, and perhaps it takes a great sturdiness and independence of mind to do it—let us drive away once and for ever, all idea of holiness being connected with anything but with a conscious active agent; let us get rid once and for ever of all superstitions with regard to place. Depend upon it, one place is as much consecrated as another, and wherever we meet with true hearts reverently to worship God, that place becomes for the time being God's house. Though it be regarded with the most religious awe, that place which has no devout heart within it, is no house of God; it may be a house of superstition, but a house of God it cannot be. "But, still," says one, "God hath a habitation; doth not your test say so?" Yes, and of that house of God, I am about to speak this morning. There is such a thing as a house of God; but that is not an inanimate structure, but a living and a spiritual temple. "In whom," that is Christ, "ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. The house of God is built with the living stones of converted men and women, and the church of God, which Christ hath purchased with his blood—this is the divine edifice, and the structure wherein God dwelleth even to this day. I would, however, make one remark with regard to places in which we worship. I do think, albeit that there can be no sanctity of superstition connected with them, there is at the same time, a kind of sacredness of association. In any place where God has blessed my soul, I feel that it is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven. It is not because the stones are hallowed, but because there I have met with God, and the recollections that I have of the place consecrate it to me, That place where Jacob laid him down to sleep, what was it but his sleeping chamber for the time being, but his sleeping chamber was none other than the house of God. Ye have rooms in your houses, I hope, and closets there more sacred in truth than any gorgeous cathedral that ever lifted its spire to heaven. Where we meet with God there is a sacredness, not in the place but in the

associations connected with it. Where we hold fellowship with God and where God makes bare his arm, though it be in a barn or a hedgerow, or on a moor, or on a mountain side, there is God's house to us, and the place is consecrated at once, but yet not so consecrated as that we may regard it with superstitious awe, but only consecrated by our own recollections of blessed hours which we have spent there in hallowed fellowship with God. Leaving that out of the question, I come to introduce you to the house which God has builded for his habitation.

We shall regard the church this morning thus—first, as a building; secondly, as a habitation; and thirdly, as what she is soon to become, namely—a glorious temple.

I. First, then, we shall regard the church as A BUILDING. And here let us pause to ask the question first of all what is a church—what is the church of God? One sect claims the title for itself of the church, while other denominations hotly contend for it. It belongs to none of us. The church of God consisteth not of any one particular denomination of men; the church of God consisteth of those whose names are written in the book of God's eternal choice; the men who were purchased by Christ upon the tree, the men who are called of God by his Holy Spirit and who being quickened by that same Spirit partake of the life of Christ, and become members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. These are to be found in every denomination among all sorts of Christians; some stray ones where we little dreamed of them; here and there a member of the church of God hidden in the midst of the darkness of accursed Rome; now and then, as if by chance, a member of the church of Christ, connected with no sect whatever, far away from all connection with his brethren, having scarcely heard of their existence yet still knowing Christ, because the life of Christ is in him. Now this church of Christ, the people of God, throughout the world, by whatever name they may be known, are in my text compared to a building in which God dwells.

I must now indulge in a little allegory with regard to this building. The church is not a heap of stones shot together; she is a building. Of old her architect devised her. Methinks I see him, as I look back into old eternity making the first outline of his church. "Here" saith he in his eternal

wisdom, "shall be the corner stone, and there shall be the pinnacle," I see him ordaining her length, and her breadth, appointing her gates and her doors with matchless skill, devising every part of her, and leaving no single portion of the structure unmapped. I see him, that mighty architect, also choosing to himself every stone of the building, ordaining its size and its shape; settling upon his mighty plan the position each stone shall occupy, whether it shall glitter in front, or be hidden in the back, or buried in the very center of the wall. I see him marking not merely the bare outline, but all the fillings up; all being ordained, decreed, and settled, in the eternal covenant, which was the divine plan of the mighty architect upon which the church is to be built. Looking on, I see the architect choosing a corner stone. He looks to heaven, and there are the angels, those glittering stones, he looks at each one of them from Gabriel down; but, saith he, "None of you will suffice. I must have a corner stone that will support all the weight of the building, for on that stone every other one must lean. Gabriel, thou wilt not suffice! Raphael thou must lay by; I cannot build with thee." Yet was it necessary that a stone should be found, and one too that should be taken out of the same quarry as the rest. Where was he to be discovered? Was there a man who would suffice to be the corner stone of this mighty building? Ah no! neither apostles, prophets, nor teachers would. Put them altogether, and they would be as a foundation of quicksand, and the house would totter to its fall. Mark how the divine mind solved the difficulty—"God shall become man, very man, and so he shall be of the same substance as the other stones of the temple, yet shall he be God, and therefore strong enough to bear all the weight of this mighty structure, the top whereof shall reach to heaven." I see that foundation stone laid. Is there singing at the laying of it? No. There is weeping there. The angels gathered round at the laying of this first stone; sad look ye men and wonder, the angels weep; the harps of heaven are clothed in sackcloth, and no song is heard. They sang together and shouted for joy when the world was made, why shout they not now? Look ye here and see the reason. That stone is imbedded in blood, that corner stone must lie nowhere else but in his own gore. The vermilion cement drawn from his own sacred veins must imbed it. And there he lies, the first stone of the divine edifice. Oh, begin your songs afresh, ye angels, it is over now. The foundation stone is laid; the terrible ceremony is complete, and now, whence shall we gather the

stones to build this temple? The first is laid, where are the rest? Shall we go and dig into the sides of Lebanon? Shall we find these precious stones in the marble quarries of kings? No. Whither are ye flying ye laborers of God? Whither are ye going? Where are the quarries? And they reply—"We go to dig in the quarries of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the depths of sinful Jerusalem, and in the midst of erring Samaria." I see them clear away the rubbish. I mark them as they dig deep into the earth, and at last they come to these stones. But how rough, how hard, how unhewn. Yes, but these are the stones ordained of old in the decree, and these must be the stones, and none other. There must be a change effected. These must be brought in and shaped and cut and polished, and put into their places. I see the workmen at their labor. The great saw of the law cuts through the stone, and then comes the polishing chisel of the gospel. I see the stones lying in their places, and the church is rising. The ministers, like wise master-builders, are there running along the wall, putting each spiritual stone in its place; each stone is leaning on that massive corner stone, and every stone depending on the blood, and finding its security and its strength in Jesus Christ, the corner stone, elect, and precious. Do you see the building rise as each one of God's chosen is brought in, called by grace and quickened? Do you mark the living stones as in sacred love and holy brotherhood they are knit together? Have you ever entered the building, and see how these stones lean one upon another bearing each others burden, and so fulfilling the law of Christ? Do you mark how the church loveth Christ, and how the members love each other? How first the church is joined to the corner stone, and then each stone bound to the next, and the next to the next, till the whole building becometh one? Lo! the structure rises, and it is complete, and at last it is built. And now open wide your eyes, and see what a glorious building this is—the church of God. Men talk of the splendor of their architecture—this is architecture indeed; neither after Grecian nor Gothic models, but after the model of the sanctuary which Moses saw in the holy mountain. Do you see it? Was there ever a structure so comely as this—instinct with life in every part? Upon one stone shall be seven eyes, and each stone full of eyes and full of hearts. Was ever a thought so massive as this—a building built of souls—a structure made of hearts? There is no house like a heart for one to repose in. There a man may find peace in his fellow-man; but here is the house where God delighteth to dwell—built of living hearts, all beating with holy

love—built of redeemed souls, chosen of the Father, bought with the blood of Christ. The top of it is in heaven. Part of them are above the clouds. Many of the living stones are now in the pinnacle of paradise. We are here below, the building rises, the sacred masonry is heaving, and, as the corner stone rises, so all of us must rise until at last the entire structure from its foundation to its pinnacle shall be heaved up to heaven, and there shall it stand for ever—the new Jerusalem—the temple of the majesty of God.

With regard to this building I have just a remark or two to make before I come to the next point. Whenever architects devise a building they make mistakes in forming the plan. The most careful will omit something; the most clever find in some things he has been mistaken. But mark the church of God; it is built according to rule, and compass, and square, and it shall be found at last that there has not been one mistake. You, perhaps, my dear brother, are a little stone in the temple, and you are apt to think you ought to have been a great one. There is no mistake about that. You have but one talent; that is enough for you. If you had two you would spoil the building. You are placed perhaps in a position of obscurity, and you are saying, "Oh that I were prominent in the church!" If you were prominent you might be in a wrong place; and but one stone out of its place in architecture so delicate as that of God, would mar the whole. You are where you ought to be; keep there. Depend on it there is no mistake. When at last we shall go round about her, mark her walls, and tell her bulwarks, we shall each of us be compelled to say, "How glorious is this Zion!" When our eyes shall have been enlightened, and our hearts instructed, each part of the building will command our admiration. The topstone is not the foundation, nor does the foundation stand at the top. Every stone is of the right shape; the whole material is as it should be, and the structure is adapted for the great end, the glory of God, the temple of the Most High. Infinite wisdom then may be remarked in this building of God.

Another thing may be noticed, namely, her impregnable strength. This habitation of God, this house which is not made with hands, but is of God's building, has often been attacked, but it has never been taken. What multitudes of enemies have battered against her old ramparts! but

they have battered in vain. "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together," but what happened? They came against her, every one of them with mighty men, each man with his sword drawn, but what became of them? The Almighty scattered kings in Hermon like snow in Salmon. As the snow is driven from the mountain side before the stormy blast, even so didst thou drive them away, O God, and they melted before the breath of thy nostrils.

"Then should our souls in Zion dwell,
Nor fear the rage of Rome or hell."

The church is not in danger, and she never can be. Let her enemies come on, she can resist. Her passive majesty, her silent rocky strength, bids them defiance now. Let them come on and break themselves in pieces, let them dash themselves against her, and learn the ready road to their own destruction. She is safe, and she must be safe even unto the end. Thus much then we can say of the structure; it is built by infinite wisdom, and it is impregnably secure.

And we may add, it is glorious for beauty. There was never structure like this. One might feast his eyes upon it from dawn to eve, and then begin again. Jesus himself takes delight in it. So pleased is God in the architecture of his church, that he has rejoiced with his church as he never did with the world. When God made the world he heaved the mountains, and digged the seas, and covered its valleys with grass; he made all the fowls of the air, and all the beasts of the field; yea, and he made man in his own image, and when the angels saw it, they sang together and they shouted for joy. God did not sing; there was no sufficient theme of song for him that was "Holy, holy, holy." He might say it was very good; there was a goodness of fitness about it, but not moral goodness of holiness. But when God built his church he did sing; and that is the most extraordinary passage, I sometimes think, in the whole Word of God, where he is represented as singing;—"Thy Redeemer in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing." Think, my brethren, of God himself looking at his church: and so fair and beautiful is the structure, that he sings over his work, and as each stone is put in its place, Divinity itself sings. Was ever song like that? Oh, come, let us sing, let us exalt the name of God

together; praise him who praiseth his church—who hath made her to be his peculiar dwelling-place.

Thus, then, have we in the first place regarded the church as a building.

II. But the true glory of the church of God consists in the fact that she is not only a building, but that she is A HABITATION. There may be great beauty in an uninhabited structure, but there is always a melancholy thought connected with it. In riding through our country, we often come upon a dismantled tower, or castle; it is beautiful, but it is not a thing of joy; there is a sorrowful reflection connected with it. Who loves to see desolate palaces? Who desireth that the land should cast out her sons, and that her houses should fail of tenants? But there is joy in a house lit up and furnished, where there is the sound of men. Beloved the church of God hath this for her peculiar glory, that she is a tenanted house, that she is a habitation of God through the Spirit. How many churches there are that are houses, yet not habitations! I might picture to you a professed church of God; it is built according to square and compass, but its model has been formed in some ancient creed, and not in the Word of God. It is precise in its discipline according to its own standard, and accurate in its observances according to its own model. You enter that church, the ceremony is imposing; the whole service perhaps attracts you for a while; but you go out of that place conscious that you have not met with the life of God there—that it is a house, but a house without a tenant. It may be professedly a church, but it is not a church possessing the indwelling of the Holy One; it is an empty house that must soon be dilapidated and fall. I do fear that this is true of many of our churches, Established and Dissenting, as well as Romanist. There are too many churches that are nothing but a mass of dull, dead formality; there is no life of God there. You might go to worship with such a people, day after day, and your heart would never beat more quickly, your blood would never leap in its veins, your soul would never be refreshed, for it is an empty house. Fair may be the architecture of the structure, but empty is its storehouse, there is no table spread, there is no rejoicing, no killing of the fatted calf, no dancing, no singing for joy. Beloved, let us take heed, lest our churches become the same, lest we be combinations of men without spiritual life, and consequently houses uninhabited, because God is not there. But a true

church, that is visited by the Spirit of God, where conversion, instruction, devotion, and the like, are carried on by the Spirit's own living influences—such a church has God for its inhabitant.

And now we will just turn over this sweet thought. A church built of living souls is God's own house. What is meant by this? I reply, a house is a place where a man solaces and comforts himself. Abroad we do battle with the world: there we strain every nerve and sinew that we may stem a sea of troubles, and may not be carried away by the stream. Abroad, among men, we meet those of strange language to us, who often cut us to the heart and wound us to the quick. We feel that there we must be upon our guard. We could often say, "My soul is among lions. I lie even among those that are set on fire of hell." Going abroad in the world we find but little rest but the day's work done, we go home, and there we solace ourselves. Our weary bodies are refreshed. We throw away the armor that we have been wearing, and we fight no more. We see no longer the strange face, but loving eyes beam upon us. We hear no language now which is discordant in our ears. Love speaks, and we reply. Our home is the place of our solace, our comfort, and our rest. Now, God calls the church his habitation—his home. See him abroad; he is hurling the thunderbolt and lifting up his voice upon the waters. Harken to him; his voice breaks the cedars of Lebanon and makes the hinds to calve. See him when he makes war, riding the chariot of his might, he drives the rebellious angels over the battlements of heaven down to the depth of hell. Behold him as he lifteth himself in the majesty of his strength! Who is this that is glorious? It is God, most high and terrible. But see he lays aside his glittering sword; his spear he bears no longer. He cometh back to his home. His children are about him. He taketh his solace and his rest. Yes, think not I venture too far—he shall rest in his lover and he doth do it. He resteth in his church. He is no longer a consuming fire, a terror, and a flame. Now, is he love and kindness and sweetness, ready to hear the prattle of his children's prayer, and the disjointed notes of his children's song. Oh how beautiful is the picture of the church as God's house, the place in which he takes his solace! "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

Furthermore, a man's home is the place where he shows his inner self. You meet a man at the market, he deals sharply with you. he knows with whom he has to deal, and he acts with you as a man of the world. You see him again at home, talking with his children, and you say, "What a different man! I could not have believed it was the same being." Mark, again, the professor in his chair; he is instructing students in science. Mark his sternness as he speaks upon recondite themes. Would you believe that that same man will in the evening have his little one upon his knee, and will tell it childish tales, and repeat the ballads of the nursery? And yet it is even so. See the king as he rides through the street in his pomp; thousands gather round him acclamation rends the sky. With what majestic port he bears himself! He is all king, every inch a monarch, as he towers in the midst of the multitude. Have you seen the kind at home? He is then just like other men; his little ones are about him; he is on the floor with them in their games. Is this the king? Yes, it is even he. But why did he not do this in his palace?—in the streets? Oh, no, that was not his home. It is in his home that a man unbends himself. Even so with regard to our glorious God: it is in his church that he manifests himself as he does not unto the world. The mere worldling turns his telescope to the sky, and he sees the pomp of God in the stars, and he says, "O God, how infinite art thou?" Devoutly he looks across the sea, and beholds it lashed with tempest, and he says, "Behold the might and majesty of the Deity!" The anatomist dissects an insect, and discovers in every part of it divine wisdom, and he says, "How wise is God!" Ay; but it is only the believer who as he kneels in his chamber can say, "My father made all these," and then can say, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." There are sweet revelations which God makes in his church, which he never makes anywhere else. It is there he takes the children to his bosom; it is there he opens his heart, and lets his people know the fountains of his great soul, and the might of his infinite affection. And is it not a sweet thing to think of God at home with his family, happy in the house of his church?

But yet, furthermore, another thought strikes me now. A man's home is the center of all he doth. Yonder is a large farm. Well, there are outhouses, and hay ricks, and barns and the like; but just in the middle of these there is the house the center of all husbandry. No matter how much

wheat there may be, it is to the house the produce goes. It is for the maintenance of the household that the husband carries on his husbandry. You may hear the cattle lowing yonder, you may mark the sheep upon the hills, but the fleece cometh home, and the full udders must yield the milk for the children of the house, for the house is the center of all. Every river of industry cometh down towards the sweet soft inland lake of home. Now God's church is God's center? He is abroad in the world, he is busy here and there and everywhere, but to what does all his business tend? To his church. Why doth God clothe the hills with plenty? For the feeding of his people? Why is providence revolving? Why those wars and tempests, and then again this stillness and calm? It is for his church. Not an angel divides the ether who hath not a mission for the church. It may be indirectly, but nevertheless truly so. There is not an archangel that fulfils the behests of the Most High but really carries the church upon his broad wings, and bears up her children lest they dash their feet against a stone. The storehouses of God are for his church. The depths beneath of hidden treasure, of God's unutterable riches—all these are for his people. There is nothing which he hath from his blazing crown to the darkness that is beneath his throne, that is not for his redeemed. All things must minister and work together for good for the chosen church of God which is his house—his daily habitation. I think if you will turn that over and over again, when you are away, you will see there is much in the beautiful fact, that as the house is the center, so is the church the center of everything with God.

One other thought and I will have done. We have heard much talk of late about the French invasion. I shall begin to be alarmed about it when I see it, but certainly not till then. However there is one thing we may say pretty safely. We are many of us peace men and would not like to wield the sword; the first sight of blood would sicken us, we are peaceful beings, we are not for fighting and war. But let the most peaceful man imagine that the invader had landed on our shore that our houses be in danger, and our homes about to be sacked by the foe, our conscientiousness I fear would give way; notwithstanding all we might say about the wrongness of war, I query whether there be a man among us who would not take such weapon as he could find next to hand to repel the enemy. With this for our war cry, "Our hearths and our homes," we would rush upon the

invader, be he who he may or what he may. There is no might so tremendous that it could paralyze our arm; until we were frozen in death we would fight for our home; there would be no command so stern that it could quiet us; we should break through every band and bond, and the weakest of us would be a giant, and our women would become heroines in the day of difficulty. Every hand would find its weapon to hurl at the invader. We love our homes, and we must and will defend them. Ay, and now lift up your thoughts—the church is God's home, will he not defend it? will he suffer his own house to be sacked and stormed? shall the hearth of divinity be stained with the blood of his children? Shall it be that the church is overthrown, and her battlements stormed, her peaceful habitations given up to fire and sword? No, never, not while God hath a heart of love, and while he calleth his people his own house and his habitation. Come, let us rejoice in this our security; let earth be all in arms abroad, we dwell in perfect peace, for our Father is in the house and he is God Almighty. Let them come on against us, we need not fear, his arm shall fell them, the breath of his nostrils shall blast them, a word shall destroy them, they shall melt away like the fat of rams, as fat of lambs shall they be consumed, into smoke shall they consume away. All these thoughts seem to me naturally to arise from the fact that the church is God's habitation.

III. I was about to show you in the third place, that the church is, by-and-bye, to be GOD'S GLORIOUS TEMPLE. It doth not yet appear what she shall be. I have, however, already mentioned this precious fact. The church is rising to-day, and she shall continue to rise until the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and then, when all nations shall call her blessed, and him blessed too—when they shall all say, "Come and let us go up to the house of our God that we may worship him," then shall the church's glory begin. When this earth shall pass away, when all the monuments of empires shall be dissolved and run down in the common lava of the last burning, then shall the church be caught up in the clouds and afterwards be exalted to heaven itself, to become a temple such as eye hath not seen.

And now, brethren and sisters, in conclusion I make these remarks. If the church of God is God's house, what should you and I do? Why we should

earnestly seek as being a part of that temple always to retain the great inhabitant. Let us not grieve his Spirit lest he leave his church for awhile; above all let us not be hypocrites lest he never come into our hearts at all. And if the church be God's temple and God's house, let us not defile it. If you defile yourself you defile the church, for your sin if you be a church member is the church's sin. The defilement of one stone in rebuilding virtually mars its perfection. Take care that thou be holy even as he is holy. Let not thine heart become a house for Belial. Think not that God and the devil can dwell in the same habitation. Give thyself wholly to God. Seek for more of his Spirit, that as a living stone thou mayest be wholly consecrated; and never be contort unless thou feelest in thyself the perpetual presence of the divine inhabitant who dwelleth in his church. May God now bless every living stone of the temple. And as for you that as yet are not hewn out of the quarries of sin, I pray that divine grace may meet with you, that you may be renewed and converted, and at last be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light.

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The Church as She Should Be

"Thou art beautiful, O my love as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners."—Song of Solomon 6:4.

There are various estimates of the Christian church. Some think everything of her; some think nothing of her; and probably neither opinion is worth the breath which utters it. Neither Ritualists, who idolise their church, nor sceptics, who vilify all churches, have any such knowledge of the true spiritual church of Jesus Christ as to be entitled to give an opinion. The king's daughter is all glorious within, with a beauty which they are quite unable to appreciate. What is usually the most correct character which is obtainable of a woman? Shall we be guided by the praises of those neighbors who are on good terms with her, or by the

scandal of those who make her the subject of ill-natured gossip? No; the most accurate judgment we are likely to get is that of her husband. Solomon saith in the Proverbs concerning the virtuous woman, "Her husband also riseth up, and he praiseth her." Of that fairest among women, the church of Christ, the same observation may be made. It is to her of small consequence to be judged of man's judgment, but it is her honor and joy to stand well in the love and esteem of her royal spouse, the Prince Emmanuel. Though the words before us are allegorical, and the whole song is crowded with metaphor and parable, yet the teaching is plain enough in this instance; it is evident that the Divine Bridegroom gives his bride a high place in his heart, and to him, whatever she may be to others, she is fair, lovely, comely, beautiful, and in the eyes of his love without a spot. Moreover, even to him there is not only a beauty of a soft and gentle kind in her, but a majesty, a dignity in her holiness, in her earnestness, in her consecration, which makes even him say of her that she is "terrible as an army with banners," "awful as a bannered army." She is every inch a queen: her aspect in the sight of her beloved is majestic. Take, then, the words of our text as an encomium upon Christ's church, pronounced by him who knows her best, and is best able to judge concerning her, and you learn that to his discerning eye she is not weak, dishonorable, and despicable, but bears herself as one of highest rank, consciously, joyously strong in her Lord's strength.

On this occasion let us note, first of all, **WHY IT IS THAT THE CHURCH OF GOD IS SAID TO BE AN ARMY WITH BANNERS.** That she is an army is true enough, for the church is one, but many; and consists of men who march in order under a common leader, with one design in view and that design a conflict and a victory. She is the church militant here below, and both in suffering and in service she is made to prove that she is in an enemy's country. She is contending for the truth against error, for the light against darkness: till the day break and the shadows flee away, she must maintain her sentinels and kindle her watch fires; for all around her there is cause to guard against the enemy, and to descend the royal treasure of gospel truth against its deadly foes. But why an army with banners? Is not this, first of all, for distinction? How shall we know to which king an army belongs unless we can see the royal standard? In times of war the nationality of troops is often declared by their

distinguishing regimentals. The grey coats of the Russians were well known in the Crimea; the white livery of the Austrians was a constant eyesore in bygone days to the natives of Lombardy. No one mistook the Black Brunswickers for French Guards, or our own Hussars for Garibaldians. Quite as effectively armies have been distinguished by the banners which they carried. As the old knights of old were recognised by their plume and helmet, and escutcheon, so an army is known by its standard and the national colors. The tricolor of the French readily marked their troops as they fled before the terrible black and white of the German army. The church of Christ displays its banners for distinction's sake. It desires not to be associated with other armies, or to be mistaken for them, for it is not of this world, and its weapons and its warfare are far other than those of the nations. God forbid that followers of Jesus should be mistaken for political partisans or ambitious adventurers. The church unfurls her ensign to the breeze that all may know whose she is and whom she serves. This is of the utmost importance at this present, when crafty men are endeavoring to palm off their inventions. Every Christian church should know what it believes, and publicly avow what it maintains. It is our duty to make a clear and distinct declaration of our principles, that our members may know to what intent they have come together, and that the world also may know what we mean. Far be it from us to join with the Broad Church cry, and furl the banners upon which our distinctive colors are displaced. We hear on all sides great outcries against creeds. Are these clamours justifiable? It seems to me that when properly analysed most of the protests are not against creeds, but against truth, for every man who believes anything must have a creed, whether he write it down and print it or no; or if there be a man who believes nothing, or anything, or everything by turns, he is not a fit man to be set up as a model. Attacks are often made against creeds because they are a short, handy form by which the Christian mind gives expression to its belief, and those who hate creeds do so because they find them to be weapons as inconvenient, as bayonets in the hands of British soldiers have been to our enemies. They are weapons so destructive to theology that it protests against them. For this reason let us be slow to part with them. Let us day hold of God's truth with iron grip, and never let it go. After all, there is a Protestantism still worth contending for; there is a Calvinism still worth proclaiming, and a gospel worth dying for. There is

a Christianity distinctive and distinguished from Ritualism, Rationalism, and Legalism, and let us make it known that we believe in it. Up with your banners, soldiers of the cross! This is not the time to be frightened by the cries against conscientious convictions, which are nowadays nicknamed sectarianism and bigotry. Believe in your hearts what you profess to believe; proclaim openly and zealously what you know to be the truth. Be not ashamed to say such-and-such things are true, and let men draw the inference that the opposite is false. Whatever the doctrines of the gospel may be to the rest of mankind, let them be your glory and boast. Display your banners, and let those banners be such as the church of old carried. Unfurl the old primitive standard, the all-victorious standard of the cross of Christ. In very deed and truth—in hoc signo vinces—the atonement is the conquering truth. Let others believe as they may, or deny as they will, for you the truth as it is in Jesus is the one thing that has won your heart and made you a soldier of the cross.

Banners were carried, not merely for distinctiveness, but also to serve the purposes of discipline. Hence an army with banners had one banner as a central standard, and then each regiment or battalion displayed its own particular flag. The hosts of God, which so gloriously marched through the wilderness, had their central standard. I suppose it was the very pole upon which Moses lifted up the brazen serpent (at any rate, our brazen serpent is the central ensign of the church); and then, besides that, each tribe of the twelve had its own particular banners, and with these uplifted in the front, the tribes marched in order, so that there was no confusion on the march, and in time of battle there was no difficulty in marshalling the armed men. It was believed by the later Jews that "the standard of the camp of Judah represented a lion; that of Reuben, a man; that of Joseph, an ox; and that of Dan, an eagle. The Targumists, however, believe that the banners were distinguished by their colors, the color for each tribe being analogous to that of the precious stone for that tribe, in the breastplate of the high priest; and that the great standard of each of the four camps combined the three colors of the tribes which composed it." So, brethren, in the church of God there must be discipline—the discipline not only of admission and of dismissal in receiving the converts and rejecting the hypocrites, but the discipline of marshalling the troops to the service of Christ in the holy war in which we are

engaged. Every soldier should have his orders, every officer his troop, every troop its fixed place in the army, and the whole army a regularity such as is prescribed in the rule, "Let all things be done decently and in order." As in the ranks each man has his place, and each rank has its particular phase in the battalion, so in every rightly constituted church each man, each woman, will have, for himself or herself, his or her own particular form of service, and each form of service will link in with every other, and the whole combined will constitute a force which cannot be broken. A church is not a load of bricks, remember: it is a house builded together. A church is not a bundle of cuttings in the gardener's hand: it is a vine, of which we are the branches. The true church is an organised whole; and life, true spiritual life, wherever it is paramount in the church, without rules and rubrics, is quite sure to create order and arrangement. Order without life reminds us of the rows of graves in a cemetery, all numbered and entered in the register: order with life reminds us of the long lines of fruit trees in Italy, festooned with fruitful vines. Sunday-school teachers, bear ye the banner of the folded lamb; sick visitors, follow the ensign of the open hand; preachers, rally to the token of the uplifted brazen serpent; and all of you, according to your sacred calling, gather to the name of Jesus, armed for the war.

An army with banners may be also taken to represent activity. When an army holds up its colors the fight is over. Little is being done in military circles when the banners are put away; the troops are on furlough, or are resting in barracks. An army with banners is exercising, or marching, or fighting; probably it is in the middle of a campaign, it is marshalled for offense and defense, and there will be rough work before long. It is to be feared that some churches have hung up their flags to rot in state, or have encased them in dull propriety. They do not fool; to do great things, or to see great things. They do not expect many conversions; if many did happen, they would be alarmed and suspicious. They do not expect their pastor's ministry to be with power; and if it were attended with manifest effect they would be greatly disturbed, and perhaps would complain that he created too much excitement. The worst of it is, that do-nothing churches are usually very jealous lest any should encroach on their domain. Our churches sometime ago appeared to imagine that a whole district of this teeming city belonged to them to cultivate or neglect, as

their monopolising decree might be. If anybody attempted to raise a new interest, or even to build a preaching station, within half a mile of them, they resented it as a most pernicious poachings upon their manor. They did nothing themselves, and were very much afraid lest anybody should supplant them. Like the lawyers of old, who took away the key of knowledge, they entered not in themselves, and them that were entering in they hindered. That day, it is to be hoped, has gone once for all; yet too much of the old spirit lingers in certain quarters. It is high time that each church should feel that if it does not work, the sole reason for its existence is gone. The reason for a church being a church dies its mutual edification and in the conversion of sinners; and if these two ends are not really answered by a church, it is a mere name, a hindrance, an evil, a nuisance; like the salt which has lost its savor, it is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill. May we all in our church fellowship be active in the energy of the Spirit of God. May none of us be dead members of the living body, mere impediments to the royal host, baggage to be dragged rather than warriors pushing on the war. May we, every one of us, be soldiers filled with vigor to the fullness of our manhood, by the eternal power of the Holy Spirit; and may we be resolved that any portion of the church which does not uplift its banner of service shall not long number us among its adherents. Be it ours to determine that whether others will or will not serve God and extend the kingdom of his dear Son, we will, in his name and strength, contend even to the death. Unsheath our swords, ye soldiers of the cross; arise from your slumbers, ye careless ones, gird on your swords and prepare for the war. The Lord has redeemed you by his blood, not that you might sleep, but that you might fight for the glory of his name.

Does not the description, "an army with banners," imply a degree of confidence? It is not an army retiring from the foe, and willing enough to hide its colors to complete its escape. An army that is afraid to venture out into the open, keeps its banners out of the gleam of the sun. Banners uplifted are the sign of a fearlessness which rather courts than declines the conflict. Ho! warriors of the cross, unfurl the gospel's ancient standard to the breeze; we will teach the foeman what strength there is in hands and hearts that rally to the Christ of God. Up with the standard, ye brave men at arms; let all eyes see it; and it the foemen glare like lions on

it, we "will call upon the Lion of the tribe of Judah to lead the van, and we will follow with his word like a two-edged sword in our hands:—

"Stand up! stand up for Jesus!

Ye soldiers of the cross!

Lift high his royal banner;

It must not suffer loss:

From victory unto victory

His army shall he lead

Till every foe is vanquished

And Christ is Lord indeed."

We cannot place too much reliance in the gospel; our weakness is that we are so diffident and so apt to look somewhere else for strength. We do not believe in the gospel as to its power over the sons of men as we should believe in it. Too often we preach it with a coward's voice. Have I not heard sermons commencing with abject apologies for the preacher's daring to open his mouth; apologies for his youth, for his assertions, for his venturing to intrude upon men's consciences, and I know not what else? Can God own ambassadors of this cowardly cringing breed, who mistake fear of men for humility! Will our Captain honor such carpet-knights, who apologise for bearing arms? I have heard that of old the ambassadors of Holland, and some other states, when introduced to his celestial majesty, the brother of the sun and cousin of the moon, the Emperor of China, were expected to come crawling on their hands and knees up to the throne; but when our ambassadors went to that flowery land, they declined to pay such humiliating homage to his impertinent majesty, and informed him that they would stand upright in his presence, as free men should do, or else they would decline all dealings with him, and in all probability his majesty would hear from a cannon's mouth far less gentle notes than he would care for. Even thus, though we may well humble ourselves as men, yet as ambassadors of God we cannot crouch to the sons of men, to ask them what message would suite them best. It must not, shall not, be that we shall smoothe our tongues and tone our doctrines to the taste of the age. The gospel that we preach, although the worldly wise man despises it, in God's gospel for all that. "Ah," says he, "there is nothing in it: science has overthrown it." "And," says another, "this gospel is but so much platitude; we have heard it over and over

again." Ah, sir, and though it be platitude to you, and you decree it to be contemptible, you shall hear it or nothing else from us; "for it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God." In its simplicity lies its majesty and its power. "We are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We will proclaim it again with confidence; We will bring forth once more the selfsame truth as of old; and as the barley loaf smote the tent of Midian, so that it lay along, so shall the gospel overturn its adversaries. The broken pitcher, and the flaming torches, and the old war cry, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon" shall yet fill the foeman with dismay. Let us but be bold for Jesus, and we shall see what his arm can do. The gospel is the voice of the eternal God, and has in it the same power as that which brought the world out of nothing, and which shall raise the dead from their graves at the coming of the Son of Man. The gospel, the word of God, can no more return to him void than can the snow go back to heaven, or the rain-drops climb again the path by which they descended from the clouds. Have faith in God's word, faith in the presence of the Holy Ghost, faith in the reigning Savior, faith in the fulfillment of the everlasting purposes, and you will be full of confidence, and like an army with banners.

Once more, an army with banners may signify the constancy and perseverance in holding the truth. We see before us not an army that has lost its banners, that has suffered its colors to be rent away from it, but an army which bears aloft its ancient standard and swears by it still. Let us be very earnest to maintain the faith once delivered to the saints. Let us not give up this doctrine or that, at the dictates of policy or fashion; but whatsoever Jesus saith unto us, let us receive it as the word of life. Great injury may be done to a church ere it knows it, if it shall tolerate error here and there; for false doctrine, like the little leaven, soon leavens the whole lump. If the church be taught of the Spirit to know the voice of the Good Shepherd, a stranger it will not follow; for it knows not the voice of strangers. This is part of the education which Christ gives to his people: "All thy people shall be taught of the Lord." They shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free. May we, as a church, hold fast the things which we have learned and have been taught of God; and may we be preserved from the philosophies and refinings of these last days. If we

give up the things which are verily believed among us we shall lose our pourer, and the enemy alone will be pleased; but if we maintain them, the maintenance of the old faith, by the Spirit of God, shall make us strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Wrap the colors round you, ye standard bearers, in the day of danger, and die sooner than give them up. Life is little compared with God's lovingkindness, and that is the sure heritage of the brave defender of the faith. Thus resolute for truth, the church becomes an army with banners.

II. Secondly, the church is said to be TERRIBLE. To whom is she terrible? She should be amiable, and she is. May God grant that our church may never be terrible to young converts by moroseness and uncharitableness. Whenever I hear of candidates being alarmed at coming before our elders, or seeing the pastor, or making confession of faith before the church, I wish I could say to them: "Dismiss your fears, beloved ones; we shall be glad to see you, and you will find your intercourse with us a pleasure rather than a trial." So far from wishing to repel you, if you really do love the Savior, we shall be glad enough to welcome you. If we cannot see in you the evidence of a great change, we shall kindly point out to you our fears, and shall be thrice happy to point you to the Savior; but be sure of this, if you have really believed in Jesus, you shall not find the church terrible to you. Harsh judgments are contrary to the spirit of Christ and the nature of the gospel; where they are the rule, the church is despicable rather than terrible. Bigotry and uncharitableness are indications of weakness, not of strength.

To what and to whom is the church terrible? I answer, first, in a certain sense she is terrible to all ungodly men. A true church in her holiness and testimony is very terrible to sinners. The ungodly care not a rush about a mock church, nor about sham Christians; but a really earnest Christian makes the ungodly abashed. We have known some who could not use the foul language which they were accustomed to when they were in the presence of godly men and women, though these persons had no authority or position or rank. Even in the most ribald company, when a Christian of known consistency of character has wisely spoken the word of reproof, a solemn abashment comes over the majority of those present; their consciences have borne witness against them, and they have felt

how awful goodness is. Not that we are ever to try and impress others with any dread of us; such an attempt would be ridiculed, and end in deserved failure; but the influence which we would describe flows naturally out of a godly light. Majesty of character never lies in affectation of demeanor, but in solidity of virtue. If there be real goodness in us—if we really, fervently, zealously love the right, and hate the evil—the outflow of our life almost without a word will judge the ungodly—and condemn them in their heart of hearts. Holy living is the weightiest condemnation of sin. We have heard of an ungodly son who could not bear to dine in the house where his departed father had in his lifetime so devoutly prayed; every room, and every piece of furniture reproved him for forsaking his father's God. We have read of others who were wont to dread the sight of certain godly men whose holy lives held them more in check than the laws of the land. The bad part of this is that the terror of the ungodly suggests to them an unhallowed retort upon their reprovers, and becomes the root out of which springs persecution. Those whom the ungodly fear because they condemn them by their character, they try to put out of the world if they can, or to bespatter them with slander if they cannot smite them with the hand of cruelty. The martyrdom of saints is the result of the darkness hating the light, because the light makes manifest its evil deeds. There will be always in proportion to the real holiness, earnestness, and Christ likeness of a church something terrible in it to the perverse generation in which it is placed; it will dread it as it does the all-revealing day of judgment.

So is there something terrible in a living church to all errorists. Just now two armies have encamped against the host of God, opposed to each other, but confederates against the church of God. Ritualism, with its superstition, its priestcraft, its sacramental efficacy, its hatred of the doctrines of grace; and on the other side Rationalism, with its sneering unbelief and absurd speculations. These, like Herod and Pilate, agree in nothing but in opposition to Christ; they have one common dread, although they may not confess it. They do not dread those platform speeches in which they are so furiously denounced at public meetings, nor those philosophical discussions in which they are overthrown by argument; but they hate, but they fear, and therefore abuse and pretend to despise, the prayerful, zealous, plain simple preaching of the truth as it

is in Jesus. This is a weapon against which they cannot stand—the weapon of the odd gospel. In the days of Luther it did marvels; it wrought wonders in the days of Whitfield and Wesley: it has often restored the ark of the Lord to our land, and it will again. It has lost none of its ancient power, and therefore is it the terror of the adversaries of Christ.

"Thine aspect's awful majesty
Doth strike thy foes with fear;
As armies do when banners fly,
And martial flags appear.
How does thine armor, glitt'ring bright,
Their frightened spirits quell!
The weapons of thy warlike might
Defy the gates of hell."

Even to Satan himself the church of God is terrible. He might, he thinks, deal with individuals, but when these individuals strengthen each other by mutual converse and prayer, when they are bound to each other in holy love, and make a temple in which Christ dwells, then is Satan hard put to it. O brethren and sisters, it is not every church that is terrible thus, tent it is a church of God in which there is the life of God, and the love of God; a church in which there is the uplifted banner, the banner of the cross, high-held amid those various banners of truthful doctrine and spiritual grace, of which I have just now spoken.

III. We will take a third point; and that is, WHY IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST TERRIBLE AS AN ARMY WITH BANNERS? Why is it terrible because of its banners? The whole passage seems to say that the church is terrible as an army, but that to the fullest degree she owes her terribleness to her banners. "Terrible as an army with banners." I believe the great banner of the Christian church to be the uplifted Savior. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Around him then we gather. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." As the brazen serpent in the midst of the camp in the wilderness, so is the Savior lifted high, our banner. The atoning, sacrifice of Christ is the great central standard of all really regenerate men, and this is the main source of dismay to Israel's foes.

But we shall take the thoughts in order. The church herself is terrible, and then terrible because of her banners. Brethren, the army itself is terrible. Why? First, because it consists of elect people. Remember how Haman's wife enquired concerning Mordecai whether he belonged to the seed of the Jews; for if he did, then she foretold that her husband's scheme would prove a failure. "If Mordecai be of the Seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." Now, the church of God as made up of men and women is nothing more than any other organisation. Look at its exterior, and you see in it few persons of great education and a great many of no education; here and there a wealthy and powerful person, but hundreds who are poor and despised. It does not possess in itself, naturally, the elements of strength, according to ordinary reckoning. Indeed, its own confession is that in itself it is perfect weakness, a flock of sheep among wolves; but here lies its strength, that each of the true members of the church are of the seed royal; they are God's chosen ones, the seed of the woman ordained of old to break the head of Satan and all his serpent seed. They are the weakness of God, but they are stronger than men; he has determined with the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are. As the Canaanites feared the chosen race of Israel because the rumor of them had gone forth among the people, and the terror of Jehovah was upon them; so is it with the hosts of evil. They have dreamed their dreams, as the Midianite did, and valiant men like Gideon can hear them telling it; the barley cake shall fall upon the royal tent of Gideon and smite it till it lies along; the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon, shall rout the foe. The elect shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and none shall say them nay. Ye are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, a chosen generation; and in you the living God will gloriously declare his sovereign grace.

The church, again, consists of a praying people. Now prayer is that which links weakness with infinite strength. A people who can pray can never be overcome, because their reserve forces can never be exhausted. Go into battle, my brother; and if you be vanquished with the strength you have, prayer shall call up another legion. Yea, twenty legions of angels, and the foe shall marvel to see undefeated adversaries still holding the field. If ten

thousand saints were burned to-morrow, their dying prayers would make the church rise like a phoenix from her ashes. Who, therefore, can stand against a people whose prayers enlist God in their quarrel? "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." We cry unto the Lord, and he heareth us; he breaketh through the ranks of the foe; he giveth us triumph in the day of battle: therefore, terrible as an army with banners are those who wield the weapon of all-prayer.

Again, a true church is based upon eternal truth. I need not quote to you the old Latin proverb which says that truth is mighty and must prevail. Truth is, and truth shall be. It alone is substance, and must outlast the lapse of ages. Falsehoods are soon swollen to their perfection of development, like the bubbles with rainbow hues which children blow, but they are dispersed as easily as they are fashioned; they are children of the hour, while truth is the offspring and heir of eternity. Falsehood dies, pierced through the heart by the arrows of time, but truth, in her impenetrable mail bids defiance to all foes. Men who love the truth are building gold and silver, and precious stones; and though their architecture may progress but slowly, it is built for eternity. Ramparts of truth may often be assailed, but they will never be carried by the foe. Establish a power among men of the most ostentatious and apparently stable kind, but rest assured that if untruth be at the root of it, it must perish, sooner or later; only truth is invincible, eternal, supreme. The fear of the true church and the dread thereof falls upon the enemy, because they have wit enough left to know that truth has an abiding and indestructible power. I was very much amused, the other day, to read a criticism by an eminent infidel, whose name would be well known if I were to mention it, in which he speaks very highly of the exceeding great skill and wisdom, and common sense, always exhibited in the arrangements of the Roman Catholic Church in opposition to Infidelity, and of the imbecility and childishness manifested by Christian ministers in assailing Rationalism with their dogmatism, etc. I was very glad to receive information so valuable, and I thought: "I see, my friend, what kind of warfare you like best. You admire the Roman Catholic kind of fighting, but you do not admire that which evangelical ministers have adopted. It is no aim of ours to please our enemies in our mode of warfare, but the reverse; and if we have discovered a weapon which galls

you, we will use that same arm more freely than ever." There is a story of an officer who was rather awkward in his manners, and, upon some great occasion, almost fell over his sword in his haste. His majesty remarked, "Your sword seems to be very much in the way." "So your majesty's enemies have very often felt," was the reply. So, when the enemies of the truth are finding fault with our procedure, we accept their verdict when we have turned it the other way upwards. If they do not admire our mode of warfare, we think; it is in all probability about the best method we could adopt. We would still, God granting us help, continue preaching the "foolishness" of the gospel, and deliver again and again the old truth, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Instead of lifting up a new banner (which would better please our adversaries) it shall be the old banner still—"None but Christ." "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that out of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Salvation is by free favor, through the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are now to observe, that the chief glory and majesty of the church lies mainly in the banner which she carries. What cause for terror is there in the banner? We reply, the enemies of Christ dread the cross, because they know what the cross has done. Wherever the crucified Jesus has been preached, false systems have tottered to their fall. Dagou has always fallen before the ark of the Lord. Rage the most violent is excited by the doctrine of the atonement, a rage in which the first cause for wrath is fear.

The terribleness of the church lies in her banners, because those banners put strength into her. Drawing near to the standard of the cross the weakest soldier becomes strong: he who might have played the coward becomes a hero when the precious blood of Jesus is felt with power in his soul. Martyrs are born and nurtured at the cross. It is the blood of Jesus which is the life-blood of self-denial; we can die because our Savior died. The presence of Alexander made the Greeks more than giants: the presence of our Redeemer makes believers swifter than eagles, and stronger than lions.

Moreover, the powers of evil tremble at the old standard, because they

have a presentiment of its future complete triumph. It is decreed of God, and fixed by his predestinating purpose, that all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Jesus must reign; the crucified One must conquer. The hands nailed to the wood must sway the scepter of all kingdoms. Like potters' vessels dashed to pieces, must all the might and majesty of men be, that shall oppose the crown and scepter of Christ's kingdom. In Christ preached lies the battle-axe and weapons of war, with which the Lord will work out his everlasting decrees. The church with the name of Immanuel emblazoned on her banner, which it is her duty to keep well displayed, and lifted high, is sure to be terrible to all the powers of darkness.

We will close with one or two reflections. Will each one here say to himself: "An army, a company of warriors, am I one of them? Am I a soldier? I have entered the church; I make a profession; but am I really a soldier? Do I fight? Do I endure hardness? Am I a mere carpet-knight, a mere lie-a-bed soldier, one of those who are pleased to put on regimentals in order to adorn myself with a profession without ever going to the war?"

"Am I a soldier of the cross—a follower of the Lamb?"

Pass the question round, my dear brethren and sisters: Are you soldiers who engage in actual fighting for Jesus, under his banner? Do you rally round it? Do you know the standard? Do you love it? Could you die in defense of it? Is the person of Jesus dearest of all things to you? Do you value the doctrine of the atoning substitution? Do you feel your own energy and power awakened in the defense of that, and for the love of that? Let not one go away without making the searching question.

And then "terrible." Am I in any way terrible through being Christian? Is there any power in my life that would condemn a sinner? my holiness about me that would make a wicked man feel ill at ease in my company? Is there enough of Christ about my life to make me like a light in the midst of the darkness? or is it very likely that if I were to live in a house the inhabitants would never see any difference between me and the ungodly? Oh, how many Christians there are who need to wear a label round their necks: you would never know that they were Christians without it! They make long prayers and great pretences, but they are

Christians in nothing but the name. May your life and mine never be thus despicable, but may we convince gainsayers that there is a power in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and make them confess, that they, not having it, are losing a great blessing.

One other thought. If I am not a soldier, if I am not a servant of Christ in very truth, and yet I come to the place of worship where Christians meet, and where Christ is preached, the day will be when the church of God will be very terrible to me. I will suppose that there is a person listening to this sermon who has been hearing the preaching of the word in this place now for many years. Imagine that the last day is come. You are brought before the great judgment-seat, and this is the question:—"Did this sinner hear the gospel faithfully preached? He is ungodly, he has rejected Christ: does he deserve to be cast away? Did he really bear the gospel, and did he reject it?" If I am asked to give my witness, I must say, "To the best of my ability, I tried to tell him the gospel of Jesus Christ." "Was this sinner prayed for by the church?" There are many of the members of this church who would feel bound to declare "Yes, Lord, we did pray for him." Yes, and all of us should say, "If we did not pray for him by name, we included him in the general company of those who attended upon the means of grace, for whom we made a constant intercession." Is there any member of the church who would be able to make an apology for the rejector of Christ? He has willfully rejected the Savior, he knowingly continued in sin. Will anybody be an advocate for him? Not one tongue would be able to excuse you at the judgment, or to argue against the righteous sentence of God. When the great Judge condemns the sinner to be taken away to execution, the whole church with whom that sinner has worshipped, and in whose presence that sinner has rejected Christ, will become "terrible as an army with banners;" for all its voices will say, "Amen, Amen, Amen! Thou art righteous, O Lord."

This is no picture drawn from fancy. Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? They shall sit as co-assessors with the Son of God at the last great assize, and shall say, "Amen!" to every verdict which proceedeth from his mouth. O that the thought of this might be blessed of God's Spirit, so as to lead many of you to be reconciled to God. Jesus is still the loving Mediator, and a full surrender of yourselves to him will assuredly

save you. Whosoever believeth on him is not condemned; and this is to believe on him—that ye trust in him, and know that God hath given unto us eternal life—and this life is in his Son who suffered in the stead of sinners, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The Lord bless you, for the Lord Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Royal Pair in Their Glorious Chariot

"Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."—Solomon's Song 3:6-11.

Great princes in the East are in the habit of travelling in splendid palanquins, which are at the same time chariots and beds. The person reclines within, screened by curtains from public view; a body-guard protects the equipage from robbers, and blazing torches light up the path along which the travelers proceed. King Solomon, in this Song, describes the Church of Christ, and Christ himself, as travelling through the world in such a palanquin. The day is coming when both our divine Lord and his chosen bride shall be revealed in glory before the eyes of all men. The present age is the period of concealment—the mystical Solomon and his beloved Solyma are both on earth, but they are unseen of men; like the ark of old they dwell within curtains; only the anointed priests of God can discern their beauties, and even these gaze rather by faith than by sight. "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is certainly

true, for Jesus is here; but equally correct is that word of Peter, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." He is here in the reality, power, and influence of his presence, but he is not here as to the visibility of his kingdom and person, for we wait with our loins girt about, and with patience of hope, until the revelation of Jesus Christ. The portion of the blessed canticle now before us is, we think, descriptive of the progress of the hidden Christ through the world. He has been borne along, in very truth, but he himself has been so little perceived of men, that they even ask the question, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?" He is not now manifested openly to men. If any should say, "Lo here!" or "Lo there! this is Christ!" believe them not, for Christ is not as yet seen. When he doth come he shall be as perceptible as the lightning's flash, which every man's eye discerneth without the need of an instructor. So, also, with his true Church. She also is hidden like her Lord, and though her hand, her foot, or her face may be sometimes seen, yet the whole elect body has never yet been beheld. If any say, "Lo, here is the Church of Christ!" or "Lo there!" believe them not, for it is a fact that there is no corporation of men of which we can say exclusively or even universally, "Lo, this is the Church of Christ." There are tares growing with the wheat in the best guarded field, and on the other hand no one enclosure contains all the wheat. The true Church of Christ is scattered here and there, it is found amongst all denominations, and there is not one denomination of which you can say, "This only is the Church of Christ, or all its members belong to the body of Christ's spouse." Just now the mystical bride is in a certain sense as invisible as her husband. Behold, then, the betrothed ones carried through the world in the sumptuous chariot of which we have to speak this morning.

I must now claim your attention while I notice, first, the glory of the progress of Christ through the world, as described in the sixth verse; secondly, the security of Christ's cause, as represented in thy seventh and eighth; thirdly, the superlative excellence of it, as described in the ninth and tenth; and lastly, our joyful duties with regard to it, as openly declared in the eleventh.

I. First, then, THE MAGNIFICENT PROGRESS, THE GLORIOUS ON-

GOING OF THE CHURCH AND HER LORD THROUGH THE WORLD.

"Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" The equipage excites the attention of the on-looker; his curiosity is raised, and he asks, "Who is this?" Now, in the first progress of the Christian Church, in her very earliest days, there were persons who marvelled greatly; and though they set down the wonders of the day of Pentecost to drunkenness, yet "they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" In after years, many a heathen philosopher said, "What is this new power which is breaking the idols in pieces, changing old customs, making even thrones unsafe-what is this?" By-and-bye, in the age of the Reformation, there were cowed monks, cardinals in their red hats, and bishops, and princes, and emperors, who all said, "What is this? What strange doctrine has come to light?" In the times of the modern reformation, a century ago, when God was pleased to revive his Church through the instrumentality of Whitfield and his brethren, there were many who said, "What is this new enthusiasm, this Methodism? Whence came it, and what power is this which it wields?" And, doubtless, whenever God shall be pleased to bring forth his Church in power, and to make her mighty among the sons of men, the ignorance of men will be discovered breaking forth in yonder, for they will say, "Who is this?" Spiritual religion is as much a novelty now as in the day when Grecian sages scoffed at it on Mars' Hill. The true Church of God is a stranger and pilgrim still; an alien and a foreigner in every land; a speckled bird; a dove in the midst of ravens; a lily among thorns.

The ignorance of men concerning spiritual things is not, however, caused by the darkness of the things themselves, for Christ and his Church are the great lights of the world. When great personages traveled in their palanquins, and more especially on marriage processions, they were attended by a number of persons who, at night, carried high up in the air burning cressets which gave forth a blaze of light. Sometimes these lights were simply torches carried in the hands of running footmen; at other times they were a sort of iron basket lifted high into the air, upon poles, from which went up a pillar of smoke and flame. Our text says "Who is

this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?" a beautiful illustration of the fact that wherever Christ and his cause are carried, light is a sure accompaniment. Into whatsoever region the gospel may journey, her every herald is a flash of light, her every minister a flaming fire. God maketh his Churches the golden candlesticks, and saith unto his children "Ye are the lights of the world," is certainly as ever God said "Let there be light," and there was light over the old creation, so does he say, whenever his Church advances, "Let there be light" and there is light. Dens of darkness, where the bats of superstition had folded their wings and hung themselves up for perpetual ease, have been disturbed by the glare of these divine flambeaux; the innermost caverns of superstition and sin, once black with a darkness which might be felt, have been visited with a light above the brightness of the sun. "The people which sat in darkness have seen a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light has sprung up." Thus saith the Lord unto the nation where his kingdom cometh, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord hath risen upon thee!" Bear ye the Church of Christ to the South Seas; carry Christ and his spouse in his palanquin to the Caffre, the Hottentot, or the Esquimaux, and everywhere the night of death is ended, and the morning with its glorious dawn has come. High lift your lamps, ye servants of our Lord. High lift up the cross of the Redeemer; for in him is light, and the light in the life of men.

But you will tell me that our text rather speaks of "pillars of smoke" than of sparkling lamps. Brethren, the smoke is but the effect of the flame, and even the pillar of smoke is luminous. What is the smoke that has attended the Church? What but the deaths of her martyrs, the sufferings of her confessors, the patient endurance of her valiant sons? Wherever she goes, the thick smoke of her suffering goeth up to heaven. "We are always delivered unto death," said the apostle. The cause of truth involves a perpetual sacrifice; her smoke ascendeth for ever. Black smoke I say it is in the eye of man, but unto God it is a sweet-smelling savor. Never did fat of rams, or the fat of kidnies of fed beasts, smell so sweetly before the Most High as the faith, the love, the courage, which has ascended up to heaven from the dauntless heroes of the Church in past ages when at the stake they have been faithful even unto death. Suffering, and grief, and woe are the lot of the spouse of the despised and rejected Savior, but all

these are as things of nought if thereby she may scatter that terrible blackness which blinds the face of man and makes him a stranger to his God.

It often happens that oriental monarchs of immense possessions, are not content with burning common coals in these cressets, but frequently consume sandal-wood and other woods which give forth a delightful smell; or else, if they use ordinary coals, they sprinkle upon them frankincense and myrrh, so that a delicious perfume is spread on all sides. In the olden times, they also went to great expense in obtaining drugs, which the merchants collected from all parts of the earth, and these were carefully compounded into the renowned "powders of the merchants," which yielded a delicious variety of delicate perfumes, not to be produced by any one aromatic essence. Our inspired poet describes the travelling procession of the royal pair and fails not to dwell upon the delightful perfume of myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant, "which make the wilderness smell as a garden of roses." Wherever the Church of Christ proceeds, though her pathway is a desert, though she marches through a howling wilderness, she scatters the richest perfume. The page of history were only worthy to be blotted in oblivion were it not for the sweet odours which the Church has left upon it. Look at all past ages, and the track of the Church is still redolent with all the richest fragrance of human virtue and divine grace. Wherever the Church advances she makes manifest the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place! Men believe in Jesus, and unto the Lord faith has all the fragrance of myrrh. They love Jesus; and love in the esteem of heaven is better than frankincense. Loving Christ they endeavor to be like him, till patience, humility, brotherly-kindness, truthfulness, and all things that are honest, lovely, and of good repute, like "powders of the merchant," are spread abroad throughout the whole earth. Tell me where the Church is not, and I will tell you where sin reigns; tell me where Christ and his Church are carried, and I will tell you where you shall find every virtue that can adorn humanity, and every excellence that can magnify the excellence of the grace of God. If you would find an antidote for the deadly exhalations which lurk among this world's deserts of sin, if you would destroy the foul pestilence which reigns in the darkness of heathenism, of Popery, and of infidelity, cry unto the Mighty One—"Arise,

thou unknown traveler, arise, and bid thy servants carry thee into the midst of all this misery and death! The light of thy flaming torches shall scatter the darkness, and the burning of thy precious perfumes shall say unto evil—'Fold thy wings!' and unto the pestilence of sin—'Get thee back unto thy den!'"

Among the ten wonders which Jewish tradition ascribes to the temple, we find that the rain never extinguished the fire of the wood which was laid in order upon the altar, nor did the wind ever conquer the pillar of smoke so as to disperse or bend it. Verily it is so with the Church of God, as she cometh out of the wilderness: who shall quench her flaming lamp, or stay the incense of her golden censers? Ride on, Great Prince, and bear thy spouse with thee in thy majestic chariot, till thou hast lit the world with thy divine light, and hast made it a temple filled with a cloud of incense of sweet smell to the nostrils of Jehovah!

II. We have, secondly, to notice THE SECURITY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH AT ALL TIMES.

Of course when travelling through a wilderness, a royal procession was always in danger of attack. Arabs prowled around; wandering Bedouins were always prepared to fall upon the caravan; and more especially was this the case with a marriage procession, because then the robbers might expect to obtain many jewels, or, if not, a heavy ransom for the redemption of the bride or bridegroom by their friends. What shall I say of the attacks which have been made upon the Church of Christ, and upon Christ himself? They have been incessant. When one form of evil has been routed, another has presented itself. Evil teems with children. The frogs and lice of Egypt were not more numerous than the enemies of the Lord's anointed and his bride. Every day produces new battles. These attacks arise from all quarters; sometimes from the world, and sometimes, alas! from even professed members of the Church. Adversaries lurk everywhere, and until the Church and her Lord shall be revealed in the splendor of the Millennium, having left the wilderness for ever, we must expect to find her molested on every side. My dear brethren, we know that Christ's cause in the world is always safe because of divine protection, and because the legions of God's angels keep watch

and ward over the saints. But we have something more tangible than this. Our gracious God has been pleased to commit unto men the ministry of Christ. "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." The Lord ordaineth that chosen men should be the protectors of his Church; not that they have any power as of themselves to do anything, but He girdeth the weak with strength and maketh the feeble mighty; so then, men, even the sons of men stand in array around the travelling palanquin of Christ, to guard both the bridegroom and the bride.

Read the 7th and 8th verses carefully, and you will notice that there are enough swordsmen. "Threescore valiant men are about it." There are always enough men chosen of God to guard the Church. Poor Unbelief holds up her hands and cries—"Ah! the good men are all dead; Zion is under a cloud; the Lord hath taken away the great men; we have no valiant defenders of the faith, none such as this crisis may require!" Ah! Unbelief, let the Lord say unto thee as he did unto Elias—"Yet have I left me seven-thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." There shall be just as many warriors as the crisis shall require. We do not know where the men are to come from, but the Lord will provide. There may be sitting in the Sunday school to-day a child who shall one day shake this nation from one end to the other; there may be even here, unknown, obscure, and unobserved, the man whom God will make strong to rebuke the infamous infidelity of our age. We know not where the anointing rests. We, in our folly, would anoint Eliab or Abinadab, but God hath chosen David, the shepherd's boy, and he will bring him forth and teach him how to hurl the stone at Goliath's brow. Tremble not, neither be ye afraid; God who makes man and makes man's mouth, will find the sixty men when the sixty shall be needed. "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of them that published it." The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Observe that these warriors are men of the right mettle. "Yes," says poor trembling Little-Faith, "we have hosts of men, but they are not like the greathearts of old; they have not the qualifications which the age requires." Ah! but remember, about the bed of Solomon there are

"threescore valiant men;" and glory be unto my Master, while I may not flatter the ministry, I must not dishonor him by believing that he has left his Church without valiant defenders. There are Luthers still living who bid defiance to all adversaries; men who can say, "We count not our lives dear unto us that we may finish our course with joy, and fulfill the ministry which the Lord hath delivered unto us." Fear not; you may not at present know the valor of the Lord's body-guard, but when the Church's battle grows hotter than just now, suddenly there shall be seen a champion stalking to the front of the battle, and men shall say, "Who is this? How he wields that battle-axe! How he splits the armor of his foes! See how he piles them heaps on heaps, and mounts that hill of slaughtered enemies to smite a greater foe! Who is this?" And the answer shall be, "This is a man whom God hath found; the world knew not of him, but God has trained him in the camps of Dan, and now the Spirit moveth him to smite the Philistines.

"Ah!" I think I hear you say, "but though there may be so many men, and men of the right sort, I am afraid they are not in the right place." Look again at the text. It is written—"Threescore valiant men are ABOUT IT;" that is, there are some on that side, and some on this, some before, and some behind; they are all round the travelling chariot of Christ. "I wish there might be one in our parish," says one. Pray for him, and he who has promised to send you all good things may yet send him to you. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he may send forth laborers into his harvest." It is singular how God sometimes raises a mighty man, in this denomination, then in that, and then in the other. Suppose any body of Christians should try to monopolize all the valiant men themselves; why, they could not do it, because every side of the royal bed must be guarded, and in his own place each man is set for the defense of the gospel. The Church is compassed about with mighties, who are under God to do great exploits. If the Lord guides the flight of sparrows, surely he knows how to dispose his ministers; and let the Church be well content to let them occupy their posts until the wilderness is past, and the glory shall be revealed. The Church often makes mistakes, and thinks she can make ministers, or at least choose their position. She can do no such thing. God sends the valiant man; all you can do is to recognize his valor, and accept him as your champion; beyond that you cannot go; this is God's work, not

man's. A minister made by men, made valiant by human strength, had better betake himself at once ignominiously to his tent, for his disgrace will be certain. God who sends the men, knows where to put them, so that they may stand round about the bed, and leave no corner unprotected.

Notice that these men are all well armed. The text says expressly, "They all hold swords." What swords are these? Every valiant man in Christ's Israel holds the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. A man who is a good textuary will usually be a good divine; he who draws from the treasury of the written word will find his spoken word to be fruitful in profit to the people of God. If we use carnal reason; if we rely upon refinement, argument, eloquence, or any other form of the wisdom of man, we shall soon find our enemies will defeat us; but to ply the Word right and left; to give gospel cuts and strokes such as the devil himself cannot parry, this is to overcome the world through the Word of God. Besides this, and here is an opportunity for you all to carry swords—every valiant man in God's Israel carries the sword of prayer, which is comparable to those huge two-handed swords of the olden time, which the soldier lifted up and brought down with such tremendous force, as to cleave a man in halves: prayer is a weapon which no man can effectually resist. If you know how to use it, bring it down upon your foeman's head, and woe unto him! I would to God that in this Church there were found many of these valiant men of Israel! Indeed, would God all the Lord's servants were prophets, that it might be said of all of you that you hold swords. Your holy lives can be swords with which to smite your enemies. The tongues with which you speak of Christ lovingly, tenderly, persuasively—these may be weapons against our common enemy. Oh that when we hear the muster roll at last, it may be said of every Church-member that he held a sword! Do not tremble, ye timid ones, for the ark of the Lord; neither let your fears promote your unbelief; God knows full well how to give the right weapons to the right men, and his Church shall be secure even to the end.

Further, my brethren, these men are not only well armed, but thy are well trained. They are all expert in war; men who have endured temptations themselves; men whose souls have been exercised, men who have slain both the lion and the bear, and are men of war from their youth.

Christian ministers especially should be no novices, but both in the school of temptation, and in some school of the prophets, they should be disciplined for fight. May there be such found here! I look out daily for such among you as are taught of God, and much of my time is spent with our young soldiers to make them expert in war. O that the Lord would hear my prayers and bless our college with men, and means, and above all with his Spirit. Fools are not the men for this age. We want a sound knowledge of doctrine, practical power in preaching, and a thorough insight into the human heart; and where these by earnest prayer can be found in a man and further developed by careful teaching, we are bound to give our aid. Such men should be looked after, and no pains should be spared to bring them forth; in fact, dear friends, you ought to think it a high honor to be allowed to help in putting such men into working order. Oh! how I groan to get my friends to feel the importance of sending out trained young ministers. I give my time and my substance cheerfully, but when will the Christian Church help in this matter as it should?

Further, these men were not only well-trained, but you will see that they were always ready. Each man has his sword upon his thigh, ready to be drawn forth. I know some nominal ministers who seem to me to carry no sword at all. They keep a sheath, a very handsome sheath, with a hilt at the top and a stick inside. What is the good of such men? We want men to have swords in their sheaths, men who can speak with power, and have the demonstration of the Spirit and the power thereof resting upon them. Such men should wear their swords where they are to be got at, so that when the adversary comes they may dash at him at once. Rejoice, O daughter of Zion, thy Lord hath not left thee, even at this day, without some such men!

Observe also that these men were watchful, for "they had their sword on their thigh because of fear in the night." They never sleep, but watch always for the Church's interest. Pray ye that the Lord may raise up many such, who night and day with tears shall watch for the souls of men, and against the enemies of our Israel.

Dear friends, some of you may at times be alarmed when you hear of attacks made upon the Bible. At one time it was thought that ethnology

would prove that the human race could not be one; and Moses was terribly abused by some who said it was not possible that all of us could have come of one pair. That battle was fought, and you hear nothing of it now; it is over; learning and argument in the hand of God has routed those antagonists. Then they pelted us with shells, and bones of lizards. Geology threatened to dig our graves; but we have lived all through that struggle, and we have found geology to be a great blessing, for it has shed a new light on the first chapter of Genesis, and made us understand a great deal better what it meant. Another Amalekite advances to combat; this time it is with figures and numbers; we are to be speared with arithmetic, and slain with algebra! And what will be the result of it? Why, it will do the Bible a world of good, for we shall understand it better. I thank God whenever the Bible is attacked; for all those who know the times and seasons, begin to study just that part of Scripture more carefully, and then we get a clearer light shed upon it, and we find ourselves more confirmed than ever that this is the very truth, and that God hath revealed it to us. "Well, but who will take this matter up?" I do not know, and I do not particularly care, but I know my Master has his threescore valiant men round about his bed, and that each man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night, and never mind what the battle may be, the end of it will be for God's glory, and there shall be progress with the chariot of Christ through that which seemed as if it must overthrow it. Cast aside your fears; rejoice, and be glad, O daughter of Zion! Thy Lord is with thee in the travelling chariot, and the threescore valiant men are watching against thy foes.

III. Meanwhile, reposing in peace, let us notice THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS CHARIOT IN WHICH JESUS RIDES.

It is not difficult to convey to persons the most unacquainted with Eastern manners and customs, an idea of what this palanquin is. It is a sort of large sedan in which one or two persons may recline with ease. Of course, this palanquin could not be made of gold or silver, because then it would be too heavy for carriage; it must be made of wood; hence King Solomon made a bed, or chariot, or palanquin, of the wood of Lebanon. Then there needs to be four pillars supporting the covering and the curtains; the pillars thereof are of silver. The bottom of it should be

something massive, in order to sustain the weight of the person; the bottom thereof is of gold. The canopy on the top, is a covering of purple. Since to lie on gold would be very unpleasant, it is covered with delicate, daintily wrought carpets; and so we have the bottom thereof paved, or rather carpeted with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. Some delicate devices of needlework adorn the bottom of this bed-chariot in which the king and his spouse recline during their journey.

The doctrines of the gospel are comparable, for their antiquity, for their sweet fragrance, for their incorruptibility, to the wood of Lebanon. The gospel of Christ never decays; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Not one single truth, bears any sign of rot. And to those souls that are enlightened from above, the gospel gives forth a fragrance far richer than the wood of Lebanon.

"No beams of cedar or of fir,
Can with thy precious truth compare."

I rejoice to know concerning you as a Church, that the more you understand the doctrines of grace the better you love them. You are confirmed in the present faith, and well you may be, for our doctrine is worthy of your confidence. We are not afraid that any truth which Christ has uttered should be tried by the most stringent criticism, for not one single stone of all the bulwarks of Gospel doctrine can ever be removed out of its place. When cedars of Lebanon have yielded to the worm, even then shall the truth as it is in Jesus remain the same.

As for the silver pillars which bear up the canopy, to what should I liken them but to the attributes of God which support and guarantee the efficiency of the great atonement of Christ beneath which we are sheltered. There is the silver pillar of God's justice. He cannot, he will not smite the soul that hides beneath the cross of Christ. If Christ hath paid the debt, how is it possible that God should visit again a second time the iniquity of his people, first on their Surety, and then again on themselves? Then stands the next, the solid pillar of his power. "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; my Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Then on the other side is the pillar of his love, a silver

pillar indeed, bright and sparkling to the eye; love unchanging and eternal, strong as the power and fast as the justice which bear up the canopy on the other side. And here on this side stands immutability, another column upon which the atonement rests. If God could change, then might he cast away his blood-bought; but "because I am God and change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob rejoice." As for the covering of the chariot, it is of purple. I need not tell you where it was dyed. No Tyrian hues are mingled here. Look up, Christian, and delight thyself in that blood-red canopy which shelters thee from the sun by day and from the moon by night! From hell and heaven, from time and from eternity, art thou secured by this covering which is of purple. Oh! tempting theme to dilate upon the precious and glorious doctrine of atonement! Whenever our adversaries assail the Church, whatever may be the apparent object of their animosity, their real one is always the same, a desperate hatred to the great truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Well, as they hate it, let us love it; and under it let us take our greatest delight.

As for the bottom of this palanquin, which is of gold,—may not this represent the eternal purpose and counsel of God, that purpose which he formed in himself or ever the earth was? Pure was the decree of God, holy, wise, just, for his own glory, and most true; and as the precious things of the temple were all of gold, well may the basis of eternal love, an immutable and unchangeable decree, be compared to much fine gold. I do not know, brethren, how it is with you, but I find it most pleasant to have as the basis of my hope, the firm decree of God. Atonement covers me, I know, but still on this I must rest, Jehovah wills it; God decrees it; he hath said it, and it must be done; he hath commanded and it standeth fast. Oh! that golden sovereignty, whereon is written—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth." Dear brethren, the Apostle plainly tells us that this is the basis on which even the silver pillars rest, "for he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen us in him from before the foundation of the world."

Then, to make this all soft and pleasant to recline upon, here is pavement of needlework. Soft cushions of love on which to rest. There is a double

meaning here, for both the bride and bridegroom find rest in love. Our Lord finds rest in the love of his people. "Here will I dwell for ever." They do, as it were, make these carpets of needle-work in their love and affection for him, and in their trust and confidence in him; and here he rests. On the other hand, our Beloved spent his life to work for us our bed of rest, so that we must translate it "love of," as well as love for the daughters of Jerusalem." We rest in Christ's love; he rests in our love. Come, I need not explain further, brothers and sisters. Take your rest now to the full. You are married unto Christ; you are one with him; betrothed unto him in faithfulness, embraced in the arms of his affection. Fear not the noise of archers; the "threescore valiant men" protect you, and the king himself embraces you; now solace yourself with him; take your full of his sweet society, and say unto him from the bottom of your heart, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." Leave fighting for the evidences to the valiant men who can do it; as for you, ye daughters of Jerusalem, rest upon your Lord's bosom; leave conflict to the men ordained to fight, the men expert in war; as for you, be you expert in communion; understand the motions of Jesus' heart; look unto the lustre of his loving eyes; behold his beauties; be ravished with his divine affection to you; and now let your soul be satisfied with favor, and be full of the lovingkindness of the Lord!

IV. We close, then, by noticing THE DUTY OF EVERY BELIEVING HEART newest in connection with the subject.

Let every believer, while he recognizes himself as part of the Church inside the palanquin, yet look upon himself personally as one of the daughters of Zion, and let us each go forth this morning to meet King Solomon. It is not King David; King David is the type of Christ up to the time of his crucifixion—"despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and yet King of the Jews. King Solomon is the type of Christ ever since the day when
"They brought his chariot from above,
To bear him to his throne."

and, with sound of trumpet, conducted him to his Father's presence-chamber above. Now it is King Solomon; King Solomon for wealth, for

wisdom, for dignity, for honor, for peace. He is the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and therefore is he King Solomon going forth. Get up from your beds of sloth; rise from your chambers of ease; go forth, go forth to pray, to labor, to suffer; go forth to live in purity, leaving Babylon behind; go forth to walk with him alone, leaving even your kinsfolk and acquaintance if they will not follow with you. Wherefore tarriest thou at home when the King is abroad? "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, come ye forth to meet him," and behold King Solomon. To-day let your eye rest upon him. Let your eye behold the head that to-day is crowned with glory, wearing many crowns. Behold ye, too, his hands which once were pierced, but are now grasping the scepter. Look to his girdle where swing the keys of heaven, and death, and hell. Look to his feet, once pierced with iron, but now set upon the dragon's head. Behold his legs, like fine brass, as if they glowed in a furnace. Look at his heart, that bosom which heaves with love to you, and when you have surveyed him from head to foot exclaim, "Yea, he is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Does sin prevail? Behold King Solomon. Have doubts and fears arisen? Behold King Jesus. Are you troubled, and does your enemy annoy you? Look up to him, behold king Solomon. I pray you remember the light in which you are to behold him. Do not think that Christ has lost his former power. Behold him as he was at Pentecost, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals. Oh! how glorious was our Lord when the Church crowned him with her zeal, and the arrows went abroad, and three thousand fell slain by his right hand to be made alive by the breath of his mouth! Oh, how these early saints crowned him, when they brought of their substance and laid it at the apostle's feet, neither did any man count that ought he had was his own. They crowned him with their heart's purest love; the Church had on her brow her bridal-wreath, and her husband wore his nuptial crown. Behold him to-day as wearing that crown still, for he is the same Christ, and do you go forth to meet him, and labor for him, and love him as the first saints did.

Forget not that his mother is to crown him soon in the day of his espousals. He is our brother as well as our husband, and the Church is his mother as well as ours. Oh! she is to crown him soon! The day of his espousals draweth nigh. Hark! I hear the trumpet sound! Jesus comes,

and his feet stand upon Mount Olivet; kings and princes lick the dust before him; he gathers sheaves of sceptres beneath his arm even as the mower gathereth wheat with the sickle. He treadeth on principalities and powers, the young lion and the dragon doth he trample under foot. And now his saints cry, "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The long-expected one is come, and his mother crowns him in the day of his espousals! Courage, poor heart, courage! Go forth and see King Solomon to-day as he is to lie, and remember,

"It doth not yet appear
How great we shall be made;
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head."

When we look on Him; let us rejoice that this is to be our glory. We are to put off this sackcloth and put on scarlet and fine linen. The dust is to be wiped from our brow and the sweat from our face; the shackles are to be taken from our wrist, and the gyves from our legs; and we are to be emancipated, ennobled, glorified, made partners with Christ in all his splendor, and taught to reign with him world without end.

But there are some here that I can hardly call the daughters of Jerusalem, yet they are always round about Zion's gate. Oh, there are many of you who are always listening to our voice, and joining in our hymns, and yet you have not seen our Master yet! Go forth; leave your sinful pleasures, and leave your self-righteousness too; go forth and behold King Solomon. Look to Jesus, sinner, bleeding on the cross, and as thou lookest, love and trust; and I know that as soon as thou hast seen him and trusted him, thou wilt have a crown to put upon his head. It will be the day of thine espousal unto him, and thou wilt crown him with such a crown. Thou wilt decorate that crown with jewels dug from the secret mine of thy deepest heart, and having made this crown, thou wilt put it on his head, and fall down before him and sing—

"All hail the power of Jesu's name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all."

Well, then, we will lay aside every fear, and continue all the day gazing upon our matchless Christ, adoring him, exalting him, and having fellowship with him; for all is well; his travelling chariot is always safe, and soon will he step out of it with his bride at his right hand, and the world shall be astonished to behold the beauties of the royal pair when he shall be exalted, and they that are with him, before the presence of his Father and all the holy angels!

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Two Sights Which I Shall Never Forget

I entered the town of Mentone just as the sun was going down, and I was struck by the number of persons who were congregated upon the beach, and along the road which skirts the sea. They were all gazing intently at a boat which was moving slowly, although rowed by several men. Evidently they were dragging a dead weight behind the boat, and one which needed to be tenderly towed along. Upon making inquiry, we learned that the corpse of a sailor had just been met with, and they were bringing it on shore for burial. This information did not tempt us to remain a spectator, but hastened us into our hotel, wondering at the morbid curiosity which could be attracted by corruption, and find a desirable sensation in gazing upon a putrid corpse. From our window we saw a coffin carried down to the shore, and felt greatly relieved with the hope that now the poor drowned one would be quietly and decently laid asleep in the lap of mother earth.

As this occurred, as we have before said, just as we entered the place where we hoped to rest and recruit our health, it made a deep impression upon us. We are not in the least degree superstitious, and do not regard events as omens one way or another, but the incident was a sad one, and we were pensive, and therefore it cast a natural gloom over us, and at the

same time engraved itself upon our memory. Unknown victim of the sea, thou hast a memorial in our heart!

The reflections which rushed upon our mind we have committed to paper, and here they are. Is not the church of God like that boat, and is she not encumbered by a mass of dead professors of religion who draw upon her strength, impede her progress, and spread around her an ill savor? Yes, it is even so, and our heart is heavy because we see it under our own eye every day. Persons have united themselves with the church who have neither part nor lot in vital godliness; they lead no assistance, they can lend none, for they have no spiritual strength, but they are a drag upon our energies, for we have to keep them in something like decent motion, and must carry them with us till they are laid in the grave. The case is worse in reality than our picture represents, for the dead are in the boat with the living, and are thus able to cause greater grief of heart to the true saints of God. We are blamed for the actions of all our fellow-members; their offensive worldliness both annoys us and renders us unsavory to others. It is a terrible thing to see one-half of a church praying and the other half trifling. We cannot soon forget our horror at hearing that while the Holy Ghost was visiting a church with revival, there were members in that very church who were engaged till far into the morning in worldly amusements. We did not believe our own ears; we should as soon have thought of hearing that the apostles sang profane songs at the moment of the Pentecost. It was not that the season was untimely, we care little for that, but the act itself betrayed a taste which is not consistent with true religion. Of course, the world laid this to the door of the church, and really devout people had to suffer for the sins of others, and God's Holy Spirit was grieved by such offenses, which he saw, though the godly ones saw it not. The sincere and humble followers of Jesus in that church would hardly have believed such conduct possible had it come under their own eyes, and those who had the sorrow of knowing it to be true felt a depression of heart worse than any bodily sickness could inflict. If the church were unmixed and pure her growth would be far more rapid, for the tares which we cannot uproot weaken the wheat among which they live. The tone of spirituality is lowered throughout the whole body by the worldliness of the few. Sin outside the church is comparatively little harmful to her; she sees it and battles with it, but

when the traitor is within her own gates the mischief which it works is terrible. Troy could not be taken by open assault, but the crafty scheme of the wooden horse filled with armed men worked the will of the Greeks; once dragged within the walls, the warriors concealed within were able to open the city gates, and the foes soon swarmed in every street, and Troy fell to rise no more. Almighty watchfulness will avert such ruin from the church of God, but apart from the divine keeping the danger is quite as imminent.

We wish that every church member would recognize the fact that he either helps or hinders the church to which he belongs. He becomes a part of the impedimenta of the army, rendering its march the more laborious, unless he adds to her actual fighting force. He who prays, labors, and lives consistently with his profession, is an accession to her real power; he may be an obscure individual, endowed with but one talent, and most at home in the rear rank, and yet he may be of the utmost value to the whole host, and when the war is over he will share in the rewards of victory which will fall to the lot of the armies of the living God. On the other hand, if he be prayerless, idle, and worldly, no matter how rich, how well educated, or how respected he may be, he is a dead weight, a mere piece of baggage, a cause of non-success, an Achan in the camp of Israel. Which, dear reader, are you at this moment?

The second memorable sight which now rises before us was seen from the garden of that right worthy and renowned physician, Dr. Bennett, to whom Mentone owes its present prosperity. Looking out to sea beyond a headland, we saw, when the doctor had pointed it out to us, a circle of commotion in the waters, as if a stream were boiling and bubbling from the bottom of the ocean. It was a spring of fresh water rising from the depths of the sea to the surface. There is a similar spring off the coast of Spezzia, which sends up an immense volume of sweet water, despite the overlying floods of brine. Such a phenomenon may appear to be impossible, but there it was before our own eyes, and at any time the traveler may see it for himself—a fountain of fresh water in the midst of the salt sea!

Have we not here a suggestive image of the power of divine grace?

Coming down from the inexhaustible reservoir in which all fullness dwells, which is placed in the highest heavens, the blessed stream of grace has a forceful current which seeks to rise towards its own level, and therefore it wells up with matchless energy. It may be that the possessor of this inward spring has a thousand memories of sin, acquired habits of evil, and a dense mass of ignorance and prejudice overwhelming him; yet the new life must and will reveal itself; it forces its way, it rises to the surface, it clears an area for its own energies, it will not be choked up or repressed. Or the illustration may refer to true religion in a neighborhood where everything is opposed to it, or in an age when the spirit of the many is in deadly hostility to it. Did not Christianity rise up like a spring from the dark floor of some lone ocean cave, far down below the bottom of the mountains? Did it not appear certain that the floods of heathenism would utterly swallow up a power so insignificant? How could it rise to the surface of human history? It might bubble on where obscure inferior creatures would be its sole observers, but the great sea would utterly ignore its existence, its sweet waters would not even alleviate the saltiness of the brine. But what is the truth of the matter? Our holy faith burst through Judaism, philosophy and idolatry, came into public notice, blessed the nations, and claimed for itself an ever widening sphere. Its fountain has risen through the ocean's salt waves, and rises still, yea, it is transforming the waters and healing them; and through its influence there shall come a day in which there shall be no sea of sin and sorrow, for this "fount of every blessing" shall have made of it a reservoir of the water of life.

A good man placed in a London court, or any of the slums of a huge city, labors under terrible disadvantages. All around him sin and ignorance abound. His religion is no sooner perceived than it is ridiculed, he becomes the butt of drunken jokes, the theme of riotous songs. Will he yield the point and cease from the fear of the Lord? He will if he be a hypocrite; on the other hand, if he be indeed a partaker of the living water which Jesus gives, it will be in him a well of water, springing up, and despite all opposition it must and will flow forth. At first in patience he will possess his soul and hold his own, by and by he will win respect and silence slander, next he will influence a few less evil than their neighbors, and in the end his vital godliness will subdue all things unto itself. One of

the most cheering results of our ministry is the consistency of the extremely poor, whose testimony is borne in places which it is almost unsafe to traverse at night. Their honesty, sobriety, and simple faith are sermons to the poor around them, which are not forgotten. Men are astonished when they see godliness under such circumstances, their attention is aroused, their wonder is excited, and in the presence of the strange sight they confess that this is the finger of God. The unconquerable energy of faith and love are the abiding miracles of the church, by which the candid are convinced and gainsayers are silenced.

Just now, what with ritualism and rationalism it might have been feared that gospel life was smothered in Great Britain. The outbreak of the revival in many parts of the land has effectually banished all the fears of believers, and in a great measure stayed the boastings of skeptics. The living water is welling up. Behold it yonder in Scotland troubling the once calm surface of society. See how it boils and bubbles up in Edinburgh and Glasgow! It makes the sea to boil like a pot. It pierces the overwhelming mass of sin, it clears its own channel, it rejoices to bless the sons of men. Spring up, O well! Sing ye unto it!

Dear reader, is there life of this order in you, or are you dead in sin? Look on this picture and on that: we have put before you death and life; which is most like your own condition? If compelled to condemn yourself, remember there is one near at hand of whom it is written, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

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Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats?

An evil is in the professed camp of the Lord, so gross in its impudence, that the most shortsighted can hardly fail to notice it during the past few years. It has developed at an abnormal rate, even for evil. It has worked

like leaven until the whole lump ferments. The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them.

From speaking out as the Puritans did, the church has gradually toned down her testimony, then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she tolerated them in her borders. Now she has adopted them under the plea of reaching the masses.

My first contention is that providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the church. If it is a Christian work, why did not Christ speak of it? "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That is clear enough. So it would have been if He had added, "and provide amusement for those who do not relish the gospel." No such words, however, are to be found. It did not seem to occur to him.

Then again, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers .., for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:11-12). Where do entertainers come in? The Holy Spirit is silent concerning them. Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people or because they refused? The concert has no martyr roll.

Again, providing amusement is in direct antagonism to the teaching and life of Christ and all his apostles. What was the attitude of the church to the world? Ye are the salt" (Matt. 5:13), not the sugar candy---something the world will spit out not swallow. Short and sharp was the utterance, "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8:22) He was in awful earnestness.

Had Christ introduced more of the bright and pleasant elements into his mission, he would have been more popular when they went back, because of the searching nature of His teaching. I do not hear him say, "Run after these people Peter and tell them we will have a different style of service tomorrow, something short and attractive with little preaching. We will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it. Be quick Peter, we must get the people somehow." Jesus pitied sinners, sighed and wept over them, but never sought to amuse them.

In vain will the Epistles be searched to find any trace of this gospel of amusement! Their message is, "Come out, keep out, keep clean out!" Anything approaching fooling is conspicuous by its absence. They had boundless confidence in the gospel and employed no other weapon.

After Peter and John were locked up for preaching, the church had a prayer meeting but they did not pray, "Lord grant unto thy servants that by a wise and discriminating use of innocent recreation we may show these people how happy we are." If they ceased not from preaching Christ, they had not time for arranging entertainments. Scattered by persecution, they went everywhere preaching the gospel. They turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). That is the only difference! Lord, clear the church of all the rot and rubbish the devil has imposed on her, and bring us back to apostolic methods.

Lastly, the mission of amusement fails to effect the end desired. It works havoc among young converts. Let the careless and scoffers, who thank God because the church met them halfway, speak and testify. Let the heavy laden who found peace through the concert not keep silent! Let the drunkard to whom the dramatic entertainment has been God's link in the chain of the conversion, stand up! There are none to answer. The mission of amusement produces no converts. The need of the hour for today's ministry is believing scholarship joined with earnest spirituality, the one springing from the other as fruit from the root. The need is biblical doctrine, so understood and felt, that it sets men on fire.

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Peace at Home, and Prosperity Abroad

"He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly."—Psalm 147:14.-15.

Pardon me, my brethren, if I attempt no exposition whatever of the text, but simply endeavor to address you upon what I think is an inference from it, or at least a reflection to which it might readily give rise. The Psalmist is here describing the prosperity of Jerusalem, and he connects that prosperity with the progress and diffusion of the Word of God. He is teaching us I think just this great truth, that there is an intimate connection between the establishment and the building of our Zion at home, and the going forth and the spread of God's Word abroad, both in the provinces of our own land, and throughout the regions of the world. Our own churches must be in a prosperous state. AS the second verse hath it—"the Lord doth build up Jerusalem," we may then rest assured that "he will gather together the outcasts of Israel." If there be in the churches of our own highly-favored land a healthiness of spirit and an abundance of the grace of God, we need not fear but that all our operations will be carried on with success. God shall greatly crown our endeavors, and give us to see our heart's desire. If this be not precisely the critical meaning of the text, then let me just say I shall use it in this sense as a motto. The subject of this evening's discourse will be the connection between a healthy church at home, and the increase of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

First, let me very briefly advert to the main points which constitute a healthy state in the Church of Christ. Under what conditions should we be warranted in applying to it the glowing description of this Psalm—"He hath blessed thy children within thee; he maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of wheat." When we have described this healthiness, we shall proceed to show the connection between this and the sending forth of God's commandment upon earth—the running swiftly of his word; and then we shall conclude by pushing this principle home to the necessary inference.

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THE POINTS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE HEALTHINESS OF THE CHURCH AT HOME?

To begin with the most important—the true piety of an her members. A Church can never be in a sound and satisfactory state for labor, she never can be in such a condition that God can smile upon her complacently, if she be mixed up with the world, if her sons and daughters be not sufficiently distinguished from the world to be manifestly God's people. if we take into our churches those who are not converted, we swell our numbers, but we diminish our real strength. We might need to purchase a larger church-book, we might, perhaps, be able to parade our numbers before the world, and we might even flatter ourselves with our apparent prosperity till we intoxicated our own brain, but we should be going backward when we think we are going forward. We have not conquered the world; we have only yielded to it. We have not brought the world up to us, we have only brought ourselves down to it. We have not Christianized an ungodly generation, but we have adulterated Christianity. We have brought the chaste spouse of Christ to commit fornication among the people. We cannot possibly be too strict in the examination of those who are proposed for church fellowship. I will grant you, there are methods by which bigotry may exclude a large proportion of those whom God has called, putting such an extent of knowledge as the test of Christian experience, that many of the lambs of the flock stand bleating without the fold, and are never enabled to come and partake of its pasturage. This evil, doubtless, is to be avoided. But on the other hand, it is quite possible that the fullest charity with which the mildness of our Savior's mind and the love of the Spirit can imbue us, may be blended with the sternest firmness in executing a sacred trust, and with the most prudent discretion in maintaining the purity of discipleship, when we are engaged in the acceptance or rejection of candidates for the fellowship of the visible Church. If we could to-morrow bring into the Church a sufficient number of ungodly but moral men to double our numbers, to double our subscriptions, to double our places of worship, to enable us to double the number of our missionaries, we should by succumbing to the temptation procure a curse instead of a blessing. In our purity, and in our purity alone we stand. Let us once lose our distinctive principles, let us

once come back and attempt to nationalize the Church, and bring ourselves from the distinction we have sought to maintain between the Church and the world, and God's blessing will be withdrawn from us; we shall cease to be strong within, and mighty without. Oh I that God might grant to each of us, who are the pastors of the Church, that unceasing vigilance and constant watchfulness whereby we shall be able to detect the wolves in sheep's clothing, and whereby we shall be able to say calmly, sternly, yet lovingly, to those who come before us seeking communion, without satisfactory evident that they belong to the living family of God, "You must go your way until the Spirit of God hath touched your heart, for until you have received the living faith in Jesus, we cannot receive you into the number of his faithful ones."

Next to the sincere piety of all our Church members, I think we must look very carefully and very steadfastly to the soundness of that gospel which we proclaim and preach. Soundness I say—and here possibly I may be touching upon a delicate subject, but what signifieth if that subject be of the utmost and highest importance ¹ There should be, I aver, in the declaration of the ministers of Christ, not uniformity, for that is not consistent with life, but unity which is not only consistent with life, but which is one of the highest marks of a healthy existence. I do not think the time will ever come when we shall all of us see eye to eye, and shall all use the same terms and phrases in setting forth doctrinal truths. I do not imagine there ever will be a period, unless it should be in that long-looked for millennium, when every brother thou be able to subscribe to every other brother's creed; when we shall be identical in our apprehensions, experiences, and expositions of the gospel in the fullest sense of the word. But I do maintain there should be, and there must be if our churches are to be healthy and sound, a constant adherence to the fundamental doctrines of divine truth. I should be prepared to go a very long way for charity's sake, and admit that very much of the discussion which has existed even between Arminians and Calvinists has not been a discussion about vital truth, but about the terms in which that vital truth shall be stated. When I have read the conflict between that mighty man who made these walls echo with his voice. Mr. Whitfield, and that other mighty man equally useful in his day, Mr. Wesley, I have felt that they contended for the same truths, and that the vitality of Godliness was not

mainly at issue in the controversy. But, my brethren, if it should ever come to be a matter which casts doubts upon the divinity of Christ, or the personality of the Holy Ghost, if it should come to a matter of using gospel terms in a sense the most contrary to that which has ever been attached to them in any age of the truth; if it should ever come to the marring and spoiling of our ideas of Divine justice, and of that great atonement which is the basis of the whole gospel, as they have been delivered to us; then it is time my brethren once for all that the scabbard be thrown aside, that the sword be drawn. Against any who assails those precious vital truths which constitute the heart of our holy religion, we must contend even to the death. It is not possible that an affirmative and negative can be two views of the same truth. We are continually told when one man contradicts another, that he does but see with other eyes. Nay, my brethren, the one man is blind, he does not see at all, the other sees, having the eyes of his understanding enlightened. There may be two views of truth, but two views of truth cannot be directly antagonistic. One must be the true view and the other the false view. No stretch of my imagination can ever allow me to anticipate the time can come when "yes" and "no" can lie comfortably down in the same bed. I cannot conceive by any means there ever can be a matrimonial alliance between positive and negative. Think ye such things might exist! Verily there were giants at one time, when the sons of God saw the daughters of men; and we may live to see gigantic heresies, when God's own children may look upon the fair daughters of philosophy, and monster delusions shall stalk across the earth. A want of union about truth too clearly proves that the body of the Church is not in a healthy state. No man's system can be said to be in a normal condition if that man prefers ashes to bread, and prefers ditch water to that which flows from the bubbling fountain. A man must be unhealthy or he would not use such garbage. We must look to the preservation of the health of the Church. Alas! if her doctrines be tainted, her faith will not be maintained, and the Church being unsound, can tell what next may occur.

But not to tarry longer here, it seems to me the next important point with regard to the true healthiness of the Church at home, will be more and more of the spirit of union. This Society happily represents in a large degree this saved bond of brotherhood. It may have become somewhat

denominational, it was never intended to be; nor is it the fault of the maintainers, it is not because they have made it exclusive but because other denominations have. somewhat seceded, and established societies of their own. The London Missionary Society comprehended all Christian men, whether in the Establishment or not. I believe we are an eligible to become members, and all may, as far as we can, assist in sending forward the gospel by its means. But alas I there lingers amongst our Churches—and I hope it is but a lingering of that which must presently expire—there lingers still a spirit of disunion, because we do not agree in ceremonies. We must needs have livens communions, because we cannot see eye to eye in discipline, while nevertheless we are really and vitally one. We must have I suppose different walks, and cannot commune and converse with one another as members of the same family, and as parts of the same divine body. Whenever the foot is at enmity with the hand there must be something like madness in the body; there cannot be a sound mind within that frame which is divided against itself. And if there be among us any remnants of the spirit of division; if there be aught in us that would make us excommunicate and cut off brethren, because we cannot see with them in all the points of the spiritual compass, though we agree in the main; if it be so, then there must be somewhere or other an unhealthy disease, there must be grey hairs here and there, which have stolen upon us though we knew it not. Oh my heart longs to see a more thorough union among the ministers of Christ Jesus. I think there is more of it than we sometimes believe. I am sure the more we come to know one another, the better we love each other. Distrust may arise from want of personal acquaintance; we need more frequently to come into company; and if the Churches were more active, so as to throw us into contact, I think we should discover more of a real unity than perhaps we think has began to exist. And oh I that this unity may grow and continue, and may not be merely an evangelical alliance in form, but a spiritual confederation in fact; that its enunciation may come from every lip and every heart, and that there may be a real love toward every other member of that alliance, in carrying out its principles to the fullest and the greatest extent.

These three points—purity of life, soundness of doctrine, and unity of the ministers of the Church of Christ—will help to constitute a healthy

Church at home. All these things, however, will never avail unless there be added another, namely, constant activity. We all have our times when we feel dull, and listless, and heavy, when we would rather be in bed all day than get up, rather sit in the chair than go to business or enter the pulpit; or when we are in the pulpit, we find our brain does not work, and we cannot put forth the energy that we would. The tongue may be as a ready writer, but we cannot speak as we would desire. We feel at times that we are not well, that there is something wrong in our system. And the Church every now and then gets into the same state. At intervals some earnest speech stirs the members up to spasmodic action, then they return again to their apathy and Laodicean lukewarmness. Sometimes they feel as if they would carry all by storm, but anon they sit down again in calm security. We have hundreds of our churches, from which I continually receive an answer like this to the enquiry, "How do you prosper?"—"Well, we are not increasing much, we have added no souls to the Church, but we are very comfortable." That very comfortableness has stolen upon a large proportion of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a marvel that they should be comfortable while souls are dying, and sinners perishing; when hell is filling, and the kingdom of Christ is not extending. But yet quite comfortable they are; and they come to look upon the revivals and increase to the Church as wonders and prodigies, rather like comets that come now and then, than like suns which are to abide with us; and they grow into the habit of questioning the revival spirit, and thinking that when the Church is alive, she has become excited, that she has been dram drinking. and is intoxicated, instead of behaving that it is just her actual evidence of health. When she is in health she is at work without her hands, praying with an her tongues, weeping with an her eyes, and agonizing with God in prayer with all the might of her many intercessors. Oh, my brethren, we are an wrong when we think that the Church is healthy when it is comfortable and still. Is the health of the stagnant pool, the health of the grave-yard, the health of a fainting fit—a fit that is on the very verge of death. God be pleased to let loose some blood from we, that we may discover what the Church really is when she shall put forth all her energy. If we saw a queen sitting upon a heap of rubbish, her hair disheveled, and dirt upon her garments, if she never stirs hand or foot, but sits down sleeping on in her misery, could you think she is a queen in all her dignity? Rise up thou Virgin Daughter

of Zion, and let us behold thee in thy beauty; shake thyself from the dust, and put on thy beautiful garments, and ascend to thy throne—then shall men see what thou art. When thou art idle, and careless, and prayerless, thou art sick and ready to die, but when thou art anxious, and striving, and travailing, then art thou in the state in which thy Lord would have thee; thou dost bless him and he hath blessed thee.

One more point, and I will conclude this description of the Church's healthiness. The Church is never healthy except when she abounds in prayer. I have known prayer meetings that have been like the bells to the parish steeple—a very poor parish where there were never enough bells to ring a chime. The minister has had to pray twice and read a long chapter, in order to spin out the time, or to meet the want yet more efficiently, he has caned upon a brother who had the gift of supplicating for twenty-five minutes, and then concluded by asking pardon for his short comings. And then the few friends, the bold-hearted, self-denying martyrs, who went to hear the Word of God, were obliged to endure the torture of hearing such a prayer as that. Those brethren must come and go, and never feel that God has been in their midst, that they have never been near to the throne of God, never had the wrestling with the angel, never brought a blessing down, for the man has been praying against time, "an occupying of the few minuted, as they call it, and there was no real intercession or drawing near to God. Now, what Church can be considered to be as Christ would have her, when her members meet to pray, and they constitute but a handful? I care not if the place is crowded at your other services, the Church is not prosperous if the prayer-meetings be thin. It signifies nothing if that Church has sent up a hundred, or five hundred, or a thousand pounds to the Missionary Society—write "Ichabod" on her walls, unless the brethren meet together for prayer. The most erudite minister may instruct the people; the most earnest preacher may plead God's cause with men, but if he bath not with him a band of men who plead man's cause with God, his pleadings will be in vain. Shut up that house in which men have ceased to pray; or if you open it, let your opening be a meeting for hearty and earnest prayer. I have to mourn and confess in my own case, that I have had to feel in myself—and I think I can speak for many others—a want of prayerfulness with regard to missionary effort especially. These things do not meet us

as the destitution of London does; for the City Missionaries, and for the sinners of our own congregations, I trust we do not need arguments to make us pray. These arguments are before us every day. We do pray for our own families, and our own congregations, but the heathens are across the sea, many miles away. We may now and then see a Master in the street, or the dark face of a Hindoo, and then our soul breathes a silent ejaculation; but alas! for the most part, many Christians might say whole months pass with them without carrying the cause of the heathen, who are in darkness, before the throne of God; and how can we expect, while this unhealthiness exists among us, that God will bless our missionary operations. Zion must avail before she can bring forth children. She may use all her weapons but if she keep back the great battering-ram of prayer, she will never break the walls of the spiritual Jericho. She may use every other instrument, but unless she takes John Bunyan's weapon of "all-prayer," she will never put to rout the great enemy of souls. Yes, my brethren, we want faithfulness, we want healthiness, we want a prayerful spirit given to us, then we may conclude that all is well with us.

It shall be left to each individual heart, and each member of the Church, to answer for himself the question, whether his own Church is in a state of spiritual health, taking these things as a test; namely, purity, soundness, unity, and prayerfulness.

II. I have now to show THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A HEALTHY CHURCH AT HOME AND THE SPREAD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM ABROAD.

To the mind of the simple this thing will be clear enough. Suppose all the Churches to degenerate into a lack of life, and into nearness to spiritual death. Suppose the pulpit in our land gives an uncertain sound. As a result God's people begin to forsake the assembling of themselves together, no crowds gather to hear the Word; places begin to get empty prayer-meetings become more and more deserted; the efforts of the Church may be still carried on, but they are merely a matter of routine; there is no life, no heart in it. I am supposing a case you see, a case which I trust we never may see. Things get worse and worse; the doctrines of the gospel become expunged and unknown; they that fear the Lord no more

speak one to another. Still for a little time the money continues to be brought into the Society, and foreign missions are sustained. Can you not imagine reading in the next report, "We have had no converts this year; our income is still maintained; but notwithstanding that, our brethren feel that they are laboring under the greatest possible disadvantages; in fact, some of them wish to return home and renounce the work." Another year—the missionary spirit has grown cold in the Churches, in funds decrease. Another year, and yet another, it becomes a moot point among us as to whether missions are necessary or not. We have come at last to the more advanced point which some have already reached, and begin to question whether Mahomet and Confucius had not a revelation from God as well as Jesus Christ. And now we begin to say, "Is it needful that we should extend the gospel abroad at all? We have lost faith in it; we see it does nothing at home, shall we send that across the sea which is a drug on the market here, and distribute as a healing for the wounds of the daughters of Zidon and of Tyre that which hath not healed the daughter of Jerusalem?" I can conceive that first one station then another would be given up, those that would be maintained would only be kept up by reason of an old custom which was recollected to have existed in the absurd days of Evangelists. I can imagine the Church degenerating further, and further, and further, till at last her unhealthiness clearly showed that it would be impossible that it ever could be maintained abroad. You have only to look abroad upon nature, and you will soon find analogies to this. There is a well of water springing up, and the people of the district flock to it, it is said to have healthy properties; men come and dome thereat and are refreshed. Suddenly the secret spring begins to fail; by some means or other the water is removed to another place, and the spring is no more there. You can conceive that this place would cease to be a thoroughfare; there would no longer be passengers. Where multitudes of men and women were wont to drink with joy and gladness, there is not a single person to be seen. Or, suppose again, there is the sun in its sphere shedding light on all the planets, and with its attractive power making them move with regularity in their orbits Suddenly the sun's fire dies out; its attractive power decreases also, and becomes extinguished. Can you not imagine that the result must be fatal to all the planets that revolve around it I How shall they be sustained in their light and heat, or how shall they be kept in their spheres when once the power

that kept them there is gone? No, prophecy is fulfilled; the sun is turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the stars fall like withered fig-leaves from the tree.

And what is the Church to our missionary stations but like the sun? Is it not her light that shines? Do they not receive from her their instructions in the Word of God—the light of the world? And are not; those stations the rays from the great central luminary? Let her lose her power and her light, and what must become of the rest of the world? Must not total blank darkness cover all the nations? Oh I yes, my brethren, if we do not know that, we soon should know it if God should ever put us to the test. If once England's glory were extinguished, if once the Christianity of America were put out, where were all the vital godliness then? How should those agencies which depend upon us! be sustained if our home piety were once brought to nought? No; we must have the bars of our gates strengthened, there must be peace in our borders, and we must. be filled with the finest wheat, or else God s Word will not run very quickly, nor will his commandment be sent faith upon the earth.

Let me endeavor very briefly to shows what this connection is. There is a direct connection between the primeness of the Church at hone and the progress of Christianity abroad—a direct connection; we shall have to speak of the more indirect connection by-and-bye. The inconsistencies of English Christians have proved one of the greatest barriers to the progress of Christ's kingdom in other lands. An excellent minister of the Church in France told me—and told it with a sorrowful earnestness too—that Protestantism received a severe check in Paris from the inconsistent conduct of Christian men there, those who protested Protestantism at least, if they were not members of our Churches. "Now sir," said he, "when a man visits Paris, who is a Protestant—an English Protestant—I will not say is an actual member of your Church certainly,—when he comes to Paris, he neglects all attendance to the Sabbath-day;" and Romanists, if spoken to about their constant breach of the holy day, will reply to the Reformed Christians of France, "Look to the Protestants of Great Britain when they are here; do they attend to their religion abroad any better than we do?"

I have been assured by several pastors living in Paris, that it is a frightful and lamentable fact, that men when they go on the Continent seem to go there to get rid of their religion, when they land on those shores they assume the garb of a traveler, and think they may be permitted to attend Roman Catholic places of worship on the Lord's day, and they are not seen worshipping God with their brethren where the worship in the English language is still maintained. I can assure you that I was affectionately requested to avail myself of an early opportunity to make a prominent complaint against the Christianity of England for its inconsistency abroad. In the name of the pastors of France I speak, and in the name of the pastors of l'Oratoire I think I speak it also—I think I speak for five of them at least—I do beseech of Christian men who are going abroad, not to permit themselves to forget their Christianity, but to remember that the eyes of men are still upon them, and if not the eyes of men certainly the eyes of God.

Let me give you another fact, which proves that when the Church is unsound home she will not go on well abroad. In the late Report of the Baptist Missionary Society J observed a great trouble through which certain stations have lately passed; a trouble which they have survived, but which materially checked their usefulness. Certain brethren holding rather extreme Church views thought it necessary, instead of carrying on operations among the pure heathen, to set to work to convert those who were Christians already to their own creed, and the effect in the villages where they tried their scheme was, that by dint of giving more charity than a poorer society could afford to give, they managed to decoy a large proportion of the congregations to a different form of Protestant service. The result was just this—they were informed by these pastors—good men doubtless—that the sect to which they once belonged was an ignoble body in its own country, and did not possess any influence. And for the first time the Hindoos answered that there were Christian men who could depreciate one another—that there were professors of this one religion who had a greater dislike to one another than any two sects of Heathenism ever had. The effect upon the minds of the villagers was not merely disastrous to that one mission, but to Christianity herself. They began to suspect that the house that was divided against itself could not have its foundations upon truth.

My brethren, when we shall once come to unity of doctrine, and to purity and consistency of life, the direct agency of our Church members, and of our missionaries upon the heathen world, will be far more healthy and effective than it is. I do not doubt, if I had a wider and more extensive knowledge of the proceedings of the Church in other lands, I could multiply instances of this kind, in which our faults at home have been very great draw-backs upon our success abroad.

And yet the agency, I think, may be considered in the main to be indirect; but nevertheless, as potent as if it were direct. If our Churches be not true, if they be not kept by God, if they be not pure and holy, and prayerful, they will begin to lose the missionary spirit, and when the missionary spirit evaporates, of what use will be the missionary body? Bury it; yes, in Bloomfield Street will we dig its grave, or in Moorgate Street shall we make a vault I Put on its shroud, and let it have a tearful burial, for if the spirit of missions be lost in the Churches, it would be no use trying to maintain the semblance of the body of the Society. We all know what the missionary spirit is, and yet we could not any of us exactly describe it. It is a sort of thing that sets a man longing to see others saved, and makes him pant especially for those who have no means of grace in their own lands, that they may have those means carried to them, that they may be saved. This leads them to self-denying, and to earnest prayer for those that are diligent servants. Extinguish the healthiness of the Church, and you have lost that spirit. We can never expect the ruddy flush of health upon the cheek, unless there is health within. The missionary spirit is just that bloom, which will soon be taken away if consumption should seize upon the frame. The missionary spirit can only be maintained by the maintenance of life and vitality in the Church. But further, if you take away the missionary spirit; of course all prayerfulness, and with that an powerful. ness to rend the clouds of heaven is withdrawn. Let the winds of the Holy Spirit, brethren, once depart from our Churches at home, our Missionary Society shall be as a ship at sea with her sails an spread, and her spars well rigged, but without a breath of air to move her towards her port. There she shall lie till she perishes upon the rocks, or founders in a calm. She can be of no service; she can bring no glory to her God, carry no cargo of living spirits up to the port of

heaven, unless there be prayer at home to wake up all the winds, and let them loose upon her to speed her on her destined course. With that want of prayer too, you must remember you suspend all hopes of finding fresh missionaries. I have often wondered whether our Churches are choosing the best means to find out young men who would be useful in the mission field. There is growing now-a-days a lack of ministers for our own pulpits. Why it is so I cannot tell, except that it strikes me, that young men are not sufficiently encouraged when they have preaching abilities, to endeavor to do their best to exercise them. I do know a brother who ever makes it a rule, if a young man displays any sort of ability, and applies to him for a recommendation for College or otherwise,—positively to throttle him if he can. "You," he says. "Who are you? I am sure you will never make a minister, you can only talk, sir—you are no good." And many a young man who might have been usefully employed in that one Church has been driven away from it to seek some more congenial spirit, because he has been put back in his attempts to do some service. Of course if we never make an attempt to grow ministers, or to bring them out from the world, train them up and guide them to the place where their talents may be proved, we shall not have a right to expect God's blessing in this matter. Only cease to cultivate wheat, and you shall have but very little of it. God does raise men and send them out; but at time he works by means. And he makes the Church use means to bring out members. The old Church of the Waldenses used the best means I think that ever will be devised. Every pastor of the Church had one young man with him, and tried to train him up, keeping him in habitual conversation with him, and teaching him what he knew of pastoral discipline and of the preaching of the Word. So that when the one minister died, they had not to look for a successor, there he was ready to hand among the young men who had come out of that Church. Our nation used to boast that it could grow everything it needed; we do not care for the boast in these free-trade times, but we do say that our Churches ought to grow All that they need for themselves. They ought not always to go a hundred miles to get pastors when they could obtain them amongst themselves. They do not-go abroad for deacons! Why not have pastors from among themselves that were raised from childhood in the Church? Ah! should we once become unsound in our Churches, and prayer become cold, and where are the men to come from that shall succeed those heroes of Christ whose

blood was shed by heathen hands? Where shall we find the successors to Knuibb and Williams? Where shall we find the successors to Moffat and Livingstone, unless the healthy tone of Christian self-denial and holy firmness of divine fervor be kept up and maintained? Do you imagine you can enlist them from abroad? Do you think they will spring up at your can? Oh, no. It is one thing to obtain money to keep a man, to obtain a free passage for him, and a station where he may be maintained; but another thing to find your man. And you may lose your men because you are not looking for them; you may pass over the men whom God would honor most, because they come not up to your standard of scholastic attainments or oratorical gift. They might come up to that by-and-bye. You striving together with prayer, with sympathy and interest in their welfare, God would enrich them, and you might find a phalanx of heroes who should be like the old guard, who never could surrender, but in every battle upon which they should enter would drive their foemen before them, even to the ends of the earth.

III. The last point is one upon which I would briefly but very earnestly preach to myself and to all here assembled. If it be true, and I am sure it is, that the healthiness of the Church at home is vitally connected with the success of the Word of God as preached abroad, then, dear brothers and sisters, let us remember that it must have also a connection with our own personal standing in the sight of God. Truth is like the crystal, which retains its shape even though it be broken almost to an invisible atom. And so the truth that our success depends upon the whole Church is equally sure, when we bring it down to this, that our success in a measure depends upon the vitality, healthiness, and Godliness of each individual. If you were as a Christian, my brother, a separate and distinct organism—a body entirely separate from every one else—you, might be never so sick and no one else would suffer; but you are not so. Remember that you are a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and we hold it to be a precious fact, that if one member suffer, all the members suffer; that, if one member rejoice, all the members share the joy. Must it not equally be true, that if one member be unhealthy, the unhealthiness of that member does to a degree taint the whole? The Church had all things common in the Apostles' days in temporals; to this day she has all things common in spirituals. We all draw from the same treasury; on the other hand we

ought to contribute to the same. If you contribute less, there is the less in the treasury; if your efforts be more feeble than they should be, the efforts of the whole Church are the feebler. Depend upon it, if there be no electric unions between man and man, there are such spiritual unions that the thoughts, acts, and words of any one man do in a degree, however inappreciable to our senses, affect the deeds and actions of every living man, and perhaps of every man that ever shall live to the end of this earthly dispensation. There is no end to a word, it is an infinite thing. It is like the stone that is dropped into the lake—the circles are ever-widening. So your influence for good or evil knows no bound. It may be but little upon one individual, but then that individual prolongs it upon another, and he upon another still, till the pulse of time, nay of eternity, may be made to throb through something that you have said or done. You may work an evil work which shall tremble in the flames of hell for ever and ever, or you may do a good work, which under God may glisten in the light of glory throughout eternity. There is no limit to the influence of any man, and certainly there is no possibility of your staying that influence altogether, and of making yourself so distinct that you are independent of another.

Look then ye cold, ye careless ones, look ye on this—ye are not clear, ye have helped to spoil the Church. Next time ye go abroad to find fault, remember that you share in the cause of that fault. Next time you mourn the Church's prayerlessness, remember that it is your own prayerlessness that helps to make up the bulk of the Church's lack. Next time you would complain of any minister's dullness, or of any Church's want of energy, oh! reflect, it is your own dullness, your own want of energy, that helps to swell the rolling tide. If every man mended one, all would be mended if every man had but one soul stirred, and that soul his own, the whole Church would be stirred up. If it were possible for every member of the Church to be sound how could any part of the body be sick? If every individual were what he should be, how could there be any complaints? We have grown into the habit of praying for the Church as if she were a colossal culprit, which we should tie up, and then take the ten-thonged whip of the law and pull off thongful after thongful of the quivering flesh, while all the while the real culprit is escaping, namely—ourselves—our own individual selves. I do feel more and more the necessity of looking at

the souls of men in the light of my own responsibility to them. I do not want to look at the maps sometimes published by the Society, with red and green marks, showing where there is light. I like to look at, and have a map where I have been a light. I would rather look at London, not in the light of what any particular society or its agency can do for it, but in the light of what I can do for it; and so each of you ought to look on his fellow-man. No society ever thought of taking your responsibility on itself; if it did so, or if you ever thought you have been both mistaken. Responsibilities to God for the souls of men is east on each one of us, and no contribution, however liberal, can ever shield us from the obligation. We must stand, each man for himself, and hear the "Well done good and faithful servant," or else "Thou wicked and slothful servant."

My dear Christian friends—members of our Churches—are you doing all you can for the souls of men. You cannot save them, but God the Holy Spirit can make you the instruments of their salvation. When you hear the bell tolling to-morrow for some one who lived in your street, can you go into the cemetery, and can you stand there and look at the grave and say, "I did all that was in the power of any mortal man for that man's salvation" No, you cannot. I am afraid that none of us, or but very few, could say, when we hear of the death of friends, "If that man perish, I did not leave a single stone unturned." No, we might say we have done something, but we could not say that we have done all that we might have done.

And to conclude,—that I may discharge this solemn responsibility myself in some measure,—are there not many in this congregation who are still unconverted? We talk about heathens—there are heathens here. You have heard the name of Jesus these many years, but you are no more Christian tonight than the Hottentot in his kraal; perhaps further off from the kingdom of heaven than he, because you have become more hardened in heart by rejecting the gospel of Christ,—a sin he has never committed, seeing his bath never known it. Ah! my hearers, in this place there have been hundreds of souls brought to Jesus. There is not a pew in this ancient Tabernacle which could not tell stories of grace. If it could but speak, it would say, "Such-and-such a broken-hearted penitent sat there." These walls, if they could cry aloud, could tell how many sighs and groans

they have heard, and how many precious tears they have seen trickling from the eyes of converted men and women. And is there not one here to night who shall yet be saved? Remember, you are lost and ruined; ruined utterly, helplessly, and hopelessly. So far as you yourself are concerned, there is no hope of your salvation. But there is help laid on One that is mighty to save even Jesus Christ. Look out of yourself to him, and you are saved. Cast away all self-confidence and repose on Jesus and your spirit lives. The soul-quickenings words are "Believe and live." Oh! may the Lord enable you now to trust Jesus and you shall be saved, be your sins never so many. The hour which sees you look to Christ, sees sin's black garment all unbound and cast away. The hour which sees your eye salute the bleeding Savior, sees the eye of God looking down on you with manifest complacency and joy. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved," be his sins never so many; "he that believeth not shall be damned," be his sins never so few. I would earnestly exhort those who feel their need of Jesus, those who are "weary and heavy-laden, lost and ruined by the fall," now to take the Savior, even now, for he is yours. You have a personal right to him, so surely as your hearts are willing to receive him, you have nothing of your own Christ is yours, take him, his grace is free as the air. Take of this water of life which saves. Drink of it, no one can deny you, drink even to the full, and there shall be joy in heaven, and joy on earth over sinners saved. May the Lord add his blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Lily among Thorns

"As the lily among thorns, so is my darling among the daughters."
-Song of Solomon 2:2.

We shall not enter into any profitless discussion this morning. We take it for granted that the Song of Solomon is a sacred marriage song between Christ and his church, and that it is the Lord Jesus who is here speaking of his church, and indeed of each individual member, saying, "As the lily among thorns, so is my darling among the daughters." I will not even

enter into any disquisition as to what particular flower is here intended by the word translated "lily," for it would be very difficult to select a plant from the Holy Land about which travelers and botanists would agree.

The lily, which we should most naturally fix upon, is, as I have gathered from books of travel, not at present found in that country, though we may not therefore be sure that it was never there, or may not yet be discovered. Several other fair and beautiful forms, according to the fancies of various travelers, have been preferred to occupy the place of the plant intended by the original Hebrew, but none of them quite come up to the ideal suggested to an English reader by our translation. I will for once take the liberty to clothe the Scripture in a western dress, if need be, and venture to do what Solomon would surely have done if his Song of songs had been written in England. I shall assume that he means one of our own lilies: either the lily of the valley, or one of those more stately beauties, matchless for whiteness, which so gloriously adorn our gardens. Either will do, and serve our turn this morning.

"As the lily among the thorns, so is my darling among the daughters." It is of small moment to be precise in botany so long as we get the spirit of the text. We seek practical usefulness and personal consolation, and proceed at once in the pursuit, in the hope that it may be with us as with the great Bridegroom himself, of whom the golden canticle says, "He feeds among the lilies."

Many are taking root among us now, newly transplanted from the world, and it is well that they should be rooted in a knowledge of their calling by grace, and what it includes. They ought to know at the very commencement what a Christian is when he is truly a Christian, what he is expected to be, what the Lord means him to be, and what the Lord Jesus regards him as really being; so that they may make no mistakes, but may count the cost, and know what it is that they have ventured upon.

Thinking over this subject carefully, and anxiously desiring to warn our new converts without alarming them, I could not think of any text from which I should be able, in the exposition of it, better to set forth the 'position, condition, and character of a genuine Christian'. Jesus himself

knows best what his own bride is like, let us hear him as he speaks in this matchless song. He knows best what his followers should be, and well may we be content to take the words out of his own mouth when in sweetest poetry he tells us, "As the lily among thorns, so is my darling among the daughters." Join me then, my brethren, at this time in considering our Lord's lilies, how they grow. Concerning the church of God, there are two points upon which I will enlarge: first, her relation to her Lord; and secondly, her relation to the world.

I. First, I think my text very beautifully sets forth THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH, AND OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL TO CHRIST.

He styles her, "my darling." An exquisitely sweet name; as if his love had all gone forth from him, and had become embodied in her. The first point then of her relation to Christ is that she has his DARLING. Think of it, and let the blessed truth dwell long and sweetly in your meditations. The Lord of life and glory, the Prince of the kings of the earth, has such a loving heart that he must have an object upon which to spend his affection; and his people, chosen from among men, whom he calls his church, these are they who are his "love," the object of his supreme delight. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it."

He looked on his people and he exclaimed, "as the Father has loved me even so have I loved you." Every believer, separated from mankind, and called unto the fellowship of Christ, is also the peculiar object of his love. Not in name only, but in deed and in truth, does Jesus love each one of us who have believed on him. You may each one of you say with the apostle, "He loved me"; you may read it in any tense you please- He loved me; he loves me; he will love me, for he gave himself for me. This shall be your song in heaven, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory."

Let your hearts saturate themselves with this honied thought; heaven lies hid within it, it is the quintessence of bliss- Jesus loves me. It is not in the power of words to set forth the charming nature of this fact; it is a very simple proposition, but the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of it surpass our knowledge. That such a poor, insignificant, unworthy being as I am should be the object of the eternal affection of the Son of God is an amazing wonder; yet wonderful as it is, it is a fact! To each one

of his people he says this morning by the Holy Spirit, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." Each one of us may rejoice in the title under which our Lord addresses us- "my darling."

This love is **DISTINGUISHING** love, for in its light one special object shines as a lily, and the rest, "the daughters," are as thorns. Love has fixed on its chosen object, and compared with the favored one all others are as nothing. There is a love of Jesus which goes forth to all mankind, for "the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works"; but there is a special and peculiar love which he bears to his own.

As a man loves his neighbors but still he has a special affection for his own wife, so is the church Christ's bride, beloved above all the rest of mankind, and every individual believer is the favored one of heaven. The saint is united to Christ by a mystical union, a spiritual marriage bond, and above all others, Christ loves the souls espoused to him. He said once, "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which you have given me;" thus indicating that there is a specialty about his intercession.

We rejoice in the largeness and the width of Jesus' love, but we do not therefore doubt its specialty. The sun shines on all things, but when it is focussed upon one point, ah, then there is a heat about it of which you little dreamed! The love of Jesus is focussed on those whom the Father has given him. Upon you, my brother or sister, if indeed you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the Lord's heart is set, and he speaks of you in the words of the text as "my love," loved above all the daughters, precious in his sight and honorable, so that he will give men for you and people for your life.

Observe that this is a love which he **OPENLY AVOWS**. The bridegroom speaks and says before all men, "As a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the daughters." He puts it upon record in that book which is more widely scattered than any other, for he is not ashamed to have it published on the housetops. The love of Christ was at first hidden in his heart, but it soon revealed itself, for even of old his delights were with the

sons of men, and he bent his steps downward to this world in divers forms before ever Bethlehem's song was sung. And now, since the incarnate God has loved, and lived, and died, he has unveiled his love in the most open form, and astonished heaven and earth thereby.

On Calvary he set up an open proclamation, written in his own heart's blood, that he loved his own people even unto the end. He bids his ministers proclaim it to the world's end, that many waters could not quench his love, neither could the floods drown it; and that neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. He would have it known, for he is not ashamed to call his people "the bride, the Lamb's wife." He declares it that his adversaries may know it, that he has a people in whom his heart delights, and these he will have and hold as his own, when heaven and earth shall pass away.

This love, wherever it has been revealed to its object, is RECIPROCATED. If the Lord has really spoken home to your soul and said, "I have loved you," your soul has gladly answered, "This is my Beloved and this is my Friend; yes, he is altogether lovely." For what says the spouse in another place? "My Beloved is mine and I am his." I am his beloved, but he is my beloved too. By this, dear hearer, shall you know whether this text belongs to you or not. What do you say when Jesus asks of you, "Do you love you me?" Is your heart warmed at the very mention of his name? If you can truly say with Peter, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you," then rest assured you love him, because he first loved you.

Do not doubt the fact, but be well assured of it, that love in your heart towards Jesus is the certain and infallible pledge of his infinite, eternal, and immutable love to you. If his name is on your heart, then be sure of this, that your name is on his breast. and written on the palms of his hands. You are espoused unto him, and the bands of the mystical wedlock shall never be snapped. This is the first point of the relation of the church to her Lord: she is the object of his love.

Next, SHE BEARS HIS LIKENESS. Notice the first verse of the chapter,

wherein the bridegroom speaks- "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." He is THE lily, but his beloved is like him; for he applies his own chosen emblem to her- "As the lily among thorns, so is my darling among the daughters." Notice that he is the lily, she is as the lily, that is to say, he has the beauty and she reflects it; she is lovely in his loveliness which he puts upon her. If any soul has any such beauty as is described here, Christ has dowered that beloved soul with all its wealth of charms, for in ourselves we are deformed and defiled. What is the confession of this very spouse in the previous chapter? She says "I am black," -that is the opposite of a lily; if she adds, "but lovely," it is because her Lord has made her lovely. There is no grace but what grace has given, and if we are graceful it is because Christ has made us full of grace. There is no beauty in any one of us but what our Lord has wrought in us.

Note, too, that he who gave the beauty is the first to see it. While they are unknown to the world Jesus knows his own. Long before anybody else sees any virtue or any praise in us, Jesus observes it, and is pleased therewith. He is quick to say, "Behold, he prays," or "Behold, he repents." He is the first to say, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself."

Love's eyes are quick, and her ears are open. Love covers a multitude of faults, but it discovers a multitude of beauties. Can it be so, O my soul, can it be so that Christ has made you lovely in his loveliness? Has he shed a beauty upon you, and does he himself look complacently upon it? He whose taste is exquisite, and whose voice is the truth, who never calls that beautiful which is not beautiful, can he see a beauty in your sighs and tears, in your desires after holiness, in your poor attempts to aid his cause, in your prayers and in your songs, and in your heart's love towards him.

Can he see a beauty in these? Yes, assuredly he can, or he would not speak as he does in this text. Let his condescending discernment have all honor for this generous appreciation of us. Let us bless and love him because he deigns to think so highly of us who owe every thing to him. "You are," says he, "my darling, as the lily."

It is evident that the Lord Jesus takes delight in this beauty which he has

put upon his people. He values it at so great a rate that he counts all rival beauties to be but as thorns. He looks upon the court of an earthly monarch, and sees my lords and ladies, but makes small account of them compared with his poor saints. If in that court he spies out one that loves him, one who wears a coronet and prays, he marks that one, and counts him or her" as the lily among thorns." There is a wealthy household, honored and famous among the old county families, but in it there is no lover of the Savior except one, and she perhaps is a little maid whose service is among the pots, yet shall she be as the wings of a dove covered with silver- "As the lily among thorns" shall she be.

All the kingdoms of the earth are but thorn bushes to the Lord Jesus compared with his church. Be they Roman, German, French, or English, all empires, with all their splendors, are mere gorse and furze upon the common, bramble-bushes and thorn coverts, the haunts of wild and noxious creatures -in the view of the King of kings; but his church, and those that make up the body of the faithful, are as lilies in his discerning eyes. He delights in them, he finds a sweet contentment in gazing on them. So you see the Lord has given to his people his likeness, and that likeness he looks upon and loves.

Bringing out still further the relationship between Christ and his church, I want you to notice that HER POSITION has drawn out his love. "As the lily," says he, "AMONG THE THORNS, so is my darling." He spied her out among the thorns. She was at the first no better than a thorn herself; his grace alone made her to differ from the briars about her; but as soon as ever he had put his life and his grace into her, though she dwelt among the ungodly, she became as the lily, and he spied her out.

The thorn bush could not hide his beloved. Christ's eye towards his people is so quick because it is cleared by love. There may at this time be in a Popish convent one truly seeking Jesus in spirit and in truth. He spies out the believer among the 'trusters in themselves', and calls her his love among thorns. There may be at this moment in the most godless haunt in London a poor, trembling heart that loves Jesus in secret: the Lord knows that heart, and it is to him as a lily among thorns. You, perhaps, are the only godly working man in the shop in which you earn

your daily bread, and the whole band hold you in derision. You may hardly know yourself whether you are really a Christian, for you are sometimes staggered about your own condition; and yet the enemies of Christ have made up their minds as to whose you are, and treat you as one of the disciples of the Nazarene. Be of good courage, your Lord discerns you and knows you better than you know yourself. Such is the quickness of his eye that your difficult and perilous position only quickens his discernment, and he regards you with the more attention. The thorns cannot hide you, thickly as they cluster around you: in your loneliness you are not alone, for the Crucified is with you.

"As the lily among thorns" wears also another meaning. Dr. Thompson writes of a certain lily, "It grows among thorns, and I have sadly lacerated my hands in extricating it from them. Nothing can be in higher contrast than the luxuriant, velvety softness of this lily, and the withered, tangled hedge of thorns about it." Ah, beloved, you know who it was that in gathering your soul and mine, lacerated not his hand only, but his feet, and his head, and his side, and his heart, yes, and his inmost soul. He spied us out, and said, "Yonder lily is mine, and I will have it"; but the thorns were a terrible barrier; our sins had gathered round about us, and the wrath of God most sharply stopped the way. Jesus pressed through all, that we might be his; and now when he takes us to himself he does not forget the thorns which girded his brow, and tore his flesh, for our sakes.

This then is a part of our relationship to Christ, that we cost him very dear. He saw us where we were, and he came to our deliverance; and now, even as Pharaoh's daughter called the young child's name "Moses," "because," said she, "I drew him out of the water," so does Jesus call his chosen "the lily among thorns," because such she was when he came to her rescue. Never will he forget Calvary and its thorns, nor should his saints allow the memory thereof to fade.

Yet once more I think many a child of God may regard himself as still being a lily among thorns, because of his AFFLICTIONS. Certainly the church is so, and she is thereby kept for Christ's own. If thorns made it hard for him to reach us for our salvation, there is another kind of thorn which makes it hard for any enemy to come at us for our hurt. Our trials

and tribulations, which we would fain escape from, often act as a spiritual protection: they hedge us about and ward off many a devouring foe. Sharp as they are, they serve as a fence and a defense.

Many a time, dear child of God, you would have been an 'exposed' lily, to be plucked by any ruthless hand, if it had not been that God had placed you in such circumstances that you were shut up unto himself. Sick saints and poor saints and persecuted saints are fair lilies enclosed by their pains, and needs and bonds, that they may be for Christ alone. I look on John Bunyan in prison writing his "Pilgrim's Progress" and I cannot help feeling that it was a great blessing for us all that such a lily was shut up among the thorns that it might shed its fragrance in that famous book, and thereby perfume the church for ages.

You that are kept from roaming by sickness or by family trials need not regret these things, for perhaps they are the means of making you more completely your Lord's. How charmingly Madame Guyon wrote when she was immured in a dungeon. Her wing was closely bound, but her song was full of liberty, for she felt that the bolts and bars only shut her in with her Beloved, and what is that but liberty? She sang,

"A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields of air;
And in my cage I sit and sing
To him who placed me there;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleases thee.
"Nothing have I else to do,
I sing the whole day long;
And he whom most I love to please
Does listen to my song;
He caught and bound my wandering wing,
But still he bends to hear me sing."

"As the lily among thorns," she lived in prison shut in with her Lord, and since the world was quite shut out, she was in that respect a gainer. O to have one's heart made as "a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." So let my soul be, yes, so let it be even if the enclosure can only be accomplished by a dense growth of trials and griefs. May every pain

that comes and casts us on our bed, and lays us aside from public usefulness; may every sorrow which arises out of our business, and weans us from the world; may every adversary that assails us with bitter, taunting words only thicken the thorn hedge which encases us from all the world, and constrains us to be chaste lilies set apart for the Well-beloved.

Enough upon this point, I think; only do let me entreat all of you who have lately come to know the Lord to think much of your relationship to him. It is the way by which you will be supported under the responsibilities of your relationship to the world. If you know that you are his, and that he loves you, you will be strong to bear all burdens; nothing will daunt you if you are sure that he is for you, that his whole heart is true to you, that he loves you specially, and has set you apart unto himself, that you may be one with him for ever. Dwell much, in your meditations, upon what this text and other Scriptures teach of the relationship of the renewed heart to Christ, and know him of whom you are so well known. May the Holy Spirit teach us all this lesson so that it may be learned by our hearts.

II. But now, secondly, our text is full of instruction as to THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH, AND EACH INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER TO THE WORLD- "The lily AMONG THORNS."

First, then, she has INCOMPARABLE BEAUTY. As compared and contrasted with all else she is as the lily to the thorn-bush. Did not our Lord say of the natural lilies- "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"? and when I think of Christ's lilies, adorned in his own righteousness, and bearing his own image, I feel that I may repeat my Master's words and say with emphasis, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these!"

In Christ's esteem his church bears the bell for beauty; she is the fairest among women. She is not to be 'compared', she has to be 'contrasted' with the rest of mankind. Our Lord means that if you take worldlings at their best and in their bravest attire, in their pomp, and glory, and parade, they are but as thorns in contrast with his church. Though the church may seem to be little, and poor, and despised, yet is she better

than all the princes, and kingdoms, and glories of the earth.

He means that true Christians are infinitely superior to ungodly men. These ungodly men may make a fair show of virtue, and they may have much prudence and wit, and count themselves wise and great, but Jesus calls all unconverted ones "thorns," while his own believing ones he compares to "lilies."

The thorns are worthless, they flourish, and spread, and cumber the ground, but they yield no fruit, and only grow to be cut down for the oven. Alas, such is man by nature, at his best. As for the lily, it is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever; it lives shedding sweet perfume, and when it is gathered its loveliness adorns the chamber to which it is taken. So does the saint bless his generation while here, and when he is taken away he is regarded with pleasure even in heaven above as one of the flowers of God. He will before long be transplanted from among the thorns to the garden enclosed beyond the river, where the King delights to dwell, for such a flower is far too fair to be left forever amid tangled briars.

There are among worldly people some who are very fair to look upon in many respects: philanthropic, kind, and upright, they have many virtues; but since these virtues have no bearings towards God, and no reference to Christ, he counts the bearers of them to be but thorns.

What virtue can there be in him whose principle in life is 'disregard of his Maker, and disbelief in his Savior'? He is an avowed rebel and yet would be commended by the Lord whom he rejects. How can it be? Acts done from other motives than those of obedience to God, or love to Christ, are poor things. There may be a great inward difference between actions which outwardly are the same. The 'apple of nature' has never the flavor of the 'pomegranate of grace'. It may seem even to excel the fruit of grace, but it is not so. Two babes before us may appear alike as they seem to sleep side by side, but the child of nature, however finely dressed, is not the living child, and the Lord will not own the dead thing as belonging to his family. Ah, you that are struggling after holiness for Christ's sake, you that are seeking after virtue in the power of the Holy Spirit, you have the beauty of the lily, while all else are still to Christ but as a thicket of thorns.

Ay, and let me say, what I am sorry to add- a real Christian is as superior even to a professing Christian as a lily is to thorns. I know churches in which there are many who make a profession, but, ah me, it is a pity that they should, for their life does not adorn their doctrine, their temper is not consistent with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They live like worldlings, to amass money, or to carry on business, or to enjoy good eating and drinking, or to dress and go to parties- they are as much for this world as if they were never renewed, and it is to be feared they never were.

It will often grieve those who really love the Lord to see how mere professors pretend to do what saints labor to perform. Saints are mimicked, I had almost said mocked and mimicked, by empty professors, and this is a standing source of sorrow. Their cold words often vex the zealous heart and pierce it as with thorns. When you are full of zeal, their lack of consecration almost kindles indignation in the minds of those who are willing to give their last penny, ay, and their last breath, for their Master's honor. Do not, however, be at all astonished, for it must be so; he who is full of the grace of God will always be as the lily among thorns, even in the professing church.

Do not marvel, young brother, if older professors dampen your ardor, and count your warm love to be a mere fanaticism. May God give you grace to keep up your first love, and even to advance upon it, though the thorny ones wound and hinder you. May you be distinguished above your fellow-professors, for I fear that unless it be so, your life will be a poor one.

This then is the relationship of the church to the world, and of Christians to the world- that they are as much superior to the unregenerate in moral and spiritual beauty as the lily is to the thorns among which it finds itself. Secondly, in the comparison of the saint to the lily we remark that he has, like the lily, a SURPASSING EXCELLENCE. I point not to its beauty just now, but to its intrinsic excellence. The thorn is a fruit of the curse: it springs up because of sin. "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto you." Not so the lily: it is a fair type of the blessing which

makes rich without the sorrow of carking care.

The thorn is the mark of wrath and the lily is the symbol of divine providence. A true believer is a blessing, a tree whose leaves heal and whose fruit feeds. A genuine Christian is a living gospel, an embodiment of goodwill towards men. Did not the old covenant blessing run, "In you and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"? I cannot refrain from quoting a metrical meditation of one who loved the Song of Solomon, and drank into its spirit. He says of the church. She is

"A radiant thing, where all is gloomy else,
Florescent where all else is barrenness;
A blossom in the desert, that proclaims
Man is no friendless outcast, hopelessly doomed
To traverse scenes of wickedness and grief;
But, pilgrim as he is, has One who plans,
Not only to protect but cheer his way.

Oh, ever testifying desert flower,
Still holding forth the story of God's love,
How amazing it is that busy throngs
Pause not to look on you! That few reflect
On the strange fact of your existence still,
A lily among thorns- a life in death,
Distinct from, yet in contact with, the world;
Burning, yet unconsumed; though cumbered,
free with glorious liberty!"

Yes, the church is a blessing, a blessing abiding and scattering its delights in the midst of the curse; and each particular believer is in his measure a blessing too, "as the lily among thorns."

A true Christian knows not how to harm his fellow men. He is like the lily which stings no one, and yet he lives among those who are full of sharpness. He aims to please, and not to provoke, and yet he lives among those whose existence is a standing menace. The thorn tears and lacerates: it is all armed from its root to its topmost branch, defying all comers. But there stands the lily, smiling, not defying; charming, and not harming.

Such is the real Christian, holy, harmless, full of love and gentleness and tenderness. Therein lies his excellence. The thorn pierces, but the lily soothes: the very sight of it gives pleasure. Who would not stop and turn aside to see a lily among thorns, and think he read a promise from his God to comfort him amid distress? Such is a true Christian: he is a consolation in his family, a comfort in his neighborhood, an ornament to his profession, and a benediction to his age.

He is all tenderness and gentleness, and yet it may be he lives among the envious, the malicious, and the profane, a lily among thorns. The thorn says, "Keep away; no one shall touch me with impunity." The lily cries, "I come to you, I shed my soul abroad to please you." The sweet odors of the lily of the valley are well known; perhaps no plant has so strong a savor about it of intense and exquisite sweetness as that lily of the valley which is found in Palestine.

Such is the sanctified believer. There is a secret something about him, a hallowed savor which goes out from his life, so that his graciousness is discovered; for grace, like its Lord; "cannot be hid." Even if the regenerate man be not known as a professor, yet does he discover himself by the holiness of his life- "his speech betrays him." When I was resting in the south I wandered by the side of a flowing stream, gathering handfuls of maiden-hair fern from the verdant bank- and as I walked along I was conscious of a most delicious fragrance all around me. I cast my eye downward, and I saw blue eyes looking up from among the grass at my feet. The violets had hidden themselves from sight, but they had betrayed themselves by their delicious scent.

So does a Christian reveal his hidden life; his tone and temper and manners bespeak his royal lineage, if indeed the Spirit of God is in him. Such are the people of God; they court no observation, but are like that modest flower of which the poet says,
"She never affects
The public walk, nor gaze of midday sun;
She to no state nor dignity aspires,
But silent and alone puts on her suit,

And sheds a lasting perfume, but for which
We had not known there was a thing so sweet
Hid in the gloomy shade."

I want you, dear Christian people, to be just like this: to have about you a surpassing wealth of blessing, and an unrivalled sweetness of influence by which you shall be known of all men. Is it so with you, or are you as rough, and stern, and repellant as a thorn bush? Are you as selfish and as quarrelsome as the unregenerate? Or do you shed yourself away in sweet odors of self-denying kindness in your families, and among your neighbors? If you do so, then does Jesus say of you, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

The last point with regard to our relationship to the world, is that the church and many individual Christians are called to endure singular trials, which make them feel "as the lily among thorns." That lovely flower seems out of place in such company, does it not? Christ said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep among sheep- no, no, that is my mistake, "as sheep among wolves." It is a very blessed thing to be as sheep among sheep: to lie down with them under the shadow of the great rock, and feed with them in green pastures under the Shepherd's eye. This is our privilege, and we ought to value it greatly, and unite with the church and frequent its ordinances; but even then we shall, some of us, have to go home to an ungodly family, or to go out into the world to win our bread, and then we shall be as sheep among wolves. Grow in the church and you will be lilies in the garden; still, you cannot always live in the Tabernacle, and so you will have to go back to the ungodly world, and there you will be lilies among thorns.

The lily startles you if you find it in such a position. Often you come upon one of God's elect ones in a most unexpected manner, and are as much amazed as if an angel crossed your path. This is the wonder of the lily among thorns. You are making your way over a wild heath and come to a tangled thorn-bush through which you must force your way. As you are driving through the dense mass, rending and tearing your garments, suddenly you stand still as one who has seen a vision of angels, for there among the most rugged brambles a lily lifts its lovely form and smiles upon you.

You feel like Moses at the back of the desert when he saw the bush which burned with fire and yet was not consumed. So have you met in a back slum, where blasphemy abounded, a beautiful child of God, whom all recognized as such, and you have felt amazed. So have you in a wealthy family full of worldliness and vanity come upon a humble man or patient woman living unto Christ, and you have asked, how came this grace to this house? So, too, in a foreign land, where all bowed down to crucifix and image, you have casually met with a confessor who has stood his ground among idolaters, protesting for his God, not by his speech so much as by his holy walk. The surprise has been great. Expect many such surprises.

The Lord has a people where you look not for them. Think not that all his lilies are in his garden, there are lilies among thorns, and he knows their whereabouts. Many saints reside in families where they will never be appreciated any more than the lily is appreciated by the thorns. This is painful, for the sympathy of our fellows is a great comfort. Lilies of the valley love to grow in clusters, and saints love holy company, and yet in some cases it must not be; they must live alone. Nor need we think that this loneliness is unrelieved, for God goes out of the track of men, and he visits those whom his own servants are passing by. The poet says,

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

But the poet forgot that God is in the wilderness, and the solitary place, and the sweetness of lonely flowers is his. He who planted the lily among thorns sees its beauty. It is God's flower, and does it waste its sweetness because no human nostril smells thereat? It were blasphemous to count that wasted which is reserved for the great King. The Lord understands the 'incense of nature' better than we do, and as he walks abroad he rejoices in his works. Grace struggling in loneliness is very choice in God's esteem. If man sees you not, O lonely believer, you may nevertheless sing, "You God see me." The flower which blooms for God alone has a special honor put upon it, and so has the saint whose quiet life is all for Jesus. If you are unappreciated by those around you, do not therefore be distressed, for you are honorable in the sight of God.

The lily is altogether 'unassisted' by its surroundings- "the lily among thorns" borrows nothing from the growth which gathers about it. A genuine Christian is quite unhelped by ungodly men; what is worse, he is cumbered by them. Yet through divine grace he lives and grows. You know how the good seed could not grow because of the thorns which sprang up and choked it, but here is a good seed, a choice bulb, which flourishes where you could not have looked for it to do so. God can make his people live and blossom even among the thorns, where the ungodly by their evil influences would choke and destroy it. Happy it is when the gracious one can overtop the thorn-thicket, which would check his growth, and make his influence to be known and felt above the grossness of surrounding sin.

We should not do justice to this text if we failed to see in it a reminder of the persecution to which many of the best of God's people are subjected. They live all their lives long like the lily among thorns. Some of you, dear friends, are in this condition. You can hardly speak a word but what it is picked up and made mischief of; you cannot perform an action but what it is twisted, and motives imputed to you which you know not of. Nowadays persecutors cannot drag men to the stake, but the old trial of cruel mockings is still continued; in some cases it rages even more fiercely than ever. God's people have been a persecuted people in all times, and you only fare as they fare. Bear well the burden common to all the chosen! Make no great wonder of it; this bitter trial has happened to many more before; and you may well rejoice that you are now in fellowship with apostles and prophets and honorable men of all ages. The lily among thorns should rejoice that it is a lily and not a thorn, and when it is wounded it should consider it a matter of course, and bloom on.

But why does the Lord put his lilies among thorns? It is because he works transformations, singular transformations, by their means. He can make a lily grow among thorns till the thorns grow into lilies. Remember how it is written, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." He can set a Christian in a godless family till first one and then another shall feel the divine power, and shall say, "We will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you." It cannot happen in nature, but it does happen in grace

perpetually, that the sweet perfume of the lily believer, shed abroad upon the thorn-bush of the ungodly, turns it into a lily-garden. Such holy work among ungodly people is the truest and best "FLOWER MISSION." They do well who give flowers to cheer the poor in their dreary habitations, but they do better still who are themselves flowers in the places where they live.

Be lilies, my dear brethren, preach by your actions, preach by your kindness, and by your love; and I feel quite sure that your influence will be a power for good. If the Holy Spirit helps all of you to stand among your associates as lilies among the thorns, the day will come when thorns will die out, and lilies will spring up on every side: sin will be banished, and grace will abound.

An Australian gentleman told me yesterday that in his colony the arum lily abounds as much as weeds do with us. When will this happen spiritually on our side the globe? Ah, when, blessed Lord, when will you remove the curse? When will you bring the better days? These are ill times, wherein the thorns grow thicker and more sharp than ever; protect your lilies, increase their number, preserve their snowy whiteness, and delight yourself in them; for Jesus' sake, Amen.

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Travailing for Souls

As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. - Isaiah 66:8

Israel had fallen into the lowest condition, but an inward yearning of heart was felt in the midst of God's people for the return of the divine

blessing; and no sooner had this anxious desire become intense, than God heard the voice of its cry, and the blessing came. It was so at the time of the restoration of the captives from Babylon, and it was most evidently so in the days of our Lord. A faithful company had continued still to expect the coming of the Lord's anointed messenger; they waited till he should suddenly come in his temple; the twelve tribes, represented by an elect remnant, cried day and night unto the Most High, and when at last their prayers reached the fulness of vehemence, and their anxiety wrought in them the deepest agony of spirit, then the Messiah came; the light of the gentiles, and the glory of Israel. Then began the age of blessedness in which the barren woman did keep house and become the joyful mother of children. The Holy Ghost was given, and multitudes were born to the church of God, yea we may say, a nation was born in a day. The wilderness and the solitary place were glad for them, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. We are not, however, about to enter into the particular application of our text as Isaiah uttered it: the great declarations of revelation are applicable to all cases, and, once true, they stand fast for ever and ever. Earnestly desiring that God may give a large spiritual blessing to his church this morning, through the subject to which my mind has been directed, I shall first ask you to note that in order to the obtaining of an increase to the church, there must be travail, and that, secondly, this travail is frequently followed by surprising results. I shall then have to show why both the travail and the result are desirable, and pronounce woe on those who stand back and hinder it, and a blessing on such as shall be moved by God's own Spirit to travail for souls.

I. It is clear from the text, "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children," that **THERE MUST BE THE TRAVAIL** before there will be the spiritual birth.

Let me first establish this fact from history. Before there has fallen a great benediction upon God's people, it has been preceded by great searchings of heart. Israel was so oppressed in Egypt, that it would have been very easy, and almost a natural thing, for the people to become so utterly crushed in spirit as to submit to be hereditary bond-slaves, making the best they could of their miserable lot; but God would not have it so; he

meant to bring them out "with a high hand and an outstretched arm." Before, however, he began to work, he made them begin to cry. Their sighs and cries came up into the ears of God, and he stretched out his hand to deliver them. Doubtless, many a heart-rending appeal was made to heaven by mothers when their babes were torn from their breasts to be cast into the river. With what bitterness did they ask God to look upon his poor people Israel, and avenge them of their oppressors. The young men bowed under the cruel yoke and groaned, while hoary sires, smarting under ignominious lashes from the taskmaster, sighed and wept before the God of Israel. The whole nation cried, "O God visit us; God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, remember thy covenant, and deliver us." This travail brought its result; for the Lord smote the field of Zoan with mighty plagues, and forth from under the bondage of the sons of Misraim, the children of Israel marched with joy.

As we shall not have time to narrate many instances, let us take a long leap in history to the days of David. The era of the son of Jesse was evidently a time of religious revival. God was honored and his service maintained in the midst of Judea's land in the days of the royal bard; but it is clear to readers of the Scriptures that David was the subject of spiritual throes and pangs of the most intense kind. His bosom throbbed and heaved like that of a man made fit to be the leader of a great revival. What yearnings he had! He thirsted after God, after the living God! What petitions he poured forth that God would visit Zion, and make the vine which he had planted to flourish once again. Even when his own sins pressed heavily upon him, he could not end his personal confession without entreating the Lord to build the walls of Jerusalem, and to do good in his good pleasure unto Zion. Now, David was only the mouth of hundreds of others, who with equal fervency cried unto God that the blessing might rest upon his people. There was much soul-travail in Israel and Judah, and the result was that the Lord was glorified, and true religion flourished.

Remember also the days of Josiah, the king. You know well now the book of the law was found neglected in the temple, and when it was brought before the king, he rent his clothes, for he saw that the nation had revolted, and that wrath must come upon it to the uttermost. The young

king's heart, which was tender, for he feared God, was ready to break with anguish to think of the misery that would come upon his people on account of their sins. Then there came a glorious reformation which purged the land of idols, and caused the passover to be observed as never before. Travails of heart among the godly produced the delightful change.

It was the same with the work of Nehemiah. His book begins with a description of the travail of his heart. He was a patriot, a man of nervous, excitable temperament, and keen sensibility for God's honor, and when his soul had felt great bitterness and longing, then he arose to build, and a blessing rested on his efforts.

In the early dawn of Christian history, there was a preparation of the church before it received an increase. Look at the obedient disciples sitting in the upper room, waiting with anxious hope; every heart there had been ploughed with anguish by the death of the Lord, each one was intent to receive the promised boon of the Spirit. There, with one heart and one mind, they tarried, but not without wrestling prayer, and so the Comforter was given, and three thousand souls were given also.

The like living zeal and vehement desire have always been perceptible in the Church of God before any season of refreshing. Think not that Luther was the only man that wrought the Reformation. There were hundreds who sighed and cried in secret in the cottages of the Black Forest, in the homes of Germany, and on the hills of Switzerland. There were hearts breaking for the Lord's appearing in strange places, they might have been found in the palaces of Spain, in the dungeons of the Inquisition, among the canals of Holland, and the green lanes of England. Women, as they hid their Bibles, lest their lives should be forfeited, cried out in spirit, "O God, how long?" There were pains as of a woman in travail, in secret places there were tears and bitter lamentations, on the high places of the field there were mighty strivings of spirit, and so at length there came that grand revulsion which made the Vatican to rock and reel from its foundation to its pinnacle. There has been evermore in the history of the church, the travail before there has been the result.

And this, dear friends, while it is true on the large scale, is true also in

every individual case. A man with no sensibility or compassion for other men's souls, may accidentally be the means of a conversion; the good word which he utters will not cease to be good because the speaker had no right to declare God's statutes. The bread and meat which were brought to Elijah were not less nourishing because the ravens brought them, but the ravens remained ravens still. A hard-hearted man may say a good thing which God will bless, but, as a rule, those who bring souls to Christ are those who first of all have felt an agony of desire that souls should be saved. This is imaged to us in our Master's character. He is the great Saviour of men; but before he could save others, he learned in their flesh to sympathize with them. He wept over Jerusalem, he sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane; he was, and is, a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. As the Captain of our salvation, in bringing many sons unto glory he was made perfect by sufferings. Even Christ went not forth to preach until he had spent nights in intercessory prayer, and uttered strong cryings and tears for the salvation of his hearers. His ministering servants who have been most useful, have always been eagerly desirous to be so. If any minister can be satisfied without conversions, he shall have no conversions. God will not force usefulness on any man. It is only when our heart breaks to see men saved, that we shall be likely to see sinners' hearts broken. The secret of success lies in all-consuming zeal, all-subduing travail for souls. Read the sermons of Wesley and of Whitfield, and what is there in them? It is no severe criticism to say that they are scarcely worthy to have survived, and yet those sermons wrought marvels, and well they might, for both preachers could truly say—

"The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men;
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave."

In order to understand such preaching, you need to see and hear the man, you want his tearful eye, his glowing countenance, his pleading tone, his bursting heart. I have heard of a great preacher who objected to having his sermons printed, "Because," said he, "you cannot print me." That observation is very much to the point. A soul-winner throws himself

into what he says. As I have sometimes said, we must ram ourselves into our cannons, we must fire ourselves at our hearers, and when we do this, then, by God's grace, their hearts are often carried by storm. Do any of you desire your children's conversions? You shall have them saved when you agonize for them. Many a parent who has been privileged to see his son walking in the truth, will tell you that before the blessing came he had spent many hours in prayer and in earnest pleading with God, and then it was that the Lord visited his child and renewed his soul. I have heard of a young man who had grown up and left the parental roof, and through evil influences, had been enticed into holding skeptical views. His father and mother were both earnest Christians, and it almost broke their hearts to see their son so opposed to the Redeemer. On one occasion they induced him to go with them to hear a celebrated minister. He accompanied them simply to please them, and for no higher motive. The sermon happened to be upon the glories of heaven. It was a very extraordinary sermon, and was calculated to make every Christian in the audience to leap for joy. The young man was much gratified with the eloquence of the preacher, but nothing more; he gave him credit for superior oratorical ability, and was interested in the sermon, but felt none of its power. He chanced to look at his father and mother during the discourse, and was surprised to see them weeping. He could not imagine why they, being Christian people, should sit and weep under a sermon which was most jubilant in its strain. When he reached home, he said, "Father, we have had a capital sermon, but I could not understand what could make you sit there and cry, and my mother too?" His father said, "My dear son, I certainly had no reason to weep concerning myself, nor your mother, but I could not help thinking all through the sermon about you, for alas, I have no hope that you will be a partaker in the bright joys which await the righteous. It breaks my heart to think that you will be shut out of heaven." His mother said, "The very same thoughts crossed my mind, and the more the preacher spoke of the joys of the saved, the more I sorrowed for my dear boy that he should never know what they were." That touched the young man's heart, led him to seek his father's God, and before long he was at the same communion table, rejoicing in the God and Saviour whom his parents worshiped. The travail comes before the bringing forth; the earnest anxiety, the deep emotion within, precede our being made the instruments of the salvation of others.

I think I have established the fact; now for a minute or two let me show you the reason for it. Why is it that there must be this anxiety before desirable results are gained? For answer, it might suffice us to say that God has so appointed it. It is the order of nature. The child is not born into the world without the sorrows of the mother, nor is the bread which sustains life procured from the earth without toil: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," was a part of the primeval curse. Now, as it is in the natural, so is it in the spiritual; there shall not come the blessing we seek, without first of all the earnest yearning for it. Why, it is so even in ordinary business. We say, "No sweat no sweet," "no pains no gains," "No mill no meal." If there be no labor there shall be no profit. He that would be rich must toil for it; he that would acquire fame must spend and be spent to win it. It is ever so. There must ever be the travail and then the desire cometh. God has so appointed it: let us accept the decree.

But better still, he has ordained this for our good. If souls were given us without any effort, anxiety or prayer it would be our loss to have it so, because the anxieties which throb within a compassionate spirit exercise his graces; they produce grateful love to God; they try his faith in the power of God to save others; they drive him to the mercy-seat; they strengthen his patience and perseverance, and every grace within the man is educated and increased by his travail for souls. As labor is now a blessing, so also is soul-travail; men are fashioned more fully into the likeness of Christ thereby, and the whole church is by the same emotion quickened into energy. The fire of our own spiritual life is fanned by that same breath which our prayers invite to come from the four winds to breath upon the slain. Besides, dear friends, the zeal that God excites within us is often the means of effecting the purpose which we desire. After all, God does not give conversions to eloquence, but to heart. The power in the hand of God's Spirit for conversions is heart coming in contact with heart. This is God's battle-axe and weapons of war in his crusade. He is pleased to use the yearnings, longings, and sympathies of Christian men, as the means of compelling the careless to think, constraining the hardened to feel, and driving the unbelieving to consider. I have little confidence in elaborate speech and polished sentences, as the means of reaching men's hearts; but I have great faith in

that simple-minded Christian woman, who must have souls converted or she will weep her eyes out over them; and in that humble Christian who prays day and night in secret, and then avails himself of every opportunity to address a loving word to sinners. The emotion we feel, and the affection we bear, are the most powerful implements of soul-winning. God the Holy Ghost usually breaks hard hearts by tender hearts.

Besides, the travail qualifies for the proper taking care of the offspring. God does not commit his new-born children to people who do not care to see conversions. If he ever allows them to fall into such hands, they suffer very serious loss thereby. Who is so fit to encourage a new-born believer as the man who first anguished before the Lord for his conversion? Those you have wept over and prayed for you will be sure to encourage and assist. The church that never travailed, should God send her a hundred converts, would be unfit to train them; she would not know what to do with little children, and would leave them to much suffering. Let us thank God, brethren, if he has given us any degree of the earnest anxiety and sympathy, which marked soul-winning men and women, and let us ask to have more for, in proportion as we have it, we shall be qualified to be the instruments in the hand of the Spirit, of nursing and cherishing God's sons and daughters.

Once more, there is a great benefit in the law which makes travail necessary to spiritual birth, because it secures all the glory to God. If you want to be lowered in your own esteem, try to convert a child. I would like those brethren who believe so much in free will, and the natural goodness of the human heart, to try some children that I could bring to them, and see whether they could break their hearts and make them love the Saviour. Why, sir, you never think yourself so great a fool as after trying in your own strength to bring a sinner to the Saviour. Oh! How often have I come back defeated from arguing with an awakened person whom I have sought to comfort: I did think I had some measure of skill in handling sorrowful cases, but I have been compelled to say to myself, "What a simpleton I am! God the Holy Ghost must take this case in hand, for I am foiled." When one has tried in a sermon to reach a certain person who is living in sin, you learn afterwards that he enjoyed the sermon which he ought to have smarted under; then, you say, "Ah, now I see what

a weak worm I am, and if good be done, God shall have the glory." Your longing, then, that others should be saved, and your vehemence of spirit, shall secure to God all the glory of his own work; and this is what the Lord is aiming at, for his glory he will not give to another, nor his praise to an arm of flesh.

And now, having established the fact, and shown the reasons for it, let us notice how this travail shows itself.

Usually when God intends greatly to bless a church, it will begin in this way:—Two or three persons in it are distressed at the low state of affairs, and become troubled even to anguish. Perhaps they do not speak to one another, or know of their common grief, but they begin to pray with flaming desire and untiring importunity. The passion to see the church revived rules them. They think of it when they go to rest, they dream of it on their bed, they muse on it in the streets. This one thing eats them up. They suffer great heaviness and continual sorrow in heart for perishing sinners; they travail in birth for souls. I have happened to become the centre of certain brethren in this church; one of them said to me the other day, "O sir, I pray day and night for God to prosper our church; I long to see greater things; God is blessing us, but we want much more." I saw the deep earnestness of the man's soul, and I thanked him and thanked God heartily, thinking it to be a sure sign of a coming blessing. Sometime after, another friend, who probably now hears me speak, but who did not know any thing about the other, felt the same yearning, and must needs let me know it; he too is anxious, longing, begging, crying, for a revival; and thus from three or four quarters I have had the same message, and I feel hopeful because of these tokens for good. When the sun rises the mountain tops first catch the light, and those who constantly live near to God will be the first to feel the influence of the coming refreshing. The Lord give me a dozen importunate pleaders and lovers of souls, and by his grace we will shake all London from end to end yet. The work would go on without the mass of you, Christians; many of you only hinder the march of the army; but give us a dozen lion-like, lamb-like men, burning with intense love to Christ and souls, and nothing will be impossible to their faith. The most of us are not worthy to unloose the shoe-latches of ardent saints. I often feel I am not so myself, but I aspire and long to be

reckoned among them. Oh, may God give us this first sign of the travail in the earnest ones and twos.

By degrees the individuals are drawn together by sacred affinity, and the prayer-meetings become very different. The brother who talked twenty minutes of what he called prayer, and yet never asked for a single thing, gives up his oration and falls to pleading with many tears and broken sentences: while the friend who used to relate his experience and go through the doctrines of grace, and call that a prayer, forgets that rigmarole and begins agonizing before the throne. And not only this, but little knots here and there come together in their cottages, and in their little rooms cry mightily to God. The result will be that the minister, even if he does not know of the feeling in the hearts of his people, will grow fervent himself. He will preach more evangelically, more tenderly, more earnestly. He will be no longer formal, or cold, or stereotyped; he will be all alive. Meanwhile, not with the preacher only will be the blessing, but with his hearers who love the Lord. One will be trying a plan for getting in the young people; another will be looking after the strangers in the aisles, who come only now and then. One brother will make a vehement attempt to preach the gospel at the corner of the street; another will open a room down a dark court; another will visit lodging-houses and hospitals; all sorts of holy plans will be invented, and zeal will break out in many directions. All this will be spontaneous, nothing will be forced. If you want to get up a revival, as the term is, you can do it, just as you can grow tasteless strawberries in winter, by artificial heat. There are ways and means of doing that kind of thing but the genuine work of God needs no such planning and scheming; it is altogether spontaneous. If you see a snowdrop next February in your garden, you will feel persuaded that spring is on the way; the artificial-flower maker could put as many snowdrops there as you please, but that would be no index of coming spring. So you may get up an apparent zeal which will be no proof of God's blessing; but when fervor comes of itself, without human direction or control, then is it of the Lord. When men's hearts heave and break, like the mould of the garden under the influence of the reviving life which lay buried there, then in very deed a benediction is on the way. Travail is no mockery, but a real agony of the whole nature. May such be seen in this our church, and throughout the whole Israel of God.

II. Now, with great brevity, let us consider that THE RESULT IS OFTEN VERY SURPRISING. It is frequently surprising for rapidity. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." God's works are not tied by time. The more spiritual a force is the less it lies within the chains of time. The electric current, which has a greater nearness to the spiritual than the grosser forms of materialism, is inconceivably rapid from that very reason, and by it time is all but annihilated. The influences of the Spirit of God are a force most spiritual, and more quick than any thing beneath the sun. As soon as we agonize in soul the Holy Spirit can, if he pleases, convert the person for whom we have pleaded. While we are yet speaking he hears, and before we call he answers. Some calculate the expected progress of a church by arithmetic; and I think I have heard of arithmetical sermons in which there have been ingenious calculations as to how many missionaries it would take to convert the world, and how much cash would be demanded. Now, there is no room here for the application of mathematics; spiritual forces are not calculable by an arithmetic which is most at home in the material universe. A truth which is calculated to strike the mind of one man to-day may readily enough produce a like effect upon a million minds to-morrow. The preaching which moves one heart needs not be altered to tell upon ten thousand. With God's Spirit our present instrumentalities will suffice to win the world to Jesus; without him, ten thousand times as much apparent force would be only so much weakness. The spread of truth, moreover, is not reckonable by time. During the ten years which ended in 1870, such wondrous changes were wrought throughout the world that no prophet would have been believed had he foretold them. Reforms have been accomplished in England, in the United States, in Germany, in Spain, in Italy, which according to ordinary reckoning, would have occupied at least one hundred years. Things which concern the mind cannot be subjected to those regulations of time which govern steamboats and railways; in such matters God's messengers are flames of fire. The Spirit of God is able to operate upon the minds of men instantaneously: witness the case of Paul. Between now and to-morrow morning he could excite holy thought in all the minds of all the thousand millions of the sons of Adam; and if prayer were mighty enough, and strong enough, why should it not be done on some bright day? We are not straitened in him, we are

straitened in our own bowels. All the fault lies there. Oh for the travail that would produce immediate results.

But the result is surprising, not only for its rapidity, but for the greatness of it. It is said, "Shall a nation be born at once?" As soon as ever Zion was in distress concerning her children, tens of thousands came and built up Jerusalem, and re-established her fallen state. So, in answer to prayer, God not only bestows speedy blessings, but great blessings. There were fervent prayers in that upper room "before the day of Pentecost had fully come," and what a great answer it was when, after Peter's sermon, some three thousand were ready to confess their faith in Christ, and to be baptized. Shall we never see such things again? Is the Spirit straitened? Has his arm waxed short? Nay, verily, but we clog and hinder him. He cannot do any mighty work here because of our unbelief; and, if our unbelief were cast out, and if prayer went up to God with eagerness, and vehemence, and importunity, then would a blessing descend so copious as to amaze us all.

But enough of this, for I must needs pass on to the next point.

III. THIS TRAVAIL AND ITS RESULT ARE ABUNDANTLY DESIRABLE; pre-eminently desirable at this hour. The world is perishing for a lack of knowledge. Did any one among us ever lay China on his heart? Your imagination cannot grapple with the population of that mighty empire, without God, without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. But it is not China alone; there are other vast nations lying in darkness; the great serpent hath coiled himself around the globe, and who shall set the world free from him? Reflect upon this one city with its three millions. What sin the moon sees! What sin the Sabbath sees! Alas for the transgressions of this wicked city. Babylon of old could not have been worse than London is, nor so guilty, for she had not the light that London has received. Brethren, there is no hope for China, no hope for the world, no hope for our own city, while the church is sluggish and lethargic. Through the church the blessing is usually bestowed. Christ multiplies the bread, and gives it to the disciples; the multitudes can only get it through the disciples. Oh, it is time, it is high time that the churches were awakened to seek the good of dying myriads.

Moreover, brethren, the powers of evil are ever active. We may sleep, but Satan sleepeth never. The church's plough lies yonder, rusting in the furrow; do you not see it to your shame? But the plough of Satan goes from end to end of his great field, he leaves no headland, but he ploughs deep while sluggish churches sleep. May we be stirred as we see the awful activity of evil spirits and persons who are under their sway. How industriously pernicious literature is spread abroad, and with what a zeal do men seek for fresh ways of sinning. He is eminent among men who can invent fresh songs to gratify the lascivious tongue, or find new spectacles to delight unclean eyes. O God, are thine enemies awake, and only thy friends asleep? O Sufferer, once bathed in bloody sweat in Gethsemane, is there not one of the twelve awake but Judas? Are they all asleep except the traitor? May God arouse us for his infinite mercy's sake.

Besides this, my brethren, when a church is not serving God, mischief is brewing withing herself. While she is not bringing others in, her own heart is becoming weak in its pulsations, and her entire constitution is a prey to decline. The church must either bring forth children unto God, or else die of consumption: she has no alternative but that. A church must either be fruitful or rot, and of all things, a rotting church is the most offensive. Would God we could bury our dead churches out of our sight, as Abraham buried Sarah, for above ground they breed a pestilence of scepticism; for men say, "Is this religion?" and taking it to be so, they forego true religion altogether.

And then, worst of all is, God is not glorified. If there be no yearning of heart in the church, and no conversions, where is the travail of the Redeemer's soul? Where, Immanuel, where are the trophies of thy terrible conflict? Where are the jewels for thy crown? Thou shalt have thine own, thy Father's will shall not be frustrated; thou shalt be adored; but as yet we see it not. Hard are men's hearts, and they will not love thee; unyielding are their wills, and they will not own thy sovereignty. Oh! weep because Jesus is not honored. The foul oath still curdles our blood as we hear it, and blasphemy usurps the place of grateful song. Oh! by the wounds and bloody sweat, by the cross and nails, and spear, I beseech you followers of Christ, be in earnest, that Jesus Christ's name may be known and loved through the earnest agonizing endeavors of the

Christian church.

IV. And now I must come near to a close, by, in the fourth place, noticing THE WOE WHICH WILL SURELY COME TO THOSE WHO HINDER THE TRAVAIL OF THE CHURCH, and so prevent the bringing forth of her children. An earnest spirit cannot complete its exhortations to zeal without pronouncing a denunciation upon the indifferent. What said the heroine of old who had gone forth against the enemies of Israel, when she remembered coward spirits? "Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Some such curse will assuredly come upon every professing Christian who is backward in helping the church in the day on her soul's travail. And who are they that hinder her? I answer, every worldly Christian hinders the progress of the gospel. Every member of a church who is living in secret sin, who is tolerating in his heart any thing that he knows to be wrong, who is not seeking eagerly his own personal sanctification, is to that extent hindering the work of the Spirit of God. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," for to the extent that we maintain known unholiness, we restrain the Spirit. He cannot work by us as long as any conscious sin is tolerated. It is not over breaking of commandments that I am now speaking of, brethren, but I include worldliness also—a care for carnal things, and a carelessness about spiritual things, having enough grace just to make us hope that you are a Christian, but not enough to prove you are; bearing a shriveled apple here and there on the topmost bough, but not much fruit; this I mean, this partial barrenness, not complete enough to condemn, yet complete enough to restrain the blessing, this robs the treasure of the church, and hinders her progress. O brethren, if any of you are thus described, repent and do your first works; and God help you to be foremost in proportion as you have been behind.

They are also guilty who distract the mind of the church from the subject in hand. Anybody who calls off the thoughts of the church from soul-saving is a mischief maker. I have heard it said of a minister, "He greatly influences the politics of the town." Well, it is a very doubtful good in my mind, a very doubtful good indeed. If the man, keeping to his own calling of preaching the gospel, happens to influence these meaner things, it is

well, but any Christian minister who thinks that he can do two things well, is mistaken. Let him mind soul-winning, and not turn a Christian church into a political club. Let us fight out our politics somewhere else, but not inside the church of God. There our one business is soul-winning, our one banner is the cross, our one leader is the crucified King. Inside the church there may be minor things that take off the thoughts of men from seeking souls,—little things that can be made beneath the eye that is microscopical, to swell into great offences. Oh, my brethren, let us, while souls are perishing, waive personal differences. "It must need be that offences come, but woe unto him by whom the offence cometh;" but, after all, what can there be that is worth taking notice of, compared with glorifying Christ. If our Lord and Master would be honored by your being a doormat for his saints to wipe their feet on, you would be honored to be in the position; and if there shall come glory to God by your patient endurance, even of insult and contumely, be glad in your heart that you are permitted to be nothing that Christ may be all in all. We must by no means turn aside to this or that; not even golden apples must tempt us in this race! There lies the mark, and until it is reached, we must never pause, but onward press, for Christ's cause and crown.

Above all, my brethren, we shall be hindering the travail of the church if we do not share in it. Many church members think that if they do nothing wrong, and make no trouble, then they are all right. Not at all, sir; not at all. Here is a chariot, and we are all engaged to drag it. Some of you do not put out your hands to pull; well, then, the rest of us have to labor so much the more; and the worst of it is we have to draw you also. While you do not add to the strength which draws, you increase the weight that is to be drawn. It is all very well for you to say, "But I do not hinder;" you do hinder, you cannot help hindering. If a man's leg does not help him in walking, it certainly hinders him. Oh, I cannot bear to think of it. That I should be a hindrance to my own sou's growth is bad indeed; but that I should stand in the way of the people of God and cool their courage, and damp their ardor—my Master, let it never be! Sooner let me sleep among the clods of the valley, than be a hindrance to the meanest work that is done for thy name.

V. And now I shall close, not with this note of woe, but with A WORD OF

BLESSING. Depend upon it there shall come a great blessing to any of you who feel the soul travail that brings souls to God. Your own heart will be watered. You know the old illustration, so often used that it is now almost hackneyed, of the two travelers, who passed a man frozen in the snow, and thought to be dead; and the one said, "I have enough to do to keep myself alive, I will hasten on;" but the other said, "I cannot pass a fellow-creature while there is the least breath in him." He stooped down and began to warm the frozen man by rubbing him with great vigor; and at last the poor fellow opened his eyes, came back to life and animation, and walked along with the man who had restored him to life; and what think you was one of the first sights they saw? It was the man who so selfishly took care of himself frozen to death. The good Samaritan had preserved his own life by rubbing the other man; the friction he had given had caused the action of his own blood, and kept him in vigor. You will bless yourselves if you bless others.

Moreover, will it not be a joy to feel that you have done what you could? It is always well on a Sunday evening for a preacher to feel when he gets home, "Well, I may not have preached as I could wish, but I have preached the Lord Jesus, and poured forth all my heart and I could do no more." He sleeps soundly on that. After a day spent in doing all the good you can, even if you have met with no success, you can lean your head on Christ's bosom and fall asleep, feeling that if souls be not gathered, yet you have your reward. If men are lost, it is some satisfaction to us that they were not lost because we failed to tell them the way of salvation. But what a comfort it will be to you supposing you should be successful in bringing some to Christ. Why it will set all the bells of your soul ringing. There is no greater joy except the joy of our own communion with Christ, than this of bringing others to trust the Saviour. Oh seek this joy and pant after it. And what if you should see your own children converted? You have long hoped for it, but your hopes have been disappointed; God means to give you that choice blessing when you live more nearly to him yourself. Yes, wife, the husband's heart will be won when your heart is perfectly consecrated. Yes, mother, the girl shall love the Saviour when you love him better. Yes, teacher, God means to bless your class, but not until first of all he has made you fit to receive the blessing. Why, now, if your children were to be converted through your teacher, you would be

mightily proud of it: God knows you could not bear such success, and does not mean to give it until he has laid you low at his feet, and emptied you of yourself, and filled you with himself.

And now I ask the prayers of all this church, that God would send us a time of revival. I have not to complain that I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nought; far from it. I have not even to think that the blessing is withdrawn from the preaching of the word, even in a measure, for I never had so many cases of conversion in my life as I have known since I have been restored from sickness; I have never before received so many letters in so short a time, telling me that the sermons printed have been blest, or the sermons preached here; yet I do not think we ever had so few conversions from the regular congregation. I partly account for it from the fact, that you cannot fish in one pond always and catch as many fish as at first. Perhaps the Lord has saved all of you he means to save; sometimes, I am afraid he has; and then it will be of little use for me to keep on preaching to you, and I had better shift quarters and try somewhere else. It would be a melancholy thought if I believed it:—I do not believe it, I only fear it. Surely it is not always to be true that strangers, who drop in here only once, are converted, and you who are always hearing the gospel remain unaffected. Strange, but may it not be strangely, lamentably true of you? This very day may the anxiety of your Christian friends be excited for you, and then may you be led to be anxious for yourselves, and give your eyes no slumber till you find the Saviour. You know the way of salvation; it is simply to come with your sins and rest them on the Saviour; it is to rely upon or trust in the atoning blood. Oh that you may be made to trust this morning, to the praise of the glory of his grace. The elders mean to meet together tomorrow evening to have a special hour of prayer; I hope, also, the mothers will meet and have a time wrestling, and that every member of the church will try to set apart a time for supplication this week, that the Lord may visit again his church, and cause us to rejoice in his name. We cannot go back; we dare not go back. We have put our hand to the plough, and the curse will be upon us if we turn back. Remember Lot's wife. It must be onward with us; backward it cannot be. In the name of God the Eternal, let us gird up our loins by the power of his Spirit, and go onward conquering through the blood of the Lamb. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Ceremony of Laying the First Stone of the New Tabernacle

FOR THE CONGREGATION OF THE C. H. SPURGEON
Took Place On Tuesday, August 16th, 1859

Precisely at two o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. SPURGEON, accompanied by Sir MORTON PETO, Bert., M.P., and other friends, ascended the temporary platform erected around the stone; and the proceedings shortly after commenced by singing the hundredth Psalm:—

Before Jehovah's awful throne
Ye nations bow with sacred joy;
Know that the Lord is God alone;
He can create, and he destroy.
We are his people, we his care,
Our souls and all our mortal frame;
What lasting honors shall we rear,
Almighty Maker, to thy name?
We'll crowd thy gates with thankful songs,
High as the heavens our voices raise;
And earth, with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill thy courts with sounding praise.
Wide as the world is thy command;
Vast as eternity thy love;
Firm as a rock thy truth must stand,
When rolling years shall cease to move.

Mr. SPURGEON then offered up an opening Prayer:— OH! LORD God!
thy throne is in heaven. Yet heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot

contain thee, neither can any among the sons of men build a house for thy habitation and thy rest. The temple of Solomon, however beautiful for situation glorious for its splendor, and "exceeding magnificent," was not fit for thy dwelling place. It is not possible that thou who fillest immensity, thou who dwellest in light to which no man can approach, shouldst confine thyself to temples piled with human hands. Nevertheless thou hast said, "To this man also will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my Word." Jesus, Master of assemblies, where two or three are gathered together in thy name, there art thou in the midst of them. Blessed Comforter, without thy quickening influence, the largest congregation is but a listless crowd, the most gorgeous cathedral but a profane place. Thou hast been pleased, O Lord, to increase this people and to multiply their joy. We have had the joy of harvest, and the shoutings as of them that tread the wine-press. Thou hast been greatly with us, and thy right arm has been made bare in the eyes of all the people. And now behold, this day we are come together to lay the first stone of a house for thee, wherein we may meet for thy sacred worship. Oh, give us the first drops of a shower of mercy! Oh that this day every one concerned in the laying of this stone may partake of the blessing of the Most High! Bless the church that shall assemble in it! "May we find our richest expectations far exceeded, and our firmest hopes far excelled. Do thou, O God, bless the many thousands that we hope will gather here, and grant that the Word may be quick and powerful to their conversion! We know that places cannot be consecrated; yet can there be consecrated associations connected with them. Lord give us the fullness of thy blessing at the beginning, and as we progress, and stone mounts on stone, may we come at last to know that better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereon God bless thy servant who is about to lay this first stone! We thank thee for him, and we pray thee bless him abundantly. Grant that the wealth and station thou hast conferred upon him may be ever, as they have been, fully consecrated unto thee. And do thou bless all the dear brethren of the ministry now present! Oh, grant to every one of them the fullness of thy Spirit, the joy of thy salvation, and the light of thy countenance! And bless, we beseech thee, the assembled congregation! This very day may sinners be converted and God be glorified! And now, thou who dost bow thine ear to listen to our requests, hearken to our prayer, while we beseech thee to let this house be builded

without accident, let, or hindrance. When builded may it by the manifestation of thy presence to the saints be filled with thy glory. And for many years to come, yea until thy second advent, thou long-expected Messiah, may ministers of a full, free, and finished salvation, occupy its pulpit! And unto Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be glory, for ever! Amen.

Mr. SPURGEON then said: Before the stone is laid the deacons of the church—or rather my esteemed brother Mr. Carr on their behalf—Has drawn up a statement of the history of this church. I was afraid that our revered brothers in the deaconship would scarcely be heard. Mr. Carr, however is the author of the statement to be laid before you, and he will therefore most properly read it himself. I can only say, if you are as much edified and delighted in hearing it read, as I was when I first perused it, you will not feel occasion for regret even though it should occupy twenty minutes in its reading. I have no fault to find with it, except I think it gives me a little too much praise. If you think so, ascribe it all to God. His praise can never be uttered in strains too loud or too hearty.

The following statement was then read by Mr. B. W. CARR:—

WITH THE REMEMBRANCE OF GRATEFUL ANNALS IN THE PAST,
WITH THE TOKENS OF ABUNDANT PROSPERITY IN THE PRESENT,
WITH GLOWING HOPES AND DEVOUT PRAYERS FOR THE FUTURE,
WE ASSEMBLE THIS DAY TO LAY THE FOUNDATION STONE OF A
NEW TABERNACLE.

This church of baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is not of recent formation. Its members hold a direct succession from progenitors in the faith, for the space of two hundred and seven years. The oldest Baptist church in Southwark, we trace back our Commencement to the year 1652. After the death of King Charles the First, and before the appointment of Oliver Cromwell to be Protector of the Commonwealth, our pious ancestors first associated in church fellowship. Their spiritual compact was made in troublous times. While the trammels of Popery had then recent been cast off, and Protestant Christians had but lately emerged from Papal darkness, full liberty of conscience was neither granted by the legislators, nor understood generally by the people. The GREAT PRINCIPLE OF UNRESTRICTED RELIGIOUS LIBERTY was, at that

time, peculiar to the Baptists. They scrupulously maintained it, and pioneered the way for its popular apprehension. But the sect of Baptists was accounted schismatic. Their meetings were held by stealth. Being unlawful for them to gather together for worship in a suitable edifice, they were compelled to go from house to house, observing the strictest secrecy. From Psalmody they were obliged to refrain. They dared not sing the praises of God, lest the sounds of their devotion should attract the notice of informers. Persecution, in truth, they did not court, neither did they shrink from enduring it with gentle patience and holy boldness, when public indignation was aroused, and legal indictments preferred against them. Benjamin Keach, one of the earliest pastors of this church, was convicted of asserting and publishing his belief, that believers only, and not infants ought to be baptized—that laymen, having abilities, might preach the gospel—and, that Christ should reign personally on earth in the latter day. In accordance with the verdict obtained and the sentence pronounced by the judge, he was imprisoned for fourteen days, fined twenty pounds, and stood in the pillory twice during one week, in the market-places of Aylesbury and Winslow, in the County of Buckinghamshire.

The times have changed—the gradual enlightenment of the public mind has advanced—the face of the local district in which our various meeting-houses were situate has been transformed—the affinity of Christian denominations has become more truly felt—and the broad relation of all parties, whatever their religious opinions, to the general state of the kingdom, has been recognized by the ruling powers, while amidst the flowing tide of civilization, our beloved church, in connection with the sect to which it belongs, has maintained its original character. Owing but one rule of faith—the pure unadulterated Scriptures; recognizing the order of government or discipline no other standard than the example and precept of the apostles as contained in the New Testament, without alloy of tradition or modification, under fresh phases of secular estate, the old creed has been endorsed by each successive generation of believers, and is held intact by those, who this day are gathered to transmit the testimony they have received to a posterity yet unborn.

No novelty whatever led to the distinctness of our communion. No

factionous spirit induces us to perpetuate it. As a protest against an innovation still fostered in Christian churches, we preserve the inscription of "Baptist" on our banners. By "immersion" the converts to Jesus in apostolic times made their public profession. In Godly and pious communities of the one church of Christ, the primitive ordinance of discipleship has been practiced through an unbroken succession. Holding in common with brethren of other denominations the unity of the faith, we desire now, as ever, in our own fellowship, to maintain the pureness of that polity, which is formed upon the model of the church at Jerusalem.

Within the first half century of its history, this church had three Pastors—WILLIAM RIDER, BENJAMIN KEACH, and BENJAMIN STINTON.

Under WILLIAM RIDER the church was formed of a few individuals who had separated from one of the most ancient congregations of Baptists in the city of London. They had the reputation of being a people of solid judgment and substantial religion. Some of them were in good circumstances as to the possessions of this world. Mr. Rider died in the year 1667, after having taken the oversight of this infant church for fifteen years.

BENJAMIN KEACH, chosen to the pastorate in the year 1668, was a man famous in his day. He was born at Stokehaman in Buckinghamshire, in February, 1640, and when eighteen years of age was called to the solemn work of the ministry. In controversy on the Baptismal question, the renowned Richard Baxter was his great antagonist. Distinguished for literary research and voluminous writing, he contributed forty-three books to the Christian public, two of which—his "KEY TO OPEN SCRIPTURE METAPHORS," and his "EXPOSITION OF ALL THE PARABLES,—have been perpetuated in several editions, and take rank in the libraries of the Christian student to this day. During his time the church was prosperous, and a large and commodious building was erected in Goat's Yard Passage, Fair Street, Horseliedown. There he continued his ministry till the period of his decease in 1704, having completed thirty-six years of arduous ministerial labor.

After an interval of a few months, BENJAMIN STINTON, the son-in-law

of Benjamin Keach, succeeded to the pastorate, which he faithfully discharged for fourteen years. Not lacking in that indefatigable industry which has been ever characteristic of the ministers of this church, he first projected a plan of the Baptist history. The manuscript is still preserved, although it devolved upon other hands to complete the interesting work. It is further notable that in his time a baptistry was constructed "for the more decent administration of the ordinance." The Baptists had, like the Christians in Primitive times, administered this rite in pools or rivers. In the year 1818, at the cost of one hundred and sixty pounds, a desirable change was effected, the old baptizing place in Horeliedown being enlarged, a meeting-house built, and three vestries of eleven feet square each being provided. The year following Mr. Stinton died.

Through the singular providence and blessing of God, this church was subsequently favored with the ministry of two eminent servants of Christ for the protracted space of one hundred and fifteen years; Dr. John Gill having been upwards of fifty-two years, and his successor more than sixty-three years their pastor.

JOHN GILL was born at Kettering in Northamptonshire, November 23rd, 1697, and ordained to the pastoral office over this church, March 22nd, 1720, being then in the twenty-third year of his age. A man of profound learning and deep piety, he was notable as a divine for the exactness of his systematic theology in which he maintained the doctrines of grace against the innovations of Arminian teachers. His "BODY OF DIVINITY" has long been held in the highest repute. As the fervent exposition of an entire and harmonious creed, it has no rival. His famous treatise entitled "THE CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH," obtained for him the championship of the Calvinistic School of Divinity. He likewise published a voluminous "COMMENTARY ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES" in nine volumes folio, remarkable for the copiousness of its glossary, the brilliance of its argument, his apprehension of prophecy, and the richness of his Hebrew scholarship. His preparations for the pulpit having, as is well known, furnished the materials for the press, we can but reflect on the priceless value of his ministry. The eulogy pronounced upon him by the Revelation Augustus Montague Toplady, a well-known cotemporary divine of the Church of England, was doubtless well merited. He says,

"that his labors were indefatigable, his life exemplary, and his death comfortable if any one can be supposed to have trod the whole circle of human learning, it was this great and eminent person. His attainments, both in abstruse and polite literature, were equally extensive and profound, and so far as the distinguishing doctrines of grace are concerned, he never besieged an error which he did not force from its stronghold, nor ever encountered an adversary whom he did not baffle and subdue."

In the year 1757, a new meeting house for the church and congregation was built in Carter Lane, Tooley Street, which Dr. Gill opened on the 9th of October in that year, "by recording the name of the Lord therein," agreeably to his own apprehension of that devout service, "preaching the doctrines of the grace of God, and administering gospel ordinances as they have been delivered to us." This venerable servant of Christ fell asleep in Jesus the 14th October, 1771.

"Though we have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have we not many fathers," but John Gill was a father of the true apostolic order. When this hoary old saint, bending with mature age, was gathered in, and came to his grave "like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season," there sprung up in his place a stripling youth, like a green blade, and so forestalled another summer season, with a fresh crop of souls as precious grain for a future harvest. A lapse of less than two years in point of time divided the ministry of Dr. Gill from that of Dr. Rippon. But the interval in a moral aspect looked rather wide just then to the eyes of those who saw the pulpit vacated by the one and occupied by the other. Of this no one was more sensible or more apprehensive than young John Rippon himself. Once and again he shrunk from accepting the solemn charge under an overwhelming sense of its responsibilities. Making the invitation a matter of daily prayer, he sought fresh proof that he had found favor with God and acceptance with his people, before returning an absolute and decisive answer.

Born at Tiverton in Devonshire, on April 29th, 1751, JOHN RIPPON was in his twenty-third year when publicly ordained, on November 11th, 1773, to the pastoral office in connection with this church at Carter Lane

Chapel. It had already appeared that the mantle of a true ministerial succession had fallen on him; the anointings of the Spirit of God had been fully manifested when by the laying on of hands he received the open recognition of his brethren. This thing came of the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, and he wrought mightily by his dear young servant. A great revival ensued. Crowded congregations at the usual services, and joyful church meetings to receive the converts into fellowship, gave evidence that "the good hand of our God strengthened the hands of the brethren for the good work." For nearly fifty years Dr. Rippon was considered to be one of the most popular ministers in London of the Baptist denomination. Pure in doctrine, and pungent in style, his discourses were sound and savory. In preaching the gospel, he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, zealous of good works, he failed not to exhort and rebuke with all authority, knowing the dispensation that was committed unto him. His lot being cast in times far different from those his predecessors had ever known, he diligently sought out opportunities, and heartily applied his energies to the wide diffusion of the gospel of Christ. Itinerant societies for the work of evangelizing in this country, and the Missionary Association for sending forth the word of life to heathen lands, specially engaged his heart, his counsel, and his co-operation. As the editor of the "Baptist Register," he kept up an extensive correspondence with Christians in all parts of the world. He enjoyed a high influence in his own denomination, and acquired great esteem in other sections of the church of Christ. His selection of hymns has had a wide circulation both in the British Empire and the United States of America, aiding the devotions and inspiring the praises of myriads of our fellow-Christians, nor has it yet been superseded by any volume that can rival it in popularity. In the strange and inscrutable providence of God he was permitted to survive his usefulness, but while the infirmities of age paralyzed his ministerial powers, he kept the faith and maintained the unblemished reputation of a Christian to the hour of his departure, which occurred on the 17th December, 1836, in the eighty-sixth year of his age.

There yet remain among us a few members of this church, who recollect the dear old Doctor in the vigor of his middle age, and in our memories, the urbanity and warm-heartedness of his private manners are as fondly

cherished, as the glowing zeal of his public ministrations. If his life has not left behind it such massive and enduring monuments on earth as that of his predecessor, we doubt not that he hath full as many trophies in heaven. These men of God, each of them filled his allotted sphere. Gill shone more like a star of the first magnitude amidst surrounding darkness: Rippon was one of a splendid galaxy. The luminous association in which he stood rendering his individuality less conspicuous when viewed from a distance. "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days," and we adore thee O God for it. Our eyes have beheld greater things, and our hearts are lifted up to thy throne for a more copious blessing. "Let thy works appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

An important event in our history as a church occurred during the closing years of Dr. Rippon's life. On Lord's day, the 7th of February, 1830, the church and congregation assembled to worship God for the last time at the old meeting-house in Carter Lane, previously to its being given up to the Corporation of the City for the approaches to the new London Bridge. For three years were we compelled to seek accommodation from the kindness of other churches, at various times assembling in different buildings. This was a grievous affliction. At length in answer to many an earnest prayer, we were directed by the kindness of our heavenly Father to a piece of freehold ground in New Park Street, where a neat chapel was built, and opened free from any debt or encumbrance on the 6th of May, 1833. Still did fresh anxieties beset our path. For when we had secured a permanent home for worship, we were constrained to seek temporary supplies for the pulpit, our pastor being totally disabled from further service. In reviewing our troubles, we do but recount God's mercies, for the Lord hath delivered us out of them all.

During the eighteen years that ensued after Dr. Rippon's death, three pastors successively accepted office and removed from among us. This was a new experience in our annals. Hitherto each servant of God who had been ordained over this church in the Lord, continued unto his death in its fellowship.

For two years and a half from December, 1837, to July, 1840, the Revelation JOSEPH ANGUS ministered with considerable success. His piety and his talents commended him to our regard, and his youth scoured for him our tender sympathy. We received him with the heartiest welcome, we parted from him with deep regret. He received more than a hundred and twenty members into our communion, and increased the attendance on the public services. The institutions in connection with the church flourished under his presidency. It is worthy of record that at his suggestion the communion of the Lord's supper was made available in this church to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have not been baptized by immersion. At the earnest call of the Baptist Missionary Society, he resigned his charge to take the office of secretary and now fills the responsible trust of theological tutor in the college at Regent's Park for the training of young ministers.

For about eight years and a half from January, 1842, to June, 1850, the Rev. JAMES SMITH, of Cheltenham, was our pastor. Under his ministry the hearts of the people were often moved, and the pool of baptism often stirred. Feeling that London air was unsuited to his health, and provincial labors had superior charms for his soul he resigned his charge, and returned to the scene of his early labors, not without leaving behind him many grateful reminiscences, and many gratifying fruits of the divine blessing on the testimony he was enabled to deliver.

For a short period of less than two years the Rev. WILLIAM WALTERS, now of Halifax, took the oversight of the church, acceding to an unanimous invitation, given him in July 1851, and retiring in the month of April, 1853.

By reason of these frequent changes, the church had become beyond measure unsettled, the number in attendance on Lord's days being greatly diminished. There remained however a faithful band, who besieged the throne of grace with much earnestness. The prayer-meetings on Monday evening continued to give evidence that these who were absent on the first day of the week, had not ceased to hope that the Lord would revive his work among us.

In December, 1853, our present pastor, by a surprising providence, was first invited to occupy the pulpit of our chapel for one Sunday. Having been born on the 19th of June, 1834, he was then only in his twentieth year. His preaching at once gave signs of singular attraction. And on his repeating his visits to the metropolis, each occasion witnessed the increasing interest his ministry excited. In January, 1854, he accepted the invitation to supply the pulpit for six months, three months of which only had expired when he was unanimously elected to the pastorate.

The antecedents of many generations, and the cherished reminiscences of the older members, prepared for the Rev. CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON that enthusiastic welcome with which he was spontaneously hailed by this church. From the day he commenced his labors in our midst, it pleased the Lord our God to grant us a revival which has steadily progressed ever since. Among the earliest additions to our number, there were not a few disciples of Christ, who, after making a profession under faithful ministers long ago departed to their rest, had wandered about and found no settled home. Many such were gathered into the fold of our fellowship. Here their souls have been restored, while they have found the presence of the Good Shepherd, who maketh us to lie down in green pastures and leadeth us beside the still waters. But the greater work was that of conversion. So did the Holy Ghost accompany the preaching of the gospel with divine power, that almost every sermon proved the means of awakening and regeneration to some who were hitherto "dead in trespasses and sins." Thus our church became an asylum for the aged, as well as a nursery for the babes of our Savior's family. Before the year had expired, the limited accommodation at New Park Street Chapel for the multitude that gathered at every service rendered it necessary to enlarge the building. As a suitable place for worship during the alterations, the large room at Exeter Hall, in the Strand, was engaged for seventeen Lord's days, from the 11th of February to the 27th of May, 1855. By this step our pastor's fame became widely extended. The crowd that beset the doors long before the hours of service impeded the public thoroughfare. Frequent paragraphs in the newspapers helped to make the preacher notorious. Slander after slander grieved his tender heart; but the grace poured into his lips by his Master, for the reclaiming of sinners (some of

whom were of the most abandoned order) afforded him the richest cordial. On our return to the enlarged chapel, we soon discovered that the place was too strait for us, and in the summer of 1856, we again availed ourselves for a few months of the superior accommodation at Exeter Hall, on Sunday evenings. In the autumn of that year, we arranged to hire the larger and more commodious hall of the Royal Surrey Gardens, for the Sunday morning service. This arrangement has been continued for nearly three years. Much of God's good providence is to be clearly recognized in thus causing us to wander. Our dilemma forced upon us a precedent, which others have followed, much to the furtherance of the gospel—to God be ascribed the glory! The prejudice against entering a Nonconformist sanctuary has in many instances been laid aside by those who have convened within the walls of an edifice, that is justly accounted neutral ground; it being sacred or profane according to the temporary use it is made to serve. Every week has borne testimony to the saving influence of the gospel, as it is there constantly proclaimed to an assembly of five thousand persons. Still, with so large a family and so small a dwelling-house, the inconvenience of a temporary lodging becomes more and more grievously felt. There is, and has been for the past two years, as fair an average of that large congregation, who are devout persons, and regular attendants as in any sanctuary in London. Yet not one-third of them can find a place under the same ministry for more than one service during the week. The church-members far exceed the extent of accommodation in our own chapel to provide all of them with sittings. It is only by having two distinct services that we can admit our communicants to the table of the Lord. The necessity therefore for the undertaking that we assemble to inaugurate, must be perceived by all. Every attempt to trace the popular demand for Evangelical teaching to spasmodic excitement has failed. The pastor of New Park Street Church has never consciously departed from the simple rule of faith recorded in the New Testament. The doctrines he has set forth are identical with those which have been received by godly men of every section of the church since the days of the apostles. The services of religion have been conducted without any peculiarity or innovation. No musical or Esthetic accompaniments have ever been used. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty. The history of our progress for five years is patent to the world. The example has been found capable of

successfully stimulating other churches in their aggressive efforts to save perishing souls. With earnest individual and united prayer, each step, has been taken. And to the exclusive honor and praise of our God, our stone of Ebenezer is this day laid.

Mr. SPURGEON: In the bottle which is to be placed under the stone we have put no money—for one good reason, that we have none to spare. We have not put newspapers, because, albeit we admire and love the liberty of the press, yet that is not so immediately concerned in this edifice. The articles placed under the stone are simply these;—the Bible, the Word of God—we put that as the foundation of our church. Upon this rock doth Christ build the ministration of his truth. We know of nothing else as our standard. Together with this we have put the old Baptist Confession of Faith, which was signed in the olden times by Benjamin Keach whose name is in this book. We put also the declaration of the deacons which you have just heard read printed on parchment. There is also an edition of Dr. Rippon's Hymn Book, published just before he died; and then, in the last place, there is a Programme of this day's proceedings. I do not suppose that the New Zealander who one day is to sit on the broken arch of London Bridge will make much out of it. If we had put gold and silver there, it is possible he might have taken it back to New Zealand with him: but I should not wonder, if ever England is destroyed, these relics will find their way into some museum in Australia or America, where they will spell over some of our old-fashioned names, and wonder who ever those good men could be who are inscribed here, as James Low, Samuel Gale, Thomas Olney, Thomas Cook, William Olney, George Winsor, and the like. And I think they will say, "Oh depend upon it, they were some good men or others, and they have put them in stone there." They are living stones indeed they have served this church well and long. Honor to whom honor is due. I am glad to put their names with mine here; and I hope we shall live together for ever in eternity.

The Ceremony of laying the First Stone was then performed in the customary manner by Sir S. M. Peto, amidst the loud acclamation of the Spectators.

Sir MORTON PETO then addressed the assembly as follows:—My Christian friends, I congratulate my excellent friend Mr. Spurgeon, the

deacons, the church, and all our friends assembled on this interesting event. It is one to which you have looked forward for some time. It is the commencement of an edifice in which we must hope that the era of much usefulness inaugurated with his ministry will be continued, and largely increased. That admirable paper which was read before the stone was laid, gave you a succinct, but interesting account of the church up to the present time. We must hope that those glories which have been so remarkably shown in the earlier history of the church, may not only be continued in the salvation of a larger number than has ever yet been known, but that in years to come those glories may be largely increased, and that all who live may have the happiness of feeling that the work which has been begun to-day, was one which the Lord had eminently blessed. It is well, dear Christian friends, in the commencement of any large undertaking, to look warily and see whether we are warranted in what we are about to attempt. I could not but feel, during the reading of that paper; that the fact there stated that the church at Park Street is larger at the present time than can be accommodated in the building, that there is practically no room in the chapel for the world, is one which to every Christian heart, must show that there remained nothing but for the church here to arise and build. I know it may be said, that the Music Hall, and other large places, might have given our friend Mr. Spurgeon an opportunity of making known the unsearchable riches of Christ, but then there are other institutions in connection with an edifice of this kind, which are of equal importance with that to which I have referred. We have not only the assembly of the church within its walls, but we must have an opportunity of gathering the young for instruction; and when we look to the fact that this new edifice will accommodate above two thousand Sunday-school children, and also place nearly five thousand people in the position of hearing the gospel of Christ, we not only feel that the world will be accommodated to hear, and the church amply provided for, but the young will be trained up in the path in which they should go. Then I rejoice, dear Christian friends, to know that this church, though strictly denominational, is in no respect Sectarian. Believing, as its members justly do, that there is no other mode of baptism than that which is figuratively set forth in Scripture by "being buried with Christ in baptism:" while I am sure, my friend Mr. Spurgeon will never, in coming across this truth (as he does not in regard to any other) compromise its

due weight, or give it more than fitting prominence that the congregations may hear the simple gospel; yet on all occasions, when the claims of Christian usefulness are to be promoted, I am quite sure the church will be rejoiced to lend this edifice to any, not only of the denomination to which we are so ardently attached, but to any other evangelical denomination that may ask it at your hands. Then, dear Christian friends, let all the denominations feel that if this is to be a metropolitan building, it has large claims on them. While you have a large and a heavy burden, which you are delighted to bear, because it is only one of those things which enable you to evidence your love to Christ, and one of those things which do so much good in stimulating exertion, yet I cannot but feel that my friend Mr. Spurgeon, and the deacons have a very strong claim on all other churches of the metropolis and of the kingdom at large. And I trust that this will be increasingly felt, and that you will have the happiness of doing as good Dr. Rippon did. When my excellent friend, Mr. Spurgeon—as I have no doubt he will if spared, (and I trust he will be spared)—opens this place, and declares the full, free, and finished gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as the basis of his ministry to come, as it has been the basis of his ministry past—that it will be in a chapel free from debt. I know there is no testimony which his loving heart would so freely acknowledge, as that testimony to himself, or rather to his Lord through him, which would enable him to feel when he first ascends the pulpit of this new chapel, I am here speaking the gospel to a people who are assembled in an edifice which has no claim whatever to discharge. Now, dear Christian friends, I can but hope that my excellent and dear friend, Mr. Spurgeon, may be something like those two worthies of whom we heard—that he and the one who is to succeed him may occupy the century between them. I only hope that my friend's will be the larger half. I hope and believe that whenever the time comes, he will not allow his increasing years to give an evidence that he desires to occupy a position which he is no longer able to fill, but I am perfectly assured of this, that the divine blessing which has so richly manifested itself in the ministry of his youth, will enable him to feel with advancing years the truth of the promise, and that he will find that he who goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall find even to the hoariest age, that he will return bringing his sheaves with him. Accept my hearty congratulations on this event, my hearty prayers that every wish of yours may be more than

abundantly realized in an the future; that my excellent and dear friend, Mr. Spurgeon and his deacons may not only live to see this house completed without accident, but that they and you occupying it together, may have what after all is of the greatest importance, a rich baptism of that divine influence, without which all that we undertake is worthless. Dear Christian friends, I thank you most heartily for having permitted me the honor of occupying this position on this occasion; and I earnestly desire that as brethren and sisters in Christ, you may find that what we have begun, may be accomplished to your joy, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Mr. SPURGEON: My dear friends, this is not the first time that I have borrowed light from Sir Morton Peto. I have often cheered the darkness of a long railway journey, by a most excellent lamp of his own manufacture, which he kindly presented to me, that I might see to read by it as I was traveling. I am very glad to see him blazing forth again today. In the light of his countenance many of us have been made glad. It is my earnest prayer that while God is pleased to bless him with wealth, and rank, and influence, he may find it quite as easy to serve his God in the future as he has done in the past. We owe him much as Dissenters for his great zeal and wisdom in having brought through the House of Commons an Act whereby our chapels are well secured to us. I pray that God may give him grace every day that he may know his own title to the kingdom of heaven to be clearer and clearer as years come upon him. May his course be like that of the sun, which goeth forth in his strength and stayeth not till the full blazing noon. And now I have to say a few words to you this afternoon with regard to this great edifice. I never answer any slanders against myself, and very seldom answer any questions about what I mean to do. It is always enough for me to have my own approbation; I always feel perfectly satisfied with the approval of my own conscience without that of anybody else, and when I have done wrong it is always enough for me to have the condemnation of my own heart. I find that I am obliged to be a self contained man, just going on my way, and letting other people do the same. If I am wrong I will be accountable to my own Master, but to no flesh living or breathing; and if I am right the day will tell it. God knows how true are my intentions even when I may have acted most foolishly. "This place," I said some time ago, when

our brethren were half afraid, "is to be built, and it will be built, and God will fill it with his presence " There is no doubt whatever about the money being obtained. I scarcely know that I have asked an individual to give anything, because I have such a solid conviction that the money must come. I suppose that out of all that is now in our hands I have collected more than half myself in preaching, and that is the way I dare say the larger part of the rest will come, through the kindness of the provincial and metropolitan churches who have almost all treated me with the noblest generosity. I give this day my hearty thanks to all that have helped me; and I do not know but what I may as well add to all that have not helped me. They many of them mean to do so, and so I will thank them beforehand. There is one gentleman here to-day who is going to make a speech, after Brother Dowson shall have addressed you. I think (albeit that he can speak admirably well,) the best part of his speech will be made with his hand, for he has three thousand pounds with him to give as a noble donation from an aged servant of Christ, long sick and confined to his house but who loves Christ's ministers and desires to help Christ's cause. He would not like me to mention his name, and therefore I shall not do it. And now, my dear friends, as to the place to be erected here. I have a word or two to say with regard to its style, with regard to its purposes, and with regard to our faith and our promise. It is to me a matter of congratulation that we shall succeed in building in this city a Grecian place of worship. My notions of architecture are not worth much, because I look at architecture from a theological point of view, not from an architectural one. It seems to me that there are two saved languages in the world. There was the Hebrew of old, and I doubt not that Solomon adopted Jewish architecture—a Hebrew form and fashion of putting stones together in harmony with the Hebrew faith. There is but one other sacred language—not Rome's mongrel tongue: glorious were that for a battle cry, but of no use for the preaching of the gospel—the Latin! There is only one other sacred language, the Greek, and that is dear to every Christian's heart. Our fullest revelation is in that tongue; our noblest names for Jesus. The very epitome and standard of our faith is Greek; and this place is Grecian. I care not that many an idol temple has been built after the same fashion. So it may have been that Abraham and the ancient Hebrews may have carried their architecture from some heathen temple in Ur of the Chaldees. Greek is the sacred tongue, and Greek is the

Baptist's tongue. We may be beaten in our own version sometimes, but in the Greek never. Every Baptist place should be Grecian—never Gothic. We owe nothing to the Goths as religionists. We owe our Scriptures to the Grecian language; and a Grecian place shall this be; and God give us the power and life of that master of the Grecian language, the apostle Paul, that here like wonders may be done by the preaching of the Word. As for our faith as a church you have heard that already. We believe in what are called the five great points commonly known as Calvinistic; but we do not regard those five points as being barbed shafts which we are to push into the bowels of Christendom. We look upon them as being five great lamps which help to irradiate the cross, or rather five bright emanations springing from the glorious covenant of our Triune God, and illustrating the great doctrine of Jesus crucified. Against all comers, especially against all lovers of Arminianism, we defend and maintain pure gospel truth. At the same time I can make this public declaration, that I am no Antinomian. I belong not to the sect of those who are afraid to invite the sinner to Christ. I warn him, I invite him, I exhort him. Hence, then, I have contumely on either hand. Inconsistency is urged by some, as if anything that God commanded could be inconsistent. I will glory in such inconsistency even to the end I bind myself precisely to no form of doctrine. I love those five points as being the angles of the gospel, but then I love the center between the angles better still. Moreover, we are Baptists, and we cannot swerve from this matter of discipline, nor can we make our church half-and-half in that matter. The witness of our church must be one and indivisible. We must have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. And yet dear to our hearts is that great article of the Nicene Creed, the "Communion of Saints." I believe not in the communion of Episcopalians. I do not believe in the communion of Baptists. I dare not sit with them exclusively. I think I should be almost strict communicant enough not to sit with them at all, because I should say, "This is not the communion of saints, it is the communion of Baptists." Whosoever loves the Lord Jesus Christ in verity and truth hath a hearty welcome, and is not only permitted, but invited to communion with the Church of Christ. However, we can say with all our hearts, that difference has never lost us one good friend yet. I see around me our independent brethren, they certainly have been to Elim to-day, for there has been much water here; and I see round about me dear strict communion brethren and one of

them is about to address you. He is not so strict a communionist but what he really in his own heart communes with the people of God. I can number among my choicest friends many members of the church of England, and some of every denomination under heaven. I glory in that fact. However sternly a man may hold the right of private judgment, he can yet give his right hand with as light a grip to every man that loves Jesus Christ. Now with regard to our prospects. We are to build this place, and the prospect I encourage is that it be paid for before it is opened. I think it is likely too; because if we carry out our intention as a committee, we have a notion that if our friends do not give us liberal contributions we will put the carcass up and roof it in, and allow them to come and stand. Those that want seats can buy them. I am sure my people would soon get me a pulpit, and such is the zeal of our brethren that they soon buy me a baptistry. I leave it open for any generous friend here that pleases to do so, to engage to provide some part of the chapel, and say, "I will give that." Churchmen give painted windows, and if some of you agree to give different parts of the chapel, it may be so erected. Understand, our large expenditure is caused partly by the fact that we have immense school rooms under ground, and also a vestry for church-meetings holding between 800 and 900 persons. This is necessary, because our church is of such an immense size, and our members come out to every service if possible. There is no church-edifice in London so well used up as ours. They hack it to pieces. We must build this strong I am sure, for the people are always with us. They love to be at the prayer meetings. There is no people that take out their quarter's seat-money so fully. They say, "We will hear all that we can;" and depend on it, they never give me a chance of seeing the seats empty. But our prospect is, after we have fitted up our vestry, schools, and the like that we shall be able to go on and build other chapels. Now, Sir Morton Peto is the man who looks to build one chapel with the hope it that will be the seedling for another. He has the noblest chance that ever man had for getting this done. We will pretty soon try our hands at it. Our people have taken to chapel-building, and they will go on with it. They built a great chapel that held two thousand persons in Horseliedown for Benjamin Keach; then they built one in Goat Yard; then one in Carter Lane for Dr Rippon, then one in Park Street; and now we have set about building one here. "What are you going to do with Park Street?" it may be asked. Why, my dear

friends, we might get out of our difficulties if we were to sell it, but that is what we do not mean to do. Our motto is, "Go forward, and never step back." You know if we were to build one chapel, and sell another, that would be the "goose-step;" there would be no marching, it is merely putting one foot up and the other down, but never getting farther. Belonging to the Presbyterian order, we have elders in our church, as well as deacons, and the presbytery is capable of the widest extension. That church can be held in connection with our own; two preaching elders can preach the Word there, and the church still remain as one—not two churches. God sparing my life, if I have my people at my back I will not rest until the dark county of Surrey be covered with places of worship. I look on this as the beginning of the end. I announce my own schemes: visionary they may appear, but carried out they will be. It is only within the last six months that we have started two churches—one in Wandsworth and the other in Greenwich, and the Lord has prospered them. The pool of baptism has been stirred with converts. And what we have done in two places I am about to do in a third, and we will do it not for the third or the fourth, but for the hundredth time, God being our helper. I am sure I may make my strongest appeal to my brethren because we do not mean to build this as our nest, and then to be lazy. We must go from strength to strength, and be a missionary church, and never rest until not only this neighborhood, but our country, of which it is said that some parts are as dark as India, shall have been enlightened with the gospel. Now I have laid out a grand scheme, and I have no doubt some of my dear brethren, the ministers of Surrey, especially Dr. Steane, will carry it all out almost before I have begun. We shall be glad whoever may do it so long as it is done. I always try to put my shoulder to everybody else's wheel, though I have got sometimes a little mire on my shoulders as the result of it; but I am ready to go and give a heave at any time if they will only be kind to me on this occasion and lift my wheel out of the mud. After Brother Dowson shall have spoken, and our friend Mr. Inskip, of Bristol, shall have made his three thousand pounds speech, we shall sing a hymn. This gangway will then be cleared, and all persons present will have an opportunity of placing an offering upon the stone. And if any of you would like to try your hand at building with a trowel you can lay a brick or two, or twenty, at a shilling a brick. Some of our friends will pay a guinea a brick to begin with, as they would not like to give less; but you

can begin with a shilling a brick afterwards. We shall pay you nothing for the labor, but you will pay us for the privilege of putting bricks into the wall.

The Rev. H. Dowson: I stand here this afternoon, my dear Christian friends, as the representative of thousands of brethren in the North of England, who love the truth, who love you and who love your pastor, and who would be glad to be here today to mingle their Hosannas with your thanksgivings, and to congratulate you, and thank God upon an that is auspicious and triumphant in the proceedings of this day. Notwithstanding the prognostication of enemies, and notwithstanding the fears of halfhearted friends, this tabernacle is now beginning to look like a great fact, and we can entertain not the least possible doubt of the success of this enterprise, promoted and devised amidst the liberality and the prayers of the people here. Where God gathers together his sheep, and increases their number, he will surely amplify the fold; and when he gives sinners hearts to hear, and hearts to pray, and hearts to believe, he will give them in his providence a place in which to worship. This is the Lord's doing, brethren. The hand of God has been in this work from the beginning, and I doubt not will conduct to a glorious termination. This vast metropolis of yours is covered in various parts with buildings—institutions of mercy, and hospitals for the relief of almost all the maladies incident to our frail humanity. What is the meaning of this grand edifice which is to fill the place before me? It is to be a hospital, an infirmary for the spiritually diseased. Here the deaf and the dumb, and the halt and the lame and the lepers, are to be assembled together, and they shall be pointed to the great Physician, and they shall be told of the balm of Gilead; and in the midst of it shall be the bath of blood, as well as the bath of baptism; and the bath of blood shall take the precedence of the bath of baptism, for it is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin. When I listened to that interesting record and sketch of the history of your church, so fostered by a merciful providence and by a Savior's care, I could not but rejoice that the same great distinctive principles will be maintained; and that, though there may be a change of position there shall be no change in the doctrines preached and professed. We shall dedicate this sanctuary to the worship of the Trinity—Father Son, and Holy Ghost, we shall dedicate this edifice to the proclamation of the

doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and salvation only through his cross; we shall dedicate this edifice to the doctrine of justification by faith, righteousness imputed, even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ Jesus, the doctrine of sovereign grace, the doctrine of the personality and agency of the Holy Spirit, the precepts of Christ, the ordinances of Christ, and the free proclamation of the gospel to every creature. The trumpet shall give a certain sound, sinners shall hear the sound,

"Their thankful tongues shall own,
That righteousness and strength are found,
In thee the Lord alone."

As to your future prospects in the removal of this debt; My dear friend and brother Mr. Spurgeon, has said, that if the money be not raised there will be a probability that the place will be left unfinished. I trust it will not be in the position of a place occupied by a venerable predecessor of mine a hundred years ago, when they commenced the Baptist interest in Bradford, in a place galled the Cockpit, and the females carried their stools under their arms, because they had neither forms nor chairs on which to sit. Surely you will not wish this great Tabernacle to be opened under such circumstances. This day the eyes of all the provinces of this country, my brethren, are turned towards you. Many parts of the country—the town from which I come to wit—is waiting to give a response to what you do to-day, and that which you shall in your liberality bestow, will give a tone and influence far and wide amongst the provinces, the hearts of whose inhabitants beat with sympathy for your cause and your enterprise. Brethren, we have laid the foundation of a material edifice. There is a nobler "temple, I need scarcely remind you, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone. This is only a tabernacle; these stones will molder and decay, or some great convulsion or earthquake hereafter shall heave up the mighty foundations of this stable edifice, but the temple of the living God, of which I hope many of you are living stones, shall stand and stand for ever, the memorial of God's eternal unchangeable compassion, and his pity for the lost and the guilty. May God bless and prosper you, cause his face to shine upon you, and give you peace evermore. Amen

Mr. INSKIP, of Bristol: My Christian friends, after the trumpet-tongued introductions which my friend and brother Mr. Spurgeon, has given me, I am sure you must expect very large things; but I do hope that you and himself will not go away disappointed by very small things. But, however, large things have their commencement from very small beginnings, and as we see yonder ground covered with the sands of the gravel and the stones about it, and as we see the bricks yonder piled, and contemplate the lime which will have a large number of component particles to combine and unite therewith, the preparation for this building which is to be erected; so it is that we have to look forward from small individual materials, to the consummation of the glorious kingdom of our blessed Lord and Savior. I have, it is true, to appear before you to-day as the representative but of one, and not of the multitude; but well assured I am, that had my brethren in the West known that I was to come here as a representative, or a delegate at all, they would have sent me well furnished and well armed. And it is only for my brother, Mr. Spurgeon, to make his way to the West, and I know that he will find a very hearty response to his warm appeals. However, the response which I have to make to-day is one which comes from a single heart. It comes from the heart of one who is confined to a sick chamber, and has not seen the outside of the city for some years past. But that chamber is enlivened and enlightened by the bright illumination of the Eternal Spirit. That man's large wealth and large fortune has been dedicated to his Lord. He numbers eighty-three years of age, and has given away upwards of eighty thousand pounds. And he has sent me here to-day to say he will give you three thousand pounds and, what is more, if twenty gentlemen will come forward with one hundred pounds a-piece upon the opening of this chapel, I am prepared to put down twenty hundreds to meet it. "It is not by might, it is not by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord." These things, as I said, emanate from small beginnings. It was my honor and my privilege this day three weeks to address a large concourse in laying the foundation stone of a new edifice for the Church of England, in the city of Bristol. The new church for our dear friend and brother, Doudney, is now progressing, through the same gentleman's bounty. There is one thing you will say, "Dear me, he deserves great praise." But he says, "Give me none of it, away with it, away with it, it is fulsome, it is annoying. Lay it upon the head of Immanuel, for he gave it to me. He it is that has induced

me thus to give you assistance." It is not for me to laud the man, and therefore I leave him in his solitude—with an earnest prayer which no doubt many of you will reciprocate—that the Lord will bless and grant to him the bright shinings of his countenance in his last declining hours. As regards this building which is about to be erected, it is a matter of considerable delight to me to be able to forward in the least degree the views of my friend Mr. Spurgeon. With much true delight has it been my happiness to hear of many sinners in the West of England having been brought to a knowledge of Christ by his ministry. Let me now ask you earnestly to supplicate that the same blessing may rest upon his labors here, in answer to earnest and incessant prayer—prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit of God who alone is the inspirer of prayer. May the work of conversion proceed! There are many things here to be considered. There are many things to be talked of, but the time would fail me now even to hint at them. I trust by-and-bye, if I should stay to the evening meeting, an opportunity will be afforded me of saying a few words which will be more audible. I leave now others more able to address you than I can possibly be, and I shall be very happy to place on this stone, in accordance with the mission with which I am entrusted, not a painted window, but a printed piece of paper.

The following verses were then sung:—

All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall:

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown him lord of all.

Let every kindred, every tribe,

One this terrestrial ball,

To him all majesty ascribe,

And crown him Lord of all.

Numerous donations were then placed upon the stone, after which the assembly separated.

EVENING MEETING

A PUBLIC TEA MEETING was held in the evening in REA'S Repository which was appropriately fitted up for the occasion. About two thousand

persons sat down to tea at five o'clock, and at half-past six, the cloth having been removed, and the seats re-arranged, the chair was taken by the Right Hon. the LORD MAYOR.

The Doxology having been sung, the Revelation JOHN SPURGEON (father of the Revelation C. H. Spurgeon) offered up prayer as follows:—
Our Father and our God, we supplicate thy blessing upon us at this time. O may we feel thy presence to be in the midst of us. May we realize thee as a God of love in Jesus Christ, and O do thou send that rich blessing which shall make us all happy and fill our hearts with joy through the precious Savior who bled and died for us. We thank thee that we have lived to see this happy day. O our Father, may we never forget thy goodness and mercy to us. Accept the free will offerings of thy people, and O may that foundation stone which is laid to-day be blessed by thee, and may that building be erected to thy glory, honor, and praise. May we each be made living stones of that living temple which is to adorn the world of glory, and may we live there for ever with Jesus Christ. O bless us all; and bless thy young servant. Do thou stand by him and keep him from the mighty foes against whom he has to contend. Keep far from him the influence of sin and Satan, and may he find joy and peace in God. O our Father, keep him, O keep him, let him not be lifted up by what he has seen, or by what thou hast done for him today. Oh do thou keep his soul humble, and then he will always be strong to praise thy great and holy name. Oh, may he draw from that fountain which is full—which runneth over, and may he find that the God of peace and love is continually with him. Bless, his church and congregation, O Father smile upon them. We leave them in thy hands; we seek thy favor and presence with us tonight. Grant, great God, that sinners may be converted unto thee. There are some in thy presence who are but a few steps from the grave, some hastening on to the abyss of woe, walking with the giddy multitude in the way which leads to death and eternal destruction. God save them! Oh, pluck them as brands from the eternal burning! May thine all-sufficient grace turn their hearts, and thy name be glorified! Bless every one now present. Prepare us for this service, accept our song of praise, and fill our hearts with joy, for the dear Redeemer's sake. Amen.

The LORD MAYOR said: My Christian friends, I do not think that it is

possible for me to be heard at the extremity of the building, but, if you will have patience with me, I trust I shall be able to get up my voice so that every one shall hear. This is a happy day, a day long to be remembered in the annals of the country, because here to-day, we are permitted to meet in quietness, in order, with the guardians of the peace around us to prevent any disturbance; a proof that civil liberty and religious freedom have made great advances in this country. In former days we had to meet in holes and corners and alleys, but now we can meet in open day in the front of the high road, inviting the assembled public to come and be witnesses of the order of our ceremonies, and to partake of the benefits which are to be derived therefrom. I therefore urge upon all, when they have anything to do with the question of civil and religious liberty, never to give up their efforts until they see it extended far and wide. Our beloved young friend has, through the providence of God, been raised up to gather the largest congregation ever gathered together; he has dispensed the truth as it is in Jesus to thousands upon thousands; and he is a despised—no, an honored Baptist minister. He comes amongst you, not in Episcopal guise, clothed in secular authority, and robed in the habiliments of office, but he comes amongst you a simplehearted man. He comes clothed in the authority of his divine Lord and Master, speaking the truth in simplicity and love, winning, not by human power, but subduing by the power of the gospel. Evidently God has called him to do a great work; and you are the people who ought to love and honor him, esteeming him for his work's sake, and ever protecting him against the calumnies of the world, to prove that he is a true servant of Jesus Christ. I have said you ought to adhere to the principles of civil and religious liberty; but for them you never could have seen the thousands at the laying of the foundation stone; but for them you would not have been gathered together now in peace and safety and an honor be to the men in church or state, who during the past centuries have suffered advocated, bled and died, that you might meet in peace and comfort. Well, when you hear of the assumptions of church authority, remember that if they are not sanctioned by the gospel of Jesus Christ, the world may fight for them, but truth will prevail; and though our Episcopal brethren have the authority of the state, and the wealth of the state, tell them that you envy neither, because you can proceed without the authority of the state, and you can raise money without its power to

compel. When they tell you that there is no certainty in the doctrine taught in the Dissenting congregations, that they have no creed, you can reply, they have a creed—the best, the purest that ever man possessed. Their creed is the Bible. They glory in the saying of one of the churchmen, "The Bible, the Bible, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants." We stand in an age when Popery is making a large aggression upon the religious liberties of the people—secretly, silently, openly, and boldly. They are anticipating the time when they shall take possession of the cathedrals and churches, and once more dominate over the English people. But religious liberty is safe in your hands. You will endeavor, I am sure, so to hold the word of truth, that it may everywhere prove a barrier against the approaches of error. The Tabernacle which is to rear its walls in the adjoining ground is to be consecrated not by the authority of men, but by the dependence of men upon the teachings of the Holy Spirit. The gospel, and the gospel only, is there to be preached: sinners are to be invited to Christ, and the full sufficiency of his salvation is to be maintained. We do not despise things in their proper order. The ordinances of the church will be respected by its worshippers, and it will be necessary therefore, not only that the gospel should be preached, but that you who hear it are to be "living epistles, seen and read of all men," of the power, the truth, the purity, the holiness, enjoined by the gospel. It is a solemn charge committed to your trust, and woe be unto you if you neglect the sound, and swerve from the gospel. And then to maintain the gospel it is not only necessary that you should love it and have it, but that you should do all in your power to propagate it everywhere—to rich and to poor, to learned and to unlearned; to all classes and conditions of people the gospel is to be preached. You can preach it as well as your pastor,—he in the pulpit, you in your lives. There are Missionary Societies which will require your aid, and though you tarry at home, you have a power to prevail in earnest supplication before the throne of divine grace, that all the labors you undertake may be blessed. And then you have something else to do with the work at home; the gospel is to be preached in your Tabernacle, but that will not be sufficient, if you do not go abroad, and carry with you the essential principles that you have received, and tell the people that they may see from your walk and conversation, that you have sat under one of the most successful and useful of Christ's ministers, and that you have learned from him to do your duty to your neighbors.

Remember "the poor ye have always with you." What a blessed and happy thing that is that you have the poor with you and that they are standing monuments by which you may prove your faith in Jesus Christ. Let it not be said, that while ye hear the gospel you have forgotten to practice it. I beg to commend you and your work to the blessing of him who alone can make it prosper. May this be but the beginning of the undertakings throughout the country, where the Dissenting places of worship, like the palaces of our land, may stand as landmarks to prove the onward progress of society, and that among Protestant Dissenters there is loyalty to the Queen, obedience to the laws, a desire to promote the well-being of society, and to make this nation blessed, peaceful, and happy, until, as from Zion, the perfection of beauty, the glory of the Lord may shine upon all the earth.

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON: I have but a word or two to say with regard to the order of the meeting. I feel myself so extremely ill just now that I must go away for a little time, I nevertheless may say a word or two. There is a large amount of talent here to-night, far more than we can bring out. Here are dozens of ministers, all of whom could speak to edification. I trust none of them will think that any invidious distinction is made when we call upon one and not another. For myself I have this much to say—thanks, thanks to every one. My Lord Mayor, I have to thank you sincerely for your kindness in coming this evening. I hardly expected you, knowing how it has pleased God to lay the heavy hand of affliction upon our country I thank God that you are able to come, and I thank you for the will to come. May every blessing rest upon your head, and when earthly honors shall fade before your eye, may you have the more lasting glories and the eternal splendors which God has prepared for his faithful servants! I have to thank a large number of ministers who are not here for their kind letters; especially must I mention the name of that honored father of all the Dissenting churches, the Reverend John Angell James, of Birmingham. There is no name I think just now that ought to be more venerated than his. Long has he worn the harness, and in the kind letter which he sent me he said his work was done, and he could do but little more to serve his Master. It was just like his humility. I had written to him sometime before expressing my candid opinion concerning him, and my hearty respect; and he told me that I was mistaken in him. I am quite

sure that I was not. I know that I could not think too highly of him. My dear friend, Dr. Campbell sent me a note to-day, that he read in the papers that this strike had put off the laying of the first stone. He should have learned by this time, as an editor, to believe nothing he sees in the newspapers unless he himself knows it to be true. I confess I take a tattle time to chew everything I read there; I am not clear upon it the first time I see it. If I were clear upon it, my dear friends, this chapel would need no subscriptions from you. I only wish newspapers would make true what they say about me—not in the abuse line, but with regard to this magnificent fortune which they had the generosity to confer upon me. I mean to distribute the dividends of this fortune among the newspapers, and much good may the share do to each of them. No one has left me a sixpence. The headache and the sickness I now feel almost seem to say that somebody is thinking of doing so. Don't do it. It is the ruin of many ministers. It is no use your giving them money: give them a right good income every year for their preaching. I can say, with regard to that, that I have nothing more to ask, or to desire, but I am afraid that if minister get money they will have the bronchitis, and all the rest of it. It is such a common thing that I hope no one will try me. I say again, I have to thank many who are not here, and then I have to thank the brethren that are here. I did not think there were so many of them that loved me. I do feel quite beaten up to-night I sometimes say some hard things. Well, I shall go on, but they will have no reference to the brethren here, I dare say. I am sure if they think that I should be hard or unkind towards any of them, they do not know me. When all the world abused me I just bent my fist and set my teeth together and said, "I'm a match for you." But no sooner did the papers begin to praise me some little than they brought tears in my eyes, for I began to say, "No, I do not deserve that; I cannot take that credit to myself." If any man wants to make me preach more vigorously than I have against any doctrine, let him abuse me, and the doctrines I preach, and I will soon come out strong upon it, rest assured. The only danger we fear is—being thrown off our guard by success. But this I rejoice to know, wherever God puts his servants they are safe. I have sometimes met with some minister who has an average congregation of fifty, perhaps, whose back was as stiff as possible, and whose neck was never bent, and he has said, "My dear brother, you are in a very dangerous position; I hope you will not be carried away with

pride." Poor dear soul! I thought if he had kept his advice to himself it might, perhaps, have been profitable to him. I do feel myself crushed down by the weight of divine mercy; I am bowed to the very earth by it, I know not what to say to you to-night, nor how to express my thoughts and feelings. Glory be to him that hath done all this! May he continue to bless! But even should he stay his hand, if I were laid aside and could never preach again, I feel I have such mercies that I must praise him throughout eternity for what I have received. Again I say, to him be glory! Yet I do thank my kind and loving friends from many a fond expression of affection that I have received this day. Oh, my dear friends, pray for all the ministers of Christ, that God would make them more abundantly useful. Ask for us more liberty in speech, more unction on our heads and in our hearts; ask for us a greater intensity of agony on account of the souls of men, ask for us greater earnestness in prayer. Pray for us that we may be masters of the sacred art of wrestling with God. Pray for us that a revival of religion may come into this land. What is Ireland that it should have a revival denied to us? What is Scotland that it should be stirred, and we should sleep? God hath blessed this nation first and foremost aforetime—why not now? Let us cry unto him mightily, and he will hear our prayers, and grant us his richest blessing. Before I sit down, I would ask the Lord Mayor kindly to forgive me for being long, but not to let any speaker speak more than ten minutes, as there are so many to address us. Then I want to observe that our dear brother, Mr. Joynson, the second most liberal subscriber to our fund, would have been here, but that he is sore sick, and has had to remove to Teignmouth. I wrote to him, hearing that he was near death's door, and he wrote me a kind reply, saying that he was not so bad as I thought, but he was far too in to come. Pray for him that he may be restored. He is a very prince in Israel in his generosity; he hath served this cause, and may God Almighty bless him! I must also publicly acknowledge my obligations to the Crystal Palace Company for the use of chairs this day. I suppose I did them a good turn once. I did it, however, out of love to those poor creatures who were injured in India, and out of a desire to preach the gospel to the great numbers assembled in that building. Still it was very kind of them so to act. Some places of worship in the neighborhood, have denied us the use of forms and the like; the Crystal Palace Company have kindly done it for us.

The Rev. W. G. LEWIS, of Westbourne Grove. My Lord, ladies, and gentlemen: I have been thinking since the commencement of this meeting, if it were possible, that one or two of the humble Godly folk, who two centuries since assembled with prayers and tears in Horseliedown, to commence an obscure and almost unknown Baptist church could have foreseen the gatherings of this day, and the still further events in the future connected with this Tabernacle, how marvelously overwhelming, how astounding to the sense, how almost beyond the power of their credulity would have been the prospect. Verily, this church connected with New Park Street, has been a chosen object of the divine regard. In the characters of the excellent men of God who have been its pastors, in the wondrous success that they have attained, in the conversion of sinners and the recovery of lost souls to Jesus Christ, its past annals have been truly wondrous, and nothing is certainly more wonderful than that portion of its history which attaches to our beloved brother, Mr. Spurgeon. I beseech you, Christian friend, who are connected with the church as its members, to respond to that appeal which God in his mercy makes to you today, to offer unto him the sacrifices of thanksgiving and of praise. I say that your experience and that of your ancestors demand to-day a tribute of unwonted extent, both as to the feeling of your hearts and as to the action of your hands. It becomes you indeed to remember well those touching, those beautiful annals to which we have listened already, and which I trust the committee in charge of the operations connected with your building, will print and promulgate far and wide. And oh, my dear friends, when I look upon the vast extent of this meeting, and reflect that very seldom, if ever, has there been such a congregation, even in this metropolis upon such an occasion as this, I feel constrained to address my brethren in the ministry also to hear the appeal which God in his providence makes to them, to be faithful, uncompromising, simple, and bold in their declaration of gospel truths. What a marvelous blessing is that which God hath poured out upon this stripling! How has he been pleased as of olden time to select his own instrument where men little thought—to call him forth, and try place him before the eyes not merely of this million-peopled city, but of our whole country, and I trust that when the reports of this day's proceedings have gone forth on the swift wings of the press, the country will feel that

Spurgeon and his people are in their hearts, and that they have a claim not merely upon denominations, but upon all who love the Savior. The man is national property. They know it on the other side of the Atlantic, and I, as I believe him not to be present, I say it with the greater freedom—Mr. Spurgeon's conduct in relation to that American proposal to procure his labors on the other side of the Atlantic—his noble conduct upon that occasion, wholly in harmony with all the other acts of his public career, demands some acknowledgment from the Christians of England. He might have money enough for his Tabernacle if he would stoop to the course that men of the world would dictate. Before my ten minutes have elapsed, I must be allowed to ask the members of Mr. Spurgeon's church, as individuals, have you done what you ought in contributing to this building? I ask have you done what a congregation, I believe I may say of five thousand persons, ought to have done? Do that and then I am sure the country will share your feelings, approve of your self-denial, and complete what is wanting. Oh, it is a blessing even to have been present at the proceedings of this day—we will cherish the memory of it to life's latest moment. It is a greater blessing still to have had the mind to work, and to put forth the hand in exertion towards the completion of this undertaking. I beseech you, therefore, every one of you, do your share, either in giving, or in collecting; and fear not that God in his mercy, who has hitherto so marvelously prospered you in days of darkness, in times of peril and persecution—who has blessed you so much in the person and ministry of your beloved pastor, will in the future annals of this New Tabernacle, still more abundantly and more wondrously shower down upon you of his heavenly favor and most divine regard.

The Rev. EVAN P ROBERT of Bristol: My Lord Mayor, and Christian friends, I cannot less than say, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear," what your ancestors desired to see and to hear. We must consider ourselves this day highly privileged in being permitted to meet on such a very important and delightful occasion. I need not tell you, because your esteemed chairman has announced it, that I am come from the city of Bristol—a city where your pastor is very highly esteemed and beloved, a city ready to receive him with open heart and arms; a city in which Christians of all denominations hailed with gladness the approach of my dear brother Spurgeon, and I have not the shadow of a

doubt, from my knowledge of Bristol, that the Christians in that city will be ever ready to contribute their mite towards the erection of that large building, the foundation of which has been laid this day. The first time that I had the privilege of meeting with Mr. Spurgeon, I felt that I loved him; and my love to him has increased with my acquaintance with him. I feel this evening, as I have felt before, a deep interest in the movement that is now going on in this place, and I am sanguine as to its results. I have not the shadow of a doubt that by the time the last stone is to be placed upon the building, the money will be forthcoming, and our esteemed brother will have to ascend the pulpit and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, in a chapel out of debt. I could not less than think, Christian friends, while our excellent chairman was addressing us on the subject of civil and religious liberty, that we ought all to be thankful, and not only so, but that we ought to be more zealous to maintain our ground, and to make advances in that respect. I rejoice that, notwithstanding all the oppositions that are made to the progress of civil and religious liberty, it is going forward—going forward in the metropolis—going forward in the provinces—going forward through the length and breadth of the land, in spite of the Puseyism, of the Popery, of the infidelity, and all the power of that is brought to bear to oppose it; it is a principle that must go on and prevail, until it shall be felt throughout the habitable world. I am afraid to trespass on your time. We Welshmen are very dangerous: when we begin to speak and get the steam up a little, we hardly know where to stop. You must tell me therefore when my time is up, for I find I cannot trust myself. I have been thinking with regard to the stone that is laid to-day, that it stands there as a witness of the working of the voluntary principle. Some people have told us that the principle has failed. Where has it failed? Wherever it has been exercised, wherever it has had fair play, it has done great things. What has erected our chapels? What has erected, too, some of the churches in our land? Why, the voluntary principle. And what has moved my esteemed friend, Mr. Spurgeon, and his beloved people to take this very important, this noble step, but the voluntary principle working in their hearts? There is no compulsion from the throne, all the compulsion they have is the love of Christ in their souls. May God increase that principle a thousand-fold! What has made my brother Spurgeon so popular?—to use the term, for want of better? What has given him such power with the people in this

city, and wherever he has gone? It is this; he has preached the full and plain gospel, and the Spirit of God has rested upon his words. That stone stands as a witness of the power of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as preached by our little stripling, our little David, who has been the means of effecting such good. And not only so, we see that stone as a witness of the faithfulness of God to his church. God has said that he would be with his people always, even to the end of the world. That stone stands as a witness there, and stone upon stone as it is laid upon it will give an additional testimony to the fidelity of him who said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." That stone stands as a witness to angels to devils, to infidels, and to the Christian church, of the zeal of the people of God at Park Street. May that zeal burn as a vehement flame! May it break out on the right hand, and on the left, and may your liberality be exercised until the whole money for the Tabernacle shall be contributed, and the building be completed, and out of debt. I hope the blessing of God will attend this meeting; that it will be the means of stirring up our brethren in the provinces, and reviving religion in the land, that we shall have some of the showers that are descending upon Ireland and Scotland, and that this shall be the beginning of better days. God grant that it may be so! Only let us retire from this place imploring God's blessing and devoting ourselves to his service, and the showers will come down, for God has said, "As the snow and the rain cometh down from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, so shall my Word be that cometh forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I have sent it."

The Rev. JOHN SPURGEON: My Lord Mayor, I am very happy to meet you to-night. We are Essex men; we come from Colchester. Colchester has something to boast of great men. The chief physician of London comes from Colchester, the Lord Mayor comes from Colchester; and I need not tell you who else. I have never had the headache in my life, friends; but if I ever had it, it would have been to-day. I feel nervous and excited. But I do feel very happy to-day to acknowledge my fault; and when a man confesses his faults, he has done a great deal towards amending them. I always thought my son did wrong in coming to London, now you see that I was wrong. I always thought he was wrong in

not going to college, I tried three or four hours with him one night with a dear friend that loved him, but it was no use; he said, "No, I will never go to college, only in strict obedience to you as a father." There I left the matter; and I see that God has been with him, though I thought it was a wrong step in him to go to London. And I thought it was a wrong step for me to come here to-night, but perhaps I may be mistaken again. I can tell you it is one of the happiest days of my life. I feel beyond myself when I think of the kindness that has been shown to him when but a youth. I ascribe it all to God's goodness and the earnest prayers of his people. He has been exposed to temptations from every source, and even now, my friends, he is not free from it. You have prayed for him, and God has sustained him. Oh! let me entreat you to continue your prayers. Every one here to-night go home and pray for your pastor. A meeting like this is enough to carry a man beyond himself and fill his heart with pride; but the grace of God is all-sufficient. Several persons said to me—"Your son will never last in London six months, he has no education" I said, "You are terribly mistaken, he has the best education that can possibly be had, God has been his teacher, and he has had earthly teachers too." I knew, as far as education went, he could manage London very well. Then they said his health would fail; but it has not failed him yet He has had enough to shake his constitution, it is true, but God has been very merciful to him. I think if there is one thing that would crown my happiness today, it would have been to see his grandfather here. I should have loved to see him here. He said, "Boy, don't ask me to go, I am too old; I am overcome with God's goodness and mercy to me." He is always talking about him. Old people like to have something to talk about, so talks about his grandson. And next to that I should like, my dear friends, to have seen his mother here. I believe, under God's grace, his mother has been the means of leading him to Christ. You are well aware that I go and talk in the best manner I can to a few poor people on the Sabbath day, and God has blessed my labors. I thought, however, I ought not to go out on the Sabbath day, as God's people should train up their children in the best way they: can, I thought I was neglecting my children, and as I came home one evening about seven o'clock, and went upstairs, I heard the voice of a mother pleading for her boy Charles, and talking to him and the others, and pouring her heart out in prayer in such a way as I never did in my life, and as I never heard

before. It is for the encouragement of mothers that I mention this, that you may pray for your children for God is a prayer-hearing and prayer answering God. My heart is too full to say more. May God bless you and keep you, and may we be brought together when this building shall be finished, and entirely out of debt! I hope to-night that some gentlemen will come forward and give each one hundred pounds. You know we must work as well as pray, and there has been a kind offer made to-night, that if twenty hundred pounds are laid down, a gentleman will double it. I trust, therefore, our good friends will come forward and make their free-will offerings to that God who has done so much for them. Oh, may God bless you all, for Christ s sake! Amen.

The CHAIRMAN: I have now to call upon the gentleman who made the best speech this morning, and laid upon the foundation stone three thousand pounds.

EDWARD INSKIP, Esq., of Bristol.—My Lord Mayor, and Christian friends, as regards "the best speech" that has been made to-day, I trust that any merit in the speech, or in the donation will be laid at the feet of our covenant head. I was thinking during the speeches to which we have listened, of a line or two of one of the poets of the sanctuary:—
"Let party names no more, the Christian world o'erspread."

And when I tell you that this gift of three thousand pounds, together with that which follows, comes from a man who was born a Churchman, and who was brought to a knowledge of the truth under a minister of the Church of England, and who is a Churchman at heart, you will see that his liberality is profound, and that he comes here in the true philanthropic principles of the Christian religion. But since I had the honor and privilege of laying that painted piece of paper, as I termed it, upon the stone this afternoon, I have been going round the boundaries of the proposed walls of this intended sanctuary, and I was thinking as I mused upon the various portions of the stones and gravel, cement, lime, ashes, bricks, and timber—what would be the position which the multitude before me would occupy in that better temple, where we all hope to adore the Lamb. I was led to ask, is my name, however mean and humble, inscribed there as a living stone? Believe me, if you value his

instructions there, and wish to see that building the birthplace of souls nothing short of an earnest and agonizing entreaty that God the eternal Spirit will sanctify that Word will ever promote your views, or bring about the realization of your wishes. Believe me, it has afforded me great gratification to be the bearer of this honored man's donation—my esteemed friend unknown to you. I said this afternoon, there is something more to follow. Three thousand pounds will not erect the building. I understand that it will take no less than seven times as much again. Where is it all to come from? I hear that the response to-day has realized only about three thousand nine hundred pounds, and that about two hundred pounds more is promised. Now, I do not pretend to be a Goliath, but I come as a simple stripling, and ask, who am I and what my father's house, that I am thus honored to ask twenty other persons to come forward and give their one hundred pounds apiece, or even forty persons their fifty pounds each, with the promise that the sum shall be doubled when that is done? This I am sure is nothing less than your pastor deserves. He has devoted his time, his energy, his health, to this matter. He has been incessant in his labors, and he has found that they have been crowned with success. As for you, the fruit of his labors, it behooves you to see that he has a place in which he can address the multitudes who flock to hear him. This afternoon he spoke of this building being erected and the roof put on, and the Tabernacle being left seatless. Surely this will not be permitted. Whether it be by the humblest mite or by the large donation, I am sure that those who love the Lord Jesus Christ will see that this thing is accomplished, and speedily too. We were speaking just now of the living stones in the temple above, and I was thinking of a scene which occurred to me in the Music Hall yonder, some year or two since. When I heard the sounds of the voices of the multitude there, I bethought myself on that occasion, why, what must be the heavenly choir; if such be the perfection of sound realized by the humble few here upon earth?—what must be the sound rising from immortal voices and from angelic tongues? Surely while we contemplate the grandeur of that scene, we shall all be in earnest in asking ourselves the one question—are we heirs of the kingdom of God? We shall all be asking ourselves that marvelous question, "Is my name inscribed on the walls of Zion?" Remember, Jesus dwells there, and if Jesus dwells there, we desire to dwell there too. See to it, then, my friends, that this meeting

conclude not without some large, some noble response to that which I consider a noble offer I have been permitted, on behalf of another, to make to you to-day. The offer you have heard; it rests with you to accept it; and whenever it may be accepted the money will be forthcoming, as the three thousand pounds is forthcoming now, on the very day when the two thousand shall be realized. But then I was about to disclose to you a secret—although, perhaps, Mr. Spurgeon may not like me to disclose it to you. I must tell you that he was very desirous that I should come and bring a large mass of feathers with which to line this beautiful nest. I trust it will be a nest indeed, but not a nest in which you may nestle yourselves into fatal security: I trust it will be a nest which you will find the birds of the air, whose feathers are of yellow gold, will set and brood over, and that there the sweet influences of those heavenly scenes will descend into your heart. I trust I shall be able to carry back with me to-morrow the intelligence that the offer I have made has been accepted, and that I shall shortly have the great pleasure of presenting to you the additional two thousand pounds.

The Rev. J. A. SPURGEON: My lord, ladies, and gentlemen—Your lordship said at the commencement of this meeting, that it was a happy day. I am quite sure I can echo that sentiment now from the depth of my spirit, and I think that I have in my cup one sweet ingredient which must be lacking in yours,—that of having such a brother as I have, in your ministry. If ever pride can be a sinless thing, I think it will be in my case when I say I am proud of my brother. But I would desire to take that stand which the Apostle Paul took when he determined "to know no man after the flesh." Though I rejoice tonight most heartily in the success my brother has achieved, I rejoice more profoundly in the success which has attended the preaching of the gospel, and in the principles of the cross of Christ which I see here to-night. Whilst I look around me and see that every other religion is beginning to fade—that every other system is tottering to its fall—that everything that is of man seems like man to be fading—Christianity is growing in strength, and seems to have the dew of its youth upon it, and is going forth crushing all things before it, and it shall triumph till it shall fill the world with its knowledge, power, and glory. I rejoice to think that whilst I come in to take up that standard which aged hands must soon begin to let fall I see on it the "Excelsior"

motto inscribed, and I see that it is going higher and higher, and it shall go so high till my Master shall be lifted up and shall draw all men unto him. I rejoice most devoutly in that divine dispensation which makes a luxury in doing good and a blessedness also, so that he who puts forth his hand to bring down a blessing upon others evokes the shower of divine blessing on his own head,—that he who does good must get good,—that he who serves the Lord shall never serve the Lord for nought. I am sure in our meeting here to-day—met as we are seeking the welfare of others—that there shall be the richest blessing poured out upon our heads; and I trust that there will be some departing from this place to-night who will be made rich with those riches which add no sorrow therewith. It has been said that there are sermons in stones, and if ever there is one class of stones that may be expected to have a voice, and eloquence, and depth of wisdom above others, it would be that class of stones to which we refer the one that has been laid to-day. Would that we could bring the corner and foundation stones of some of our old chapels and make them speak to-night! Methinks they would cry, "shame," upon some of our fearful trembling-hearted ones to-night. The difficulties our ancestors had to encounter were far greater than ours. The stones they laid were laid under far less favorable auspices than our stone has been laid. This is an age of panic, and of fears, but I rejoice to think that we are putting our panic and fears in a practical way of building up defenses for Zion; and I hope there will arise many more mighty arsenals, in which the great guns of our denomination may come and fire with great success into the camp of our enemies. I rejoice to think of the success that has already attended the efforts of our friends in collecting money; and whilst we feel very happy here tonight, I think we ought to give our happiness a practical turn. I cannot leave this meeting unless we once again raise our solemn thanksgiving to God for the great goodness and the great love that he hath shown our brother. I yield to no one in the profound respect I entertain for my brother's peculiar talents, but I hold that it has not been so much how he has said, as what he has said, that has achieved his success. I hope that this meeting will take a practical and that we shall go forth tonight determined that we will preach more earnestly and simply, and then I trust with more success, the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. JAMES LOW: The object of my rising is to call your attention to the noble offer that our friend, Mr. Inskip, has made. Our friend has given us a promissory note for two thousand pounds, on one condition, that is, that we raise another two thousand pounds in hundreds and fifties. This morning I screwed up my courage to fifty pounds, but as soon as that challenge was given, I altered my mind and made it one hundred pounds. This is a large meeting, containing some thousands of persons. I know there are some here who are very rich, and who could pay the whole expense of this building out of their own pockets and scarcely miss it, and I can hardly imagine that you will allow my friend Mr. Inskip, to go away disappointed. Let me beseech you to fix him at once. Now, I have to ask that nineteen other gentlemen, or ladies, if you please—for their money is equally valuable—to give a pledge for one hundred pounds each, and that will make up the two thousand pounds which our friend, Mr. Inskip, has promised to double. If you would only do that this evening, it would give such an impetus to our efforts to raise the whole of the money required for this building, that I do believe we should get enough, in a month, to complete it. But lest I should be disappointed, our kind friend has given me a still greater latitude. I do not want to check the nineteen friends from coming forward with their hundred pounds; but he has very kindly allowed me to say, that if a portion of it comes in hundreds, the deficiency may be made up in fifties. Now, surely with such latitude as that, we must succeed in getting the two thousand pounds. And then he has done another thing which I think was very liberal. If I fail to succeed after making this offer, I do not know what sort of a character I shall be able to give you. It is this: he will not only take it in hundreds and fifties, but, if it is more convenient for you to pay within three months, he will give you credit for that time. Now, as an old tradesman, I have known in my time what it is to be tempted by having a little credit offered me, but I took care I would not take credit for any article that I did not feel confident to be able to pay for in a given time. I feel the greatest encouragement in asking you either to send up your names for one hundred pounds each, or to those who cannot afford so much, for fifty pounds, and those who are not prepared to pay the money down, we will give three months credit. Do not let me plead in vain.

The Rev. GEORGE SMITH, of Poplar: My Lord Mayor, ladies and

gentlemen, I have very great pleasure in taking some part in the deeply interesting proceedings of this night. When I think of the men who have already spoken with fervor, with pathos, with eloquence, and with the intimate knowledge of your Master, which justify them in honoring him as they have, and when I think of the other brethren on the platform of your own denomination, who will further vindicate the cause with which you are connected, and advocate the great object which you have in view, —I should shrink from the responsibility of occupying any portion of your attention, but for the fact that I belong to another denomination. I am with you in heart though I am not with you altogether in practice. I am connected with the Congregational denomination, as most of you if not all know, and I am here to testify on behalf of myself and of my brethren generally, to the very great regard we have for that gifted young man, under thirty years of age, whose name has become a worldwide reputation, and who everywhere has been greatly honored of God in turning multitudes from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. I never had any doubt about him from the beginning. I never entertained a suspicion of him from the commencement. I never uttered an unkind word about him from the time when he commenced his ministry. I always thought that he was raised up of God to do a great and good work, and we might well rejoice if men are raised up in a way rather different from that which we had anticipated. There is a fact upon record of very great value in relation to liberty of preaching. In the days of Oliver Cromwell, many soldiers went to Edinburgh on the Lord's day, and finding there was very indifferent preaching in the pulpits, Cromwell's chaplain took possession of the churches and preached the word of life. The Presbytery wrote a letter complaining to the Lord Protector, that his soldiers—the men connected with the iron-hearted regiment that he headed—those iron-sides, who feared God and kept their powder dry—actually had ventured to preach the word of life in the regular sanctuary. Cromwell's reply was worthy to be written in characters of living light, and handed down from age to age. "What! doth that offend you? I would to God that all the Lord's servants were prophets." And with that feeling, my lord, I am sure that we have hailed the advent of our beloved brother, Mr. Spurgeon. I hope his life will long be spared, and that a great and important work will be carried on by him. If there be a man under heaven that we might envy, and if there be a man under heaven in whom we

might glorify the Grace of God, he is the man. I honor the man that he has never pandered to the public taste. He has always preached the word of life fully, faithfully, and effectually. I honor the man for the large-hearted Catholicity which has characterized him. The pulpits of the land have properly been opened to him, and he has ever been ready to preach for his brethren of every denomination. I have heard him preach in my own pulpit to crowded and delighted audiences. And I am sure that we ought to be prepared to help him in return, for he has been prepared to help very many. I am sure I am only among a large number of my brethren—and I mention it as an encouragement to others—I proposed a short time ago to the deacons of our church that, as he had often preached on behalf of other objects for us, we should invite him to come and preach, and give him a liberal collection towards this New Tabernacle. And it only waits for the time to be fixed by him, and I trust we shall all be prepared to do everything we can to promote the common welfare of this great church and congregation. I congratulate this meeting to-night most heartily and cordially upon the fact that three beloved honored men, bearing one name and related to each other, have taken part in this meeting. May they be a three-fold cord that cannot readily be broken. In expressing the largest desires for the welfare of the Baptist denomination represented by Mr. Spurgeon, I am only giving utterance to feelings that we all entertain. There is but little difference between us, but a very little difference indeed. Different sections of the church of God look at each other in the distance through the mists of prejudice and passion, and they think they are monsters; they get a little nearer and they find they are men—brethren, related to one common Father, related to one divine Redeemer who is not ashamed to call us brethren, and whether we be Baptists or psuedo-Baptists, whether we be Presbyterians or Congregationalists, whether we be Arminians or Calvinists (though I am not ashamed to call myself a Calvinist) if we are good men and true, we are related to each other, and to the Lord. Let us, then be limited, and angels shall look down from the crystal battlements of heaven and say of our congregations here—"Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

The Meeting then sung the following verse, commencing, "Jesus is worthy to receive honor and power divine."

JOSEPH PAYNE, Esq.: ladies and gentlemen, I am very glad to meet you all upon the present occasion. I am one of those Churchmen whom my Lord Mayor has been digging in the ribs in rather an extraordinary manner; but I am not one that he would find fault with, I am sure. We have been working together too long and too often for any of his observations to be applied in that way to my humble self. The late Rev Mr. Branch used to say, that an old woman once asked him, "Mr. Branch, can you tell me what Mr. Payne is?" "Why," said Mr. Branch, "he is a Churchman." "No, no," said the woman, "I am sure he ain't." "Why?" "Because wherever I go I sees him—at Wesleyan meetings, at Baptist meetings, at Congregational meetings, and at all sorts of meetings—well, if he is a Churchman he's a rum un." The Revelation Dr. Archer was once speaking at a meeting, (you see I am giving myself a character,) and he went through the list of speakers, and said—"The first is Dr. Archer, a humble Presbyterian; the second is Mr. Branch, a sturdy Baptist; the third is Mr. Gladstone, an Episcopalian; the fourth is Mr. Edward Corderoy, who belongs to the Wesleyan body, and the fifth is Joseph Payne, who belongs to nobody;" and he gave the reason—"he belongs to nobody because he belongs to everybody." Now, I think I have said enough about myself; I am aging to say a word or two about my excellent friend, the Revelation Mr. Spurgeon. Among these decorations, there is one that I do not see, but I have it before my mind's eye—I mean the three letters C. H. S. [A voice: "It is outside."] Then we have it outside and inside too. Now, what does C. H. S. mean? Why, it means first, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon." But I do not mean that. C. H. S. means a Clear-Headed Speaker, who is Clever at Handling Subjects in a Cheerful-Hearted Style; he is a Captain of the Home of Surrey; he is a Cold-Hating Spirit; he has Chapel-Heating Skill; he is a Catholic Humbug-Smasher, he is a Care-Hushing Soother; he is a Child-Helping Strengtheners: he is a Christ-Honoring Soldier, and he is a Christ-Honored Servant. Those are all the C. H. S's, and a very good set of C. H. S's they are. Now I desire to look back upon the past, to look round upon the vast, and to look onward to the last. I desire to look back to the past. Our friend was always popular, always clever, always active, but he was not always so popular, he had not always the large number of friends that gather round him now. I knew him and loved him, and admired him from the beginning,

therefore I look back upon the past with great satisfaction to think that I had so much discernment, that has been so admirably proved, and so magnificently repaid. I look round upon the vast. It is a goodly and glorious sight to see such a meeting as this, with the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor in the chair. You know it is said there are four descriptions of speakers to preside at public meetings:—some who are able and not willing, some who are willing and not able, some who are neither able nor willing, and some who are both able and willing. Now the Lord Mayor belongs to the fourth class. He is a first-class man in some respects but a fourth class in that respect. He has shown his willingness in coming here, and he has shown his ability in that splendid, magnificent, glorious speech that he made, though he was a little too hard upon some of us Episcopalians. I look onward to the last. Oh! what a glorious thought that will be when all the instrumentality shall be at an end, when we shall see the grand glorious gathering in the brighter and better world above! The Lord Mayor will be there, Spurgeon the grandfather will be there; the father—the mother—the brother—and Spurgeon himself will be there, and I pray God that you and I may be there also. I have a high opinion of our excellent friend for four reasons: he is a preacher that does not mumble, he is a preacher that does not grumble, he is a preacher that does not stumble, and he is a preacher that never will crumble. He is a preacher that does not mumble. One of our celebrated authorities in the law, old Seldon, says, that if a man were to call out murder in the same tone in which he would make love, nobody would come to his assistance. A minister of the gospel is calling out murder, and it is to be called out in a loud tone; not in a namby pamby style. He is also a preacher that does not grumble. You heard him tonight say how pleased he was with the salary given by the people of Park Street. He is perfectly satisfied with what he gets; though he has not half that he deserves. He is a preacher that does not stumble. Did you ever see a man walk more firmly than he does before the world and the church? He walks firmly, physically, morally, and religiously. Then he is a preacher that will not crumble. The man himself will die—many many years let it be before that consummation is arrived at! We all must die, but the reputation and character of a faithful preacher of God's free and glorious gospel will never die. We may address the character and reputation of such a man in the language of the poet, and say:—

"The stars shall fade away; the sun himself
Grow dim in age, and nature sink in years.
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amid the war of elements,
The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds."

I would say—pray and believe; then persist and receive. In connection with the first, let me tell you that there was a number of farmers somewhere in Essex, who met to pray for rain in a large open field. The deacons were there; the "Lows" and the "Olneys," and the good men of that stamp, the five pounders and the fifty pounders, and the hundred pounders were there for the purpose. It was a fine day but there was a little Sunday school girl who came with an umbrella under her arm. The minister, who was not so clever as Mr. Spurgeon, said, "Why, bless you, my good girl, what do you mean by bringing a great umbrella on such a fine day as this?" "Why, sir," said she, "have not you all met to pray for rain? Don't you expect to get it if you pray properly? I do, so I picked out the biggest umbrella I could find." Well, there came a heavy shower and the ministers and the deacons were all very glad to get under the little school girl's umbrella. And the ministers and deacons went out from under that umbrella with their heads lower than they had been before, because they had been shamed into propriety by a little Sunday school girl. Pray, then, and believe. Pray that God will give you friends, and believe that you will get them. The next is, persist and receive. There was a clergyman in Ireland who met with a ragged boy, and he took him to a ragged school. The boy was very fond of using his slate and pencil; he never put sums upon his slate, but drew ugly pictures of the boys and the master. The master did not like it, because schoolmasters, you know, are very uppish people, some of them; stuck-up people who think they ought not to be caricatured. He sent to the clergyman, saying "I cannot manage the boy at all, I wish you would take him away." "Indeed I shall do no such thing," said the clergyman, "I will come and see him, and talk to him. So the clergyman came, and there was the boy in the school working away with his slate and pencil. "Well," said the clergyman, "bring up your slate let us see what you are doing." The boy did not like to do so, but however he brought up his slate, and, giving it to the clergyman, bobbed his head down to avoid a box on the ears, which he knew he deserved and

thought he might get. But that was not the clergyman's plan. He looked at the slate and he there saw the ugliest picture of the good old clergyman himself, with long ears, very long hair, a hole in his coat, and his white choker as dirty as it could be. He looked at it and said, "You have a very good notion of drawing, my boy, my daughter draws beautifully, and if you will come to the parsonage house three times a week, she shall teach you to draw. Well, she did teach him to draw, and that boy is now an artist,—a capital painter in London. And the very first thing he did, was to paint a beautiful picture of the good clergyman and the daughter who had been so kind to him, and presented it to them in a beautiful frame, as a token of his respect and gratitude for their having saved him from destruction, and putting him in the way of gaining a honest livelihood. That clergyman persisted and received the end of his perseverance. Now I want you to persist and go on with this great work, and you will, in spite of all discouragements and difficulties, be sure to receive. You will draw people in the Tabernacle, and money to your funds, and then great things will be done. Now I have to read some verses, and then there will be an end.

My breath I will spend, and my horn I will blow,
The claims and requirements to let the world know,—
(Though my horn is not gold, but is only brass gilt,)
Of the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
Sir Samuel, Baptist, and Baronet too,
In handling the trowel to science was true,
And charged it with mortar right up to the hilt,
For the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
Unconquered, at present, friend Spurgeon is found,
But soon he will hold unapproachable ground;
For no one will dream with the pastor to tilt,
Of the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
With wonderful talent all ranks to comprise,—
The truth that he preaches to make people wise
He'll spread o'er his hearers, just like a great quilt,
In the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
The Englishman plainly and soberly dress'd,—
The Irishman clad in his holiday vest,—
Will sit, side by side, with the Scot in his kilt,

In the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
Rich merchant of London, if such should be here,
Thou, friend to a preaching sublime and sincere,
Can'st not give too much, give whatever thou wilt,
To the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
Poor widow, neglected, distress'd, and forlorn,
The prop of thy age from thy dwelling withdrawn,
To cast in two mites will not fix thee with guilt,
T'wards the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
Friend Spurgeon, the clearest of preachers I know,
Look on to the time when thy language shall flow
Like a beautiful stream, without thickness or silt,
In the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
And thousands deliver'd from sin and from hell,
In mansions of glory for ever shall dwell,
Who heard of the blood which for sinners was spilt,
In the great Tabernacle that is to be built.

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON: If our friends are not tired I should like another brother to speak, and I have a few words to say before I call upon my brother Bloomfield. I have been treated somewhat severely by that class of brethren who are exceedingly strong in their Calvinism. Many suspect me of being a great heretic. Now, a great heretic I certainly am, if it be heresy to judge of the Scriptures as God the Holy Ghost gives me ability, and not to bend myself to the dictates of man. I am, I ever must be, from my deep and terrible experience of the depravity of the human heart, a high Calvinist, in the best sense of that term. I am not bitter towards others; but I do love to preach the fullness of the decree of God. I do love, however, so to preach it that I may combine it with practical exhortation and fullness of precept. There are many brethren who believe the same. The stone has to be rolled away from the sepulcher of Calvinism yet. The Calvinism of some men is the Calvinism of John Calvin, nor the Calvinism of the Puritans, much less the Christianity of God. My dear brother Bloomfield is one of those who hold the truth very strongly. I hope he may hold it never less sternly. He has an affectionate loving heart, and he is not prepared to condemn one who, in some points,

differs from the brethren. I do differ from some in certain matters, those are but small matters compared with the grand fundamentals of that holy faith delivered to us by Christ, translated by Paul, handed down by Augustine, clarified by Calvin, vindicated yet again by Whitfield, and held by us as the very truth of God, as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Rev. J. BLOOMFIELD: I rejoice to be with you to-day, just to show my firm attachment to that honored servant of God who has been the means, under the influence and power of the Spirit, of bringing you together. I believe that the preaching of Mr. Spurgeon is in harmony with our good old puritan divines. I cannot understand that Christianity which dries up the sympathies of the human heart. I feel a strong sympathy with one expression dropped by Mr. Spurgeon's father. He said he thought his son did wrong when he first came to London. I thought so too, but what made me think so was losing a great many persons from my own congregation. However, I am very glad that so good a man has them, and I wish them well from my very heart, and him too, and all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. Any man that preaches the atonement in its perfection is a brother that I am glad to shake hands with and bid God speed. Whether or not he preaches the high and distinguishing doctrine of divine grace in the phraseology that I employ; whether or not he chooses to preach those doctrines in the plain language in which I am bound to preach them, because I can preach them in no other, I say I bid him God speed, and trust the blessing of God will go with him wherever he goes to preach the everlasting gospel of the blessed God. Christ said, when on earth, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor." I ask any man to look at the vast numbers that have testified before delighted audiences to the way in which the ministry of Mr. Spurgeon has been blessed to them; and I ask if God has not honored him; I ask if the Holy Ghost has not honored his testimony, and if the Father in heaven, if the Holy Ghost has sealed his ministry, where is the man that dares to speak against the success which he has realized so largely in his work. I love some of the friends that have spoken harshly of him, but I have always hated their harshness; I have told them so to their faces, as I would tell them again. I hate their bigotry, while I love the truth they preach. May God continue to bless the ministrations, of our excellent friend, and honor him with increasing and abundant success,

for his own sake. Amen.

The Rev. C. H. . SPURGEON proposed a vote of thanks to Sir Morton Peto, for his kindness in laying the stone, to the Lord Mayor for presiding, and the Lady Mayoress for coming to the meeting.

The motion having been seconded by James Low, Esq., was carried by acclamation.

The LORD MAYOR: The best thanks you could give me would be this, that you fill every box, and put your names to the piece of paper until you have got two thousand pounds. I believe you will have it tomorrow, if you do not get it to-night.

Mr. SPURGEON: The Lord Mayor has kindly said he shall contribute fifty pounds himself. I am sure, with his very great claims, it is far too much for us to expect from any Lord Mayor. He has out-done himself in liberality and I heartily thank him.

The Doxology was then sung, and the proceedings terminated.

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Building the Church

“The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” - Acts 2:47

We are just coming to the most beautiful season of the year—the spring, when everything around us is shaking off the cold grave clothes of winter, and putting on the beautiful array of a new life. The church of Living God was in that condition at Pentecost, her winter was over, and the flowers appeared on the earth. She enjoyed the spring breezes, for the breath of the Holy Spirit refreshed her garden: there was spring music; the time of the singing of birds had come, for her preachers testified faithfully of Jesus, and so many and varied were the sweet notes which welcomed the new season, that many nations of men heard in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. There was, also, the spring blossoming, the fig tree put forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes perfumed the air, for all around multitudes inquired, “Brothers, what will we do?” and many also professed their faith in Jesus. There were the spring showers of repentance, the spring sunbeams of joy in the Holy Spirit and the spring flowers of newly-given hope and faith. May we see such a springtime in every church of Jesus Christ throughout the world, and arouse ourselves to enjoy so wonderful a season. Let us rise up and our precious lover, and in concert with him let us sow in hope, and look for a rapid budding. The Sun of Righteousness is coming forth as a bridegroom out of his dwelling, and the weary night is melting into the welcome day; let us listen to our lover's voice as he cries to us, “Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me.”

It seems from the text that the additions to the church which were made in the early spring of Pentecost did not always occur in one form, sometimes they came in crowds, and at other times by gradual increase. On one day there were three thousand added—that is an instance of mass conversions, when a nation is born all at once. In such a work we are bound to believe; I mean not merely in the possibility of it, but in the probability of it, for it stands to reason that what would convince one

man in a particular condition of heart would as readily convince three thousand or thirty thousand if they were in the same state. Given the same soil, the same seed, the same season, and the same wonder-working God, and I cannot imagine any reason why there would be a limit set to the results. The Holy Spirit is divine, and consequently he knows how to influence all kinds of men and women, and he can by the instrumentalities now in use reach just as many as he pleases.

I remember when I first preached in London a remark made by a friend, which greatly encouraged me at the time, and has proved true in my experience. When he heard that my little country chapel had been filled by the inhabitants of the village in which I had preached, he gave me hope of filling a far larger place in London: "For," he said, "what will draw two hundred will draw two thousand, and what was useful to a few may be made just as useful to a multitude." I immediately saw that this was true. When we are dealing with spiritual forces we do not have to calculate by pounds and ounces, or by so much horsepower. We do not have to think of quantity. As an illustration: give me fire, I will not bargain for a furnace, just give me a single candle, and a city or a forest may soon be ablaze. A spark is quite sufficient to begin with, for fire multiplies itself: So give us the truth, a single voice, and the Holy Spirit with it, and no one can say where the sacred blaze will end. One Jonah sufficed to subdue all Nineveh by continually repeating one monotonous sentence of the coming judgment of God, and despite the weakness of our present ministry, if God blesses the gospel, there is no reason why it shouldn't quickly be felt by all of London. The sermon preached by Peter at Pentecost was the arrow of the Lord's deliverance to three thousand people, and there is no reason why the Lord wouldn't cause one of ours to be the same. Three thousand cannot be converted if only a hundred are present to hear; but with this great assembly of ours today, and thousands of smaller ones, within gunshot, why wouldn't their be many brought to faith in Christ? Assuredly the divine Comforter can just as easily bless three million with salvation as he could three individuals.

But it would appear from our text that the additions to the new church, founded on the day of Pentecost, were not always accomplished in mass. The Spirit of God was still with them, but their increase was more gradual. "The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." You have seen a heavy shower of rain in the spring: in a moment a

big drop has fallen upon the pavement, and before you were ready to escape from it a deluge followed, so plentiful that you half suspected a cloud had burst open right over your head: such a sudden and impetuous shower may serve as an example of the conversion of three thousand souls at once. But at other times rain has fallen gently, and has continued to descend hour by hour, a soft, warm, spring watering, which in its own way and fashion has done its work of blessing quite as surely as the heavier downpour. We must still be very thankful if we don't see three thousand converted in one day; if we see three hundred every day for ten days, or if we see thirty every day for a hundred days; we must always be grateful for all success so long as sinners really come to Jesus. Whether they come in hordes, or one by one, we will welcome them. The woman who lost her money was glad to find one coin, although she would have been even happier to have found a whole purse full if they had been lost.

I want you to think about additions to the church as they used to occur among the early Christians. Certain people today are always talking about the "early church," and they seem to have some very "strange ideas" about this early church. Their early church was very different from anything we meet with in the Acts of the Apostles, for it was very particular in its architecture, music, and dress.

This "early church" that they perceive could not worship at all unless it had a visible altar, at which gentlemen in gorgeous attire of blue and scarlet and fine linen stood in various poses and bowed and genuflected many times. The "early church," it seems, believed in baptismal regeneration, transubstantiation, the requirement for the activities and intercessions of an earthly priest, and the receipt of saving grace through sacraments. Well, that may be or may not be, but there was an earlier church which had no such notions, and it is for us to turn away from such false "early churches" and to focus on the earlier church or the earliest church, and there, I promise you, you will find no man-made and church ordained priest, nor any nonsense of saving grace coming through sacraments; but simplicity, and truth, and the power of the Holy Spirit. The early church that is so much admired by Anglicans today was a degenerate vine, a field of wheat and tares, a mass leavened with antichristian error, in a word a baptized heathenism. In its own way, it reestablished the many deities of the heathen, only this time they called them saints instead of gods, putting the Virgin Mary into the place of

Venus, and setting up Peter or Paul in the niches formerly occupied by Saturn or Mars. Our present “revived early church” is only Paganism with a trimming of crosses around the edges. We are resolved to return to the primitive church of which we read, “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.” This true “early church” will be our subject this morning, trusting that the Holy Spirit will be with us as with them.

I. First, then, ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH, WHAT ABOUT THEM?
“The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

It seems to have been the custom in the earliest times for persons who had been converted to Christ to join themselves with the church of Jesus Christ.

From that fact, I feel persuaded that they did not conceal their convictions. It is a strong temptation with many to say, “I have believed in Jesus, but that is a matter between God and my own soul, there is no need that I should tell this to others. Can't I quietly go to heaven and be a Nicodemus, or a Joseph of Arimathea?” To which I reply, Yes, you can quietly go to heaven, and we hope you will do so, but that is a different thing from being cowardly and ashamed of Christ. We will not object to your being a Nicodemus if you will go with him when he carries spices to the grave of Jesus; and you may be a Joseph of Arimathea if you will attend him when he goes boldly to Pilate and begs for the body of Jesus. Neither of these two brethren were cowards after the cross had been set up before their eyes, neither were they ashamed to identify themselves with the crucified Christ. Follow them, not in the infancy of their love, but in its more mature days. Remember, dear friends, the promise of the gospel runs like this, “He that believes in his heart, and confesses Christ with his mouth, will be saved.” Do not, I charge you, neglect half of the command! The gospel commission which we have received is this: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.” That is the message as we find it, we did not insert the clause concerning baptism, neither do we dare to leave it out, or advise you to neglect it. I give you the very words of the Savior. Do not, therefore, divide the gospel command in order to throw half of it away, but believe it all and affirm your belief, and be added to the church.

It is quite clear, too, that believers in those days did not try to go to heaven alone. However, there has been a great deal said in these days about simply being a Christian and not joining any particular church, this is clearly a piece of hypocrisy, and in all cases a mistake.

This idea of not joining any one particular church, and instead simply belonging to the “church at large” is often advocated in the name of unity, and yet it is clear to everyone that it is just the opposite of unity, and is intended to put an end to all visible church fellowship. The good people mentioned in our text immediately join the church of the Living God in Jerusalem. I dare say that even in those days, had they criticized the church, they would have found faults in her, certainly within a few weeks there were great faults that had to be remedied; but these converts felt that the group of Christians at Jerusalem was indeed the true church of Jesus Christ, and, therefore, they joined it. All of you can find true churches of Jesus Christ if you choose to look for them. If you wait for a perfect church, you must wait until you get to heaven; and even if you could find a perfect church on earth, I am sure they would not admit you to their fellowship, for you yourself are not perfect. Find those people who are nearest to the Scriptures, who hold the truth in doctrine and in practice, and are most like the apostolic church, and then join them, and you will be blessed for it. Consider the matter, and reflect that if it would be right for you to remain out of church fellowship, it must be right for every other believer to remain in the same condition, and then there would be no visible church on earth at all, and no body of people banded together to maintain and teach Christian commands and practices. Christian fellowship, especially the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and the maintenance of an evangelistic ministry, would become an impossibility, if no one openly declared the Savior’s cause. Act then according to your duty, and if you are a Christian, join with Christians; if you love the Master, love the servants; if you love the Captain, unite with the army, and join that regiment of it which you think adheres the closest to the Master’s word.

Observe next, that the persons who were reached at Pentecost were added to the church by the Lord.

Does anybody else ever add to the church? Oh, yes, the devil also often shoves in his servants. Who was it that added Judas, and Ananias and Sapphires, and Simon Magus, and Demas to the church? Who was it that

snuck in at night and planted weeds among the wheat? That evil spirit is not dead, he is still plenty busy in this department, and continually adds to the church those who are “not” being saved. Satan’s servants are the mixed multitude which infest the camp of Israel, and are the first to fall into lusting; his servants are the Achans who bring a curse on the tribes: his are those of whom Jude wrote about saying, “certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.” These false believers adulterate the church, and by so doing, they weaken and defile it, and bring on it much grief and dishonor. When the Lord adds to the church, that is quite another matter.

Moreover, the church itself cannot avoid adding some who should not be received. With the greatest possible care and prudence we will still make mistakes, therefore some are added whom the Lord never added to the church. You have heard Rowland Hill's story of meeting a drunken man in the street one night, who hiccupped and said to him, “How do you do, Mr. Hill? I am one of your converts.” “Yes,” said Rowland, “I would say that you are, but you are not one of God's, or else you would not be drunk.” Converts of that sort are far too numerous, converts of the Preacher, converts of friends, or converts of a watered-down gospel, but not true born again children of the Lord.

Dear friends, I invite all of you who are thinking about joining the church, to search and see whether you are the type that the Lord would add to a church. If you are, you have been converted by the Lord, you have been wounded by the Lord, and you have been healed by the Lord, and in the Lord is your righteousness and trust. It has not been man's doing; whoever may have been the instrument, the Holy Spirit has produced all your works in you. You must have been the subject of a divine intervention; something more than you could do for yourself or any man could do for you must have been formed in you by the Lord. He who made you has made you new. Oh, dear friends, who love the Lord, join in earnest prayer that the Lord would add to the church daily those who are being saved, for we long for such.

Then, the right kind of additions to the church are described in the text by the words, “those who were being saved.” The words of the verse in the King James Bible are not quite a correct translation of the original. I suppose they were borrowed from the vulgar Latin, they are not in the Greek. The translation should be either “The Lord added to the church

daily the saved,” or “The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Saved persons were added to the church, and only the saved were fit to be added. We are not authorized to receive into our number those who desire to be saved, as certain churches do: I commend their plan in doing so, but I am sure they have no Scriptural warrant for it. Those who are being saved, in whom the work of salvation has truly begun, are the only proper candidates, and these are spoken of in the forty-fourth verse as “believers.” The proper persons to be added to the visible church of Jesus Christ are those who believe to the salvation of their souls, who are daily experiencing the saving power of the name of Jesus by being delivered from sin, by being saved from the pattern of the world, by being saved in the sense of sanctified from the various corruptions and lusts which rule among the sons of men. These are the sort of persons who should be added to the church. So let the question be asked, “Am I saved? Have I believed in Jesus?” If I have, the process of salvation is going on within me, I am being delivered from the reigning, ruling power of sin each day; I am being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and I will be kept and presented in the end spotless before the presence of God with great joy. We set the door wide open to all who are saved, however little their faith may be. The church has no right to exclude any of the saved because their knowledge or experience is not that of advanced believers. If they believe in Jesus and are saved, then the babes belong to the family and ought to be received, the lambs belong to the flock and ought not to be kept outside the fold. Church membership is not a certificate of advanced Christianity, it is simply the recognition of the profession of saving faith in Jesus Christ. May the Lord add to this church many of the saved, and may we sit at the Lord's table together and sing of redeeming grace and dying love, as those who love the Savior. Come here, you who are the Lord's little ones, but stay far away, you unbelievers and unregenerate ones.

Again the text says, “The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” They were really “added” to the church. I am afraid certain persons' names are added to the church, but they themselves are not.

They increase our numbers, they are added like figures on a piece of paper, but they do not add to our strength. The church is a vital body, and

to add to a vitalized body requires a divine operation. The church is like a tree; if you want to add to a tree you cannot take a dead branch and tie it on, that is not adding to it, but hindering it. To add to a tree there must be some grafting done, which requires skill, and the branch, itself alive, must be knit to the living trunk by a living bond, so that the vital sap of the tree will flow into the grafted branch. A true church is a living entity, and only living men and women made alive by the Spirit of God are fit to be grafted into it, and the grafting must be done by the Lord himself, otherwise it is no true addition to the church of the Living God. Some members are only tied on to the church, and they are neither useful nor an enhancement, just as a dead branch fastened to a tree would add no beauty to it, and would certainly bear no fruit. There must be a living union, so that the life which is in the church will join with the life that is in the man or the woman, and the one life of the one living Spirit will flow through the whole of the body.

When I hear those who profess to be Christians criticizing the churches to which they belong, when I see division and hostility among church members, I can clearly understand that the Lord never added them, and it would be a great mercy to the church if the Lord would take them away. When the Lord adds them, then they are added for time and for eternity, and they can say to the church, "Where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."

One more point in the text is this, that "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." There were additions to the church every day.

Some churches, if they have an addition once in twelve months make as much noise over that one as a hen does when she has laid an egg. Now, in the early church they would not have been contented with so small an increase; they would have gone weeping and mourning all over Jerusalem if there had been additions only once in the year. But, one cries, "If we have an addition every month, isn't that enough?" "Well, it is enough for some people, but when hearts are warm and full of love to Christ, then we want him to be praised from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same, and we long to have added to the church daily those who are being saved; and why not? But, you reply, we are not preaching daily. That may be, but we ought to be; if not daily in the pulpit, there should be the daily

preaching of the life, and if all the members of the church were daily teaching of Jesus Christ from house to house, a daily sowing would bring a daily reaping; if we were daily praying with earnestness, and daily using every effort we could by the power of the Holy Spirit, and if daily the church lived in fellowship with her master, we would soon see added to it daily those who were being saved. "Why don't we see it," says one, "in many churches?" Why, because many churches do not believe in it. If there were many converts added to them, they would say, "Yes, we hear of a great many additions, but what are they? We hope they will hold on," or some such unkind remark. If to some churches there would come a large increase, there are brethren who would not believe it to be genuine, and would despise the little ones. God will not cause his children to be born where there is no one to nurse them; he will be sure not to send converts to churches which do not want them. He will not have his lambs snarled over and kept out in the cold for months together to see whether they will howl as wolves or bleat as sheep. He loves to see his people watchful for new converts, and watchful over them. The Good Shepherd would have us feed his lambs, gather them in from the cold field of the world, and carry them to some warm sheltered place, and nurture them for him. When he sees a church ready to do that, then will he send them his lambs, but not till then.

II. That brings me to the second point, which is this: UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS MAY WE EXPECT ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH ON A LARGE SCALE?

Turn to the chapter again and we will have our answer. We may expect additions to every church of the Living God on a large scale when she has first of all a Holy Spirit ministry.

Peter was no doubt a man of considerable natural abilities, he was also a warmhearted, fervent man, the kind of person that would have power over his fellowmen, because of the enthusiasm within him; but for all this Peter had never seen three thousand persons converted until he had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. After the tongue of fire had sat on Peter's head, he became another man from what he had ever been before. If, dear brethren, we are to see large multitudes converted, the power of the preacher must lie in his being filled with the Holy Spirit. I fear that many churches would not be content with a ministry whose power would lie

solely in the Holy Spirit. What I mean is this, that they judge a minister by his elaboration of style, or beauty of imagery, or degree of culture; and if he is a man of such refined speech that only a select few can understand him, then he is a favorite with what is considered to be “a respectable church.” Some despise a preacher whom the common people hear gladly, who uses great plainness of speech, and discards the words which man's wisdom teaches. They complain that he is only fit to address the most common among people, and for this they turn their backs on him. They don't want the fire of the Spirit, but rather the flash of rhetoric; not the rushing wind of the Holy Spirit, but the perfumed wind of “high culture.” The jingle of rhetoric has more attraction for them than the clear sound of the trumpets of the sanctuary. May God have mercy on the church that has got into such a miserable state, and is so lacking in true education, for where a church is educated by the Lord she understands that salvation is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God. Plainness of speech is the perfection of gospel utterance, for that is how the Master himself spoke. Men of studied elocution, who can build up a climax, and cap it with a dainty piece of poetry, are not the men whom God the Holy Spirit honors to be soul-winners. Haven't you heard fine sermons, which have perfectly charmed you by their beauty, and yet after you have heard them you have felt that if the Lord did bless such sermons to the conversion of anybody it would be a novelty on the face of the earth, for there was such little of Christ in them, and none of the power of the Holy Spirit? Great sermons are often great sins, and “intellectual treats” are frequently a mess of savory mush made from unclean meats.

A Holy Spirit ministry, if Peter is the model, is one which is bold, clear, telling, and persuasive. One which tells men that Jesus is the Christ, and that they have crucified him, and calls on them to repent and turn to the Lord. The truly sent preacher speaks out straight and plain, and home to the conscience, whether men will hear or whether they will refrain. The Holy Spirit minister chooses Jesus for his main theme, as Peter did. He did not speak to them about modern science and the ways of twisting Scripture into agreement with it. He cared nothing for the ramblings of the Rabbis or the philosophies of the Greeks; but he went right on preaching Christ crucified and Christ risen from the dead. When he had preached Christ, he made a pointed personal appeal to them and said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you.” He was not afraid to give

such an exhortation; he was not like some who say, "We must warn sinners and then leave them; we may preach Christ to them, but may not request them to repent;" but he boldly preached the gospel and left it to his Master to send it home by the power of the Holy Spirit. That was the sort of sermon which God blesses. The man was full of God, and God shone through the man, and worked with him, and forgiveness of sins was sought for and was found through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by a vast number of souls. May God send to all his churches a Holy Spirit ministry!

But if there are to be many additions to the church it must next be a Holy Spirit church.

Note that. What is a Holy Spirit church? Well, it is a church baptized into his power, and this will be known first by its being devoted.

Read the 42nd verse: "They devoted themselves." He will not bless a church which is excited and then relapses, is carried away by every novelty, and does not know what it believes, but a church which lives in Jesus and in his truth.

They were devoted in four points. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

In the apostle's teaching. They were a doctrinal church, they believed in being devoted to the unmovable truth; they did not belong to the shifty generation of men who plead that their views are progressive, and that they cannot hold themselves bound by a ordinary creed. Dear brothers and sisters, never give up the grand old truths of the gospel. Let no excitement, even though it is the whirlwind of a revival, ever sweep you off your feet concerning the great doctrines of the cross. If God does not save men by truth he certainly will not save them by lies, and if the old gospel is not competent to work a revival, then we will do without the revival; we will keep to the old truth, anyhow, come what may! Our flag is nailed to the pole.

Next they were devoted in fellowship. They loved each other, and they continued doing so. They conversed with one another about the things of God, and they did not give up the conversation. They helped each other when they were in need, and they continued in such kindness. They were true brethren, and their fellowship was not broken.

Next they continued in the breaking of bread, which is a delightful ordinance, and never to be despised or underestimated. As often as they could they celebrated the death of Christ, until he would come again. They delighted the dear memorials of his sacred passion, both in the church and from house to house.

They also remained devoted in prayer. Mark that! God cannot bless a church which does not pray, and churches must increase in supplication if they would increase in strength. Sacred insistent requests must surround the throne of God, and then the blessing will be given. Oh, children of the heavenly King, you hamper the Spirit and hinder the blessing if you restrain prayer.

Here were four points, then, in which the church was devoted, and God blessed it.

Note next that it was a united church.

We read of them that they were so united that they had all things in common, and they daily continued with one accord in the church. There were no parties among them, no petty strifes and divisions, they loved the Lord too well for that. The Sacred Dove takes his flight when strife comes in. If you divide the church within itself, you also divide it from the mighty operations of the Spirit of God. Be full of love to one another, and then you may expect that God the Holy Spirit will fill you with blessing.

They were a generous church as well as a united church.

They were so generous that they threw in their property into a common reserve lest any should be in need. They were not communists, they were Christians; and the difference between a communist and a Christian is this—a communist says, “All that is yours is mine;” while a Christian says, “All that is mine is yours;” and that is a very different thing. The one is for getting, and the other is for giving. These believers acted in such a generous spirit one to another, that it seemed as if nobody considered that what he had belonged to himself, but generously gave of it to the necessities of others. I do not believe the Lord will ever bless a stingy church. There are churches whose minister has fearfully questioned how he will even provide food and clothing for his household, and yet these churches are not very poor. There are churches where more is spent per

year for cleaning than they spend on the cause of Christ; and where this is the case no great good will be done. The Lord will never bless a synagogue of misers; if they are misers they may keep their worship to themselves, for God is as a generous God, and he loves to have a generous people.

Again, these people were in such a condition that their homes were holy places.

I want you to notice this, that they were breaking bread from house to house, and ate their food with gladness and singleness of heart. They did not think that religion was meant only for Sundays, and for what men now-a-days call the House of God. Their own houses were houses of God, and their own meals were so mixed and mingled with the Lord's Supper that to this day the most cautious student of the Bible cannot tell when they stopped eating their common meals, and when they began eating the Supper of the Lord. They elevated their meals into diets for worship: they so consecrated everything with prayer and praise that all around them was holiness to the Lord. I wish our houses were, in this way, dedicated to the Lord, so that we worshipped God all day long, and made our homes temples for the living God. A great dignitary not long ago informed us that there is great value in daily prayer in the parish church; he even asserted that, however few might attend, it was more acceptable than any other worship. I suppose that prayer in the parish church with nobody to join in it except the priest and the usher is far more effectual than the largest family gathering in the house at home. This was evidently this gentleman's idea, and I suppose the literature which he was best acquainted with was of such an order as, to have led him to draw that inference. Had he been acquainted with the Bible and such old fashioned books, he would have learned rather differently, and if some one should make him a present of a New Testament, it might perhaps suggest a few new thoughts to him. Does God need a house? He who made the heavens and the earth, does he dwell in temples made with hands? What crass ignorance this is! No house beneath the sky is more holy than the place where a Christian lives, and eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and praises the Lord in all that he does, and there is no worship more heavenly than that which is presented by holy families, devoted to the fear of the Lord.

To sacrifice home worship to public worship is a most evil course of action. Morning and evening devotion in a little home is infinitely more pleasing in the sight of God than all the cathedral pomp which delights

the carnal eye and ear. Every truly Christian household is a church, and as such it is competent for the discharge of any function of divine worship, whatever it may be. Are we not all priests? Why do we need to call in others to make devotion a performance? Let every man be a priest in his own house. Are you not all kings if you love the Lord? Then make your houses palaces of joy and temples of holiness. One reason why the early church had such a blessing was because her members had such homes. When we are like them we will have “added to the church those who were being saved.”

I have already mentioned that they were a praying church, and that accounted greatly for the increase. They were a devout church, a church which did not forget any part of the Lord's will. They were a baptized church, and they were a church that continually celebrated the Lord's Supper, so we can see that they were obedient to Christ in both ordinances. They were also a joyful church. We find that they ate their food with gladness. Their religion was not of the somber type which comes from doubts and fears. They were believers in a risen Redeemer, and though they knew that they would soon be persecuted, they rejoiced so much that everybody could see heaven shining on their faces, and might have known that they believed in the blessed gospel, for they were a blessed people. They were also a praising church, for it is said they “praised God, and they had favor with all the people.” Oh, may the Lord make this church and all the churches around us to be as holy and joyful as that apostolic community.

III. I must conclude with a word on that which I wanted most of all to say: **WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO THESE ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH BRING TO US?**

To you who are to be added to the church tonight, and I thank God that there are so many of you, it involves this responsibility: Do not come in among us unless you are saved.

Judge yourselves with honesty, examine yourselves with care, and although you have gone as far as you have, yet tonight, before I give you the right hand of fellowship, if you are conscious that you are not what you profess to be, I do beg you to still stand back. However, if you are the weakest of the weak, and the feeblest of the feeble, yet, if you are sincere,

come and be welcomed; but if you are not sincere, do not add to your sin by taking upon you a profession which you cannot keep up, and by declaring a lie before the Lord; for if you do so, remember you will not have lied to man, but to God himself, in daring to affirm yourselves Christians, while you are unbelievers. Come, yes come if you are believers, and when you come, remember that the responsibility which you undertake in God's strength, is that you live to prove that you have really given yourself up to the church, that you intend to serve Christ with all your heart, that you will seek to promote the holiness and unity of the church which you join, and will strive to do nothing to dishonor her good name or to grieve the Spirit of God. In joining the church, pray to continue to be devoted in doctrine and fellowship. Pray for more grace, that you may be filled with the Spirit of God. Do not come in to weaken us, we are weak enough already. Do not come in to adulterate our purity, we have enough impurity even now. Pray that God may make you a real increase to our prayerfulness, to our holiness, to our earnestness, to our higher life, and then come and welcome, and the Lord be with you!

As for us who will receive the converts, what is our responsibility?

First, to welcome them wholeheartedly. Let us open wide the door of our hearts and say, "Come and welcome," for Jesus Christ's sake. After welcoming them we must watch over them, and when so many are added, double care is needed. Of course, no two pastors can possibly watch over this vast assembly of four thousand five hundred professed believers. Let the watching be done by all the members: by the officers of the church first, and then by every individual. I am very thankful that out of the cheering number to be brought in tonight the larger proportion belong to the families of the church. My brothers and sisters already in Christ, it is fortunate for these young people that they have you to watch over them. Never let it be said that any parent discourages his child, that any guardian discourages the young after they have come forward and avowed their faith. If you notice faults, remember you have faults yourselves: do not mockingly throw their failing in their teeth as some have unkindly done. Guide them and cheer them on. Help their weakness, bear with their ignorance and impulsiveness, and correct their mistakes. I charge you, my beloved sisters, be nursing mothers in the church, and you, my brothers, be fathers to these young people, that they may be enabled by your help through God's Spirit to stay on the path. It is

an evil thing to receive members, and never care for them afterwards. Among so many some must escape our supervision, but if all the members of the church were watchful this could be avoided; each would have some one to care for him, each one would have a friend to whom to tell his troubles and his cares. Watch, I pray, watch over the church. And you older ones, myself included, let our example be such that they can safely follow. Do not let them come into the church and find us cold. Let us try, as we see these young ones coming among us, to grow young again in heart and sympathy. In receiving these new members we ought to have, dear brethren, an access of new strength, and a more vigorous life. The church ought to be giving out more light, for here are fresh lamps. She should be doing more for Christ, here are new workers; she should become stronger, more daring, more useful, for here are newly enlisted bold soldiers. I think, as I see new converts brought in, I see the Lord lighting up new stars to gladden this world's night; I see him swearing in new soldiers to fight Christ's battles; I see him sending out new sowers to sow the fields of the world for the ever-glorious harvest, and I bless and praise and magnify his name with gladness of soul.

Heavenly Father, keep them, yes, keep us all, lest any of us, though added to the church on earth, should not be added to the church in heaven. Keep us so that when the muster roll is read for the last time, we who have had our names inscribed among the saints on earth may find them written among the blessed in heaven. May God grant it, and he will have all the glory. Amen.

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Christ Glorified as the Builder of His Church

"He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory." - Zechariah 6:13.

"There's music in all things, if men had ears;

This world is but the echo of the spheres."

Heaven sings evermore. Before the throne of God, angels and redeemed saints extol his name. And this world is singing too; sometimes with the loud noise of the rolling thunder, of the boiling sea of the dashing cataract, and of the lowing cattle; and often with that still, solemn harmony, which floweth from the vast creation, when in its silence it praises God. Such is the song which gushes in silence from the mountain lifting its head to the sky, covering its face sometimes with the wings of mist, and at other times unveiling its snow-white brow before its Maker, and reflecting back his sunshine, gratefully thanking him for the light with which it has been made to glisten, and for the gladness of which it is the solitary spectator, as in its grandeur it looks down upon the laughing valleys. The tune to which heaven and earth are set, is the same. In heaven they sing, "The Lord be exalted; let his name be magnified for ever." And the earth singeth the same: "Great art thou in thy works, O Lord! and unto thee be glory." It would seem, therefore, a strange anomaly if the church, the temple of the living God, should be void of song, and we bless God that such an anomaly doth not exist, for "day and night they praise God in his temple." And while it is true the ceaseless circles of the starry heavens are praising him without cessation, it is also true that the stars of earth, the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, are each of them evermore singing their hymns of praise to him. To-day, in this house, thousands of voices shout his name, and when the sun of to-day shall set, it shall rise upon another land, where Christian hearts awakened, shall begin to praise as we have just concluded; and when tomorrow we shall enter upon the business of the week, we will praise him when we rise, we will praise him when we retire to rest, and we will solace ourselves with the sweet thought, that when the link of praise here is covered with darkness, another golden link is sparkling in the sunshine in the lands where the sun is rising when it sets upon us.

And mark how the music of the church is set to the same tune as that of heaven and earth - "Greet God, thou art to be magnified." Is not this the unanimous song of all the redeemed below? When we sing, is not this the sole burden of our hosannahs and hallelujahs? - "Unto him that liveth and sitteth upon the throne, unto him be glory, world without end." Now,

my text is one note of the song. May God help me to understand, and to make you to understand it also. "He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory." We all know that the Lord Jesus Christ is here alluded to, for the context runs - "Behold the man, whose name is the Branch" - which title is ever applied to the Messiah, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. "He grew up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Now we shall notice this morning, first of all, the temple, that is the Church of Christ. We shall notice next, its builder - "He," that is Jesus, "shall build the temple." Then we shall stop a moment and pause to admire his glory, - "He shall bear the glory." Then we shall attempt, under the good hand of the Holy Spirit, to make some practical applications of the subject.

I. The first point is THE TEMPLE.

The temple is the church of God; and here let me begin by just observing, that when I use the term "church of God," I use it in a very different sense from that in which it is sometimes understood. It is usual with many Church of England people, to use the term "church" as specially applying to the bishops, archdeacons, rectors, curates, and so forth: these are said to be the church and the young man who becomes a pastor of any congregation is said to "enter the church." Now I believe that such a use of the term is not scriptural. I would never for one moment grant to any man that the ministers of the gospel constitute the church. If you speak of the army, the whole of the soldiers constitute it; the officers may sometimes be spoken of first and foremost, but still the private soldier is as much a part of the army as the highest officer. And it is so in the church of God, all Christians constitute the church. Any company of Christian men, gathered together in holy bonds of communion for the purpose of receiving God's ordinances, and preaching what they regard to be God's truths, is a church; and the whole of these churches gathered into one, in fact all the true believers in Christ scattered throughout the world, constitute the One true Universal Apostolic Church, built upon a rock, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Do not imagine,

therefore, when I speak at any time of the church, that I mean the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and some twenty other dignitaries, and the whole host of ministers. No, nor when I speak of the church do I mean the deacons, the elders, and pastors of the Baptist denomination, or any other - I mean all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth, for these make up the one universal church which hath communion in itself with itself, not always in the outward sign, but always in the inward grace; the church which was elect of God before the foundation of the world, which was redeemed by Christ with his own precious blood, which has been called by his Spirit, which is preserved by his grace, and which at last shall be gathered in to make the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

Well, now, this church is called the temple of God, and Christ is said to be its builder. Why is the church called the temple? I reply very briefly, because the temple was the place where God especially dwelt.

It was true that he did not wholly dwell in the temple made with hands, of man's building, which Solomon piled upon the mount of Zion, but it is true that in a special sense the Infinite Majesty there held its tabernacle and its dwelling place. Between the wings of the overshadowing cherubim, there did shine the bright light of the Shekinah, the type, the manifestation, and the proof of the special presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel. It is true he is everywhere; in the highest heavens and in the deepest hell God is to found, but especially did he dwell in his temple, so that when his people prayed, they were bidden to turn their eye towards the temple as Daniel did, when he opened his window towards Jerusalem, and offered his prayer. Now such is the church. If you would find God, he dwelleth on every hill-top, and in every valley, God is everywhere in creation; but if you want a special display of him, if you would know what is the secret place of the tabernacle of the Host High, the inner chamber of divinity, you must go where you find the church of true believers, for it is here he makes his continual residence known - in the hearts of the humble and contrite, who tremble at his word.

Again, the temple was the place of the clearest manifestation.

He who would see God the best of all, must see him in his temple. I repeat, he was to be discovered everywhere. If you stood on Carmel's top,

and looked towards the great sea wherein are all the ships and the great leviathan he had made to play therein, there might God be discovered in his great strength. If you turned your eye on the same hill, and looked toward the vale of Esdraelon there was God to be seen in every blade of grass, in every sheep feeding by the Stream; God was everywhere to be discovered; but if you would see him it is not on Bashan, it is not on Sermon, it is not on Tabor; it was on Mount Zion that the Lord God loved to make a special display of himself. It is so with the Church. God is to be seen in the midst of her, her helper, her strength, her teacher, her guide her deliverer, her sanctifier. In holy communion - in the breaking of bread, and in the pouring out of wine, in holy baptism - in the immersion of believers into the Lord Jesus Christ, in the preaching of the Word, in the constant declaration of the great salvation of Jesus, in the lifting up of the cross, in the high exalting of him that died upon it, in the preaching of the Covenant, in the declaration of the grace of God - here is he to be seen, here is his name written in brighter letters and in clearer lines than elsewhere the wide world o'er. Hence his church is said to be his temple Oh, Christian people, you know this, for God dwelleth in you, and walketh with you; you dwell in him, and he dwells in you - "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." It is your happy privilege to walk with God; he manifests himself to you, as he doth not unto the world; he takes you into his inner chamber; he manifests his love; the song of Solomon is sung in your courts, and nowhere else; it is not the song of the wide world, it is the sonnet of the inner chamber, the song of the house of wine, the music of the banquet. You understand this, for you have been brought into near acquaintance with Christ; you have been made to lean your head upon his bosom, you have been taught to look into his heart, and to see eternal thoughts of love there towards you. You know well, better than we can tell you, what it is to be the temple of the living God.

And once more; we should fail to describe the reason why the word "temple" is used to picture the church, if we did not observe that the church is like the temple - a place of worship.

There was a law passed by God, that no offering should be presented to him except upon the one altar in his temple at Jerusalem, and that law is extant to this day. No acceptable service can be offered to Christ except by

his church. Only those who believe in Christ can offer songs, and prayers, and praises, that shall be received of God. Whatever ordinances you attend to, who are without Christ in your hearts, you do belie that ordinance and prostitute it - you do not honor God therein. Two men go up to the temple to pray, the one a believer the other an unbeliever. He that is an unbeliever may have the gifts of oratory, the mightiest fluency of speech, but his prayer is an abomination unto God, whilst the feeblest utterance of the true believer is received with smiles by him that sits upon the throne. Two persons go to the Master's table - the one loveth the ordinance in its outward sign, and reverenceth it with superstition, but he knows not Christ; the other believes in Jesus, and knows how to eat his flesh and drink his blood as a worthy partaker in that divine ordinance; God is honored in the one, the ordinance is dishonored in the other. Two persons come to holy Baptism: the one loves the Master, believes in his name, and trusts him; he is baptized, he honors Christ Another comes, perhaps an unconscious infant, one who is incapable of faith; or hath no faith; he dishonors God, he dishonors the ordinance in venturing to touch it, when he is not one of the church, and therefore hath no right to offer sacrifice of prayer and praise unto the Lord our God. There is only one altar - that is, Christ; and there is only one set of priests, namely, the church of God, the men chosen out of the world to be clothed in white robes to minister at his altar. and whosoever besides pretendeth to worship God, worshippeth him not aright. His offering is like that of Cain; God hath no respect to his sacrifice, for without faith it is impossible to please God. We care not who it is that doth the act; unless he believeth, he cannot will pleasure from God, nor shall his sacrifice be accepted.

I have thus noted the reasons why the church is said to be the temple. As there was only one temple, so there is only one church. That one church is his holy place, where God dwells, where God accepts worship, where songs of praise are daily uttered, and the smoking incense of prayer continually comes up before his nostrils with acceptance.

II. Now, we have an interesting subject in the second part of our text. "He shall build the temple of the Lord." CHRIST IS THE CHURCH'S ONLY BUILDER.

Now, I shall want to make a parallel between Christ's building the church, and Solomon, as the builder of the first temple. When Solomon built the temple, the first thing he did was to obtain instructions with regard to the model upon which he should build it. Solomon was exceeding wise, but I do not think he was his own architect. The Lord, who had shown the pattern of the old tabernacle in the wilderness to Moses, doubtless showed the pattern of the temple to Solomon, so that the pillars, and the roof, and the floor thereof were all ordained of God and every one of them settled in heaven. Now, Christ Jesus in this is no Solomon; with this exception, that being God over all, blessed for ever, he was his own architect. Christ has made the plan of his church. You and I have made a great many plans for the building up of that church. The Presbyterian makes his plans extremely precise. He will put an elder in every corner, and the Presbytery is the great ground-work - the pillar and the ground of the truth, and right is he in so doing to an extent. The Episcopalian builds his temple too. He will have a bishop at the door-post, and he will have a priest to shut the gate. He will have everything built according to the model that was seen by Cranmer in the mount, if he ever was there at all. And those of us who are of severer discipline, and have a simpler style, must have Christ's church always built in the congregational order; every congregation distinct and separate, and governed by its own bishop, and deacons, and elders. But mark, Christ does not attend to our points of church government, for there is one part of Christ's church that is Episcopalian, and looks as if a bishop of the Church of England had ordered it; another part is Presbyterian; another, Baptist, another, Congregational; and yet all these styles of architecture somehow fused into one by the Great Architect, make that goodly structure which is called "the temple of Christ, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." Christ must be his own architect. He will bring out different points of truth in different ways. Why, I believe that different denominations are sent on purpose to set out different truths. There are some of our brethren a little too high, they bring out better than any other people, the grand old truths of sovereign grace. There are some, on the other hand, a little too low; they bring out with great clearness the great and truthful doctrines of man's responsibility. So that two truths that might have been neglected, either the one or the other, if only one form of Christianity existed, are both brought out, both made resplendent, by the

different denominations of God's people, who are alike chosen of God, and precious to him.

God forbid I should say anything that would bolster up any in their errors; nevertheless God's people, even in error, are a precious people. Even when they seem to be as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter, they are still comparable to fine gold. Rest assured that the Lord hath deep designs to answer, even by the divisions of his church. We must not interfere with Christ's reasons, nor with his style of architecture. Every stone that is in the temple, Jesus Christ ordained should be put where it is; even those stones that are most contemptible and unseen, were put in their places by him. There is not one board of cedar, one piece of burnished pinnacle, that was not foreseen and pre-arranged in that eternal covenant of grace which was the great plan that Christ, the Almighty Architect, did draw for the building of the temple to his praise. Christ, then, is the only Architect, and he shall bear the glory, for he designed the building.

Now, you remember that when Solomon set to work to build his temple, he found a mountain ready for his purpose, mount Moriah. The top of it was not quite broad enough, he had therefore to enlarge it, so that there might be room for the beautiful temple, the joy of the whole earth. When Jesus Christ came to build his temple, he found no mountain on which to build it; he had no mountain in our nature, he had to find a mountain in his own, and the mountain upon which he has built his church is the mountain of his own unchangeable affection, his own strong love, his own omnipotent grace and infallible truthfulness. It is this that constitutes the mountain upon which the church is built, and on this the foundation hath been digged, and the great stones laid in the trenches with oaths and promises and blood to make them stand secure, even though earth should rock and all creation suffer decay.

Then after Solomon had his mountain ready and the foundation builded, the next trouble was he had no trees near at hand: there were, however, fine trees growing in Lebanon, but his servants had not skill enough to cut them down. He had therefore, to send for Hiram, king of Tyre, with his servants, to cut down the trees upon Lebanon, which, after being

shaped according to the model, were to be sent by rafts or floats to Joppa, the port nearest to Jerusalem, and there brought a short distance over land for the building of the temple. He had to do the same with the stones of the quarry; for the different stones that were needed for the building had to be hewn out of the quarry by Hiram's servants, assisted by some of Solomon's people, who had inferior skill and therefore were set about the more laborious and rougher parts of the work. The same fact you will notice, if you will read the history of the building of Solomon's temple, occurred with regard to the making of the vessels of the house. It is said that Hiram did cast them, and Solomon found the gold; and the moulds were made in the great plain, and Solomon did cast them there, with Hiram for his chief designer and director.

Ah! but herein Solomon fails to be a type of Christ. Christ builds the temple himself. There stand the cedars of Lebanon that the Lord hath planted but they are not ready for the building; they are not cut down, nor shaped nor made into those planks of cedar, whose odoriferous beauty shall make glad the courts of the Lord in Paradise. No; Jesus Christ must cut them down with the axe of conviction; he must cut them up with the great saw of his law, he must plane and polish them with his holy gospel. And when he hath made them fit to be pillars in the house of the Lord, then they shall be carried across the sea to heaven; then shall they be placed in his temple for ever. No Hiram is needed. The axe is in his hand, the plane is in his hand too. He understandeth well that business. Was he not a carpenter on earth? And spiritually, he shall be the same to his church for ever and ever. It is even the same with the stones of the temple. We are like rough stones in the quarry. Behold the hole of the pit whence we were digged, and the rock whence we were hewn. But we were hewn out of that rock by no hand but Christ's. He raised up seed unto Abraham out of the stones of the pit; it was his own hammer that broke the rock in pieces, and his own arm of strength that wielded the hammer, when he dashed us from the rock of our sin. Though we are each of us being polished, so that we may be ready for the temple, yet there is nothing that polishes but Christ. Afflictions cannot sanctify us, except as they are used by Christ, as his mallet and his chisel. Our joys and our efforts cannot make us ready for heaven apart from the hand of Jesus who fashioneth our hearts aright, and prepareth us to be partakers

of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thus you notice that herein Jesus Christ excels Solomon, for he provides all the materials. He hews them himself; he rough-casts them first, and then afterwards, during life, polishes them till he makes them ready to transport them to the hill of God, whereon his temple is to be built. I was thinking what a pretty figure was that floating of the trees of Lebanon after being hewn into planks and made ready to be fixed as pillars of the temple - what a fine emblem of death! Is it not just so with us. Here we grow, and are at length cut down, and made ready to become pillars of the temple. Across the stream of death, we are ferried by a loving hand, and brought to the port of Jerusalem where we are safely landed, to go no more out for ever, but to abide as eternal pillars in the temple of our Lord. Now, you know the Tyrians floated these rafts; but no stranger, no foreigner shall float us across the stream of death. It is remarkable that Jesus Christ always uses expressions with regard to his people, which impute their death to him alone. You will recollect the expression in the Revelation - "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." But when he begins to reap, not the vintage, which represents the wicked that were to be crushed, but the harvest which represents the godly; then it is said "He that sat upon the throne thrust in the sickle." He did not leave it to his angels, he did it himself. It is so with the bringing of those planks, and the moving of those stones. I say no king of Tyre and Sidon shall do it, Jesus Christ who is the death of death and hell's destruction, he himself shall pilot us across the stream, and land us safe on Canaan's side. "He shall build the temple of the Lord."

Well, after these things were brought, Solomon had to employ many thousand workmen to put them in their proper places. You know that in Solomon's temple there was no sound of hammer heard, for the stones were made ready in the quarries, and brought all shaped and marked so that the masons might know the exact spot in which they were to be placed; so that no sound of iron was needed. All the planks and timbers were carried to their right places, and all the catches with which they were to be linked together were prepared, so that there might not even be the driving of a nail - everything was ready beforehand. It is the same

with us. When we get to heaven, there will be no sanctifying us there, no squaring us with affliction, no hammering us with the rod, no making us. We must be made meet here; and blessed be his name, all that Christ will do beforehand. When we get there, we shall not need angels to put this member of the church in one place, and that member in another; Christ who brought the stones from the quarry and made them ready, shall himself place the people in their inheritance in paradise. For he has himself said "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go away, I will come again and I will receive you unto myself" Christ shall be his own usher, he shall receive his people himself, he shall stand at the gates of heaven himself to take his own people, and to put them in their allotted heritage in the land of the blessed.

I have no doubt you have read many times the story of Solomon's temple, and you have noticed that he overlaid all the temple with gold. He provided much of the substance, but his father David brought him a good store. Now Jesus will overlay all of us with gold, when he builds us in heaven. Do not imagine we shall be in heaven what we are to-day. No, beloved, if the cedar could see itself after it had been made into a pillar, it would not know itself. If you could see yourselves as you shall be made, you would say, " 'It doth not yet appear' how great we must be made." Nor were these pillars of cedars to be left naked and unadorned - though they had been fair and lovely then - they were overlaid with sheets of gold. So shall we be. "It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body," plated with pure gold: no longer what it was, but precious, lustrous, glorified.

And in the temple, we understand, there was a great brazen sea in which the priests did wash themselves, and there were other brazen seas, in which they washed the lambs and bullocks when they were offered. In heaven there is a great laver, in which all our souls have been washed, "for they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb." Now Christ himself prepares this sacred sea. He filled it with blood from his own veins. As for our prayers and praises, the great laver in which they are washed, was also made and filled by Christ; so that they with us are clean, and we offer acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I say again, before I leave this head, there is no part of

the great temple of the church, which was not made by Christ. There is a great deal in the church on earth, that Christ had nothing to do with, but there is nothing in his true church, and nothing especially in his glorified church, which was not put there by him. Therefore, we may well come to the conclusion, on the last head, here, he shall bear all the glory, for he was the only builder of it

III. Now, what a sweet thing it is to try and GLORIFY CHRIST.

I am happy this morning to have a subject that will magnify my Master. But is it not a sad thing, that when we would magnify Christ most, our poor, failing lips refuse to speak. Oh, if you would know my Master's glory, you must see it for yourselves, for like the Queen of Sheba, the halt can never be told you, even by those who know him most and love him best. Half his glory never can be told. Pause awhile, and let me endeavor to address to you a few loving words. Your Master, O ye saints of the Lord, has prepared you and will build you into his temple. Speak and say, he shall have all the glory. Let us note, first, that the glory which he shall have will be a weighty glory. Dr. Gill says, "the expression implies, that the glory will be a weighty one, for it said, he shall bear the glory." "They shall hang," says another expression, "upon him all the glory of his Father's house;" and in another place, we are told, that there is "an exceeding weight of glory," which is prepared for the righteous. How great then, the weight of glory which shall be given to Christ. Oh, think not that Christ is to be glorified in such humble measure, as he is on earth. The songs of heaven are nobler strains than ours. The hearts of the redeemed pay him loftier homage than we can offer. Try not to judge of the magnificence of Christ by the pomp of kings, or by the reverence paid to mighty men on earth. His glory far surpasses all the glory of this time and space. The honor which shall be bestowed upon him is as the brightness of the sun, the honors of earth are but the twinklings of a fading star. Before him, at this very day, principalities and powers do bow themselves. Ten thousand times ten thousand seraphim wait at his footstool. "The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," and all these wait his beck and his command. And as for his redeemed, how do they magnify him? never staying, never changing, never wearying; they raise their shout higher, and higher, and higher, and yet louder, and louder still, the strain is lifted up, and evermore it is the

same. "To him that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, unto him be glory, world without end."

And note again, that this glory is undivided glory.

In the church of Christ in heaven, no one is glorified but Christ. He who is honored on earth has some one to share the honor with him, some inferior helper who labored with him in the work; but Christ has none. He is glorified, and it is all his own glory. Oh, when you get to heaven, ye children of God, will ye praise any but your Master? Calvinists, today you love John Calvin; will you praise him there? Lutheran, to-day thou dost love the memory of that stern reformer; wilt thou sing the song of Luther in heaven? Follower of Wesley, thou hast a reverence for that evangelist; wilt thou in heaven have a note for John Wesley? None, none, none! Giving up all names and all honors of men, the strain shall rise in undivided and unjarring unison "unto him that loved us, that washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever."

But again: he shall have all the glory; all that can be conceived, all that can be desired, all that can be imagined shall come to him.

To-day, you praise him, but not as you can wish; in heaven you shall praise him to the summit of your desire. To-day you see him magnified, but you see not all things put under him; in heaven all things shall acknowledge his dominion. There every knee shall bow before him, and every tongue confess that he is Lord. He shall have all the glory.

But to conclude on this point, this glory is continual glory.

It says he shall bear all the glory. When shall this dominion become effete? When shall this promise be so fulfilled that it is put away as a worn out garment? Never,

"While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures,"

we shall never leave off praising Christ. We think we can almost guess how we shall feel when we get to heaven, with regard to our Master. Methinks if I should ever be privileged to behold his blessed face with joy, I shall want nothing but to be allowed to approach his throne, and cast what little honor I may have before his feet, and then be there and ever

more adore the matchless splendor of his love, the marvels of his might. Suppose some one entering were to say to the redeemed, "Suspend your songs for a moment! Ye have been praising Christ, lo, these six thousand years; many of you have without cessation praised him now these many centuries! Stop your song a moment; pause and give your songs to some one else for an instant." Oh, can you conceive the scorn with which the myriad eyes of the redeemed would smite the tempter? "Stop from praising him! No, never. Time may stop, for it shall be no more; the world may stop, for its revolutions must cease; the universe may stop its cycles and the movings of its world but for us to stop our songs - never, never!" - and it shall be said, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." He shall have all the glory, and he shall have it for ever; his name shall endure for ever; his name shall continue as long as the sun; men shall be blessed in him, and all generations shall call him blessed; therefore shall they praise him for ever and ever.

IV. Now, in conclusion, let us just make A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF OUR TEXT.

Brothers and sisters, are we to-day built upon Christ? Can we say, that we hope that we are a part of his temple; that his handiwork has been exhibited upon us, and that we are built together with Christ? If so, listen to one word of exhortation. Let us evermore honor him. Oh! methinks, every beam of cedar, and every slab of gold, and every stone of the temple, felt honored when it was raised up to be a part of the fabric for Jehovah's praise. And if that cedar, that marble, could have been vocal in that day when the flame descended from heaven, the token of Jehovah's presence, the store, and the cedar, and the gold, and the silver, and the brass, all would have burst out into song, and would have said, "We praise thee, O God, for thou hast made the gold more than gold, and the cedar more than cedar, inasmuch as thou hast consecrated us to be the temple of shine indwelling." And now, will you not do the same? O my brothers and sisters! God has highly honored you to be stones in the temple of Christ. When you think of what you were, and what you might have been; how you might have been stones in the black dungeons of vengeance for ever, dark dank stones, where the mobs, and the greed, and the slimy thing for ever might have lived; disgraced, abandoned, cast away in blackness of darkness for ever - when you think of this, and then

remember that you are stones in Jehovah's temple, - living stones, - oh, ye must say that ye will praise him, for man is more than man, now that God dwelleth in him. Daughters of Jerusalem, rejoice! you are more than women now. Sons of Israel, rejoice! for your manhood is exalted, he hath made you temples of the Holy Ghost - God dwelling in you and you in, him. Go out from this place and sing his praise; go forth to honor him, and while the dumb world wants you to be its mouth, go and speak for the mountain, for the hill, for the lake, for the river, for the oak, and for the insect; speak for all things; for you are to be like the temple, the seat of the worship of all worlds; you are to be like the priests and offerers of the sacrifices of all creatures.

Let me address myself last of all to others of you. Alas! my hearers, I have many here who have no portion in Israel, neither any lot in Jacob. How many of you there are, who are not stones in the spiritual temple, never to be used in the building up of God's Jerusalem. Let me ask you one thing; it may seem a slight thing to-day to be left out of the muster-roll of Christ's church, - will it seem a slight thing to be left out, when Christ shall call for his people? When you are all assembled around his great white throne at last, and the books shall be opened, oh! how dread the suspense, while name after name is read! how dreadful your suspense, when it comes to the last name, and yours has been left out! That verse of our hymn has often impressed me very solemnly:

"I love to meet among them now,
Before thy gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all;
But can I bear the piercing thought -
What if my name should be left out,
When thou for them shalt call?"

Sinner conceive it! The list is read, and thy name unmentioned. Laugh at religion now! scoff at Christ now! now that the angels are gathering for the judgment; now that the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long; now that the heavens are red with fire, that the great furnace of hell o'erleaps its boundary, and is about to encircle thee in its flame; now despise religion! Ah! no. I see thee. Now thy stiff knees are bending, now

thy bold forehead for the first time is covered with the hot sweat of trembling, now thine eyes that once were full of scorn are full of tears, thou dost look on him whom thou didst despise, and thou art weeping for thy sin. O sinner, it will be too late then. there is no cutting of the stone after it gets to Jerusalem. Where thou fallest there thou liest. Where judgment ends thee, there eternity shall leave thee. Time shall be no more when judgment comes, and when time is no more, change is impossible! In eternity there can be no change, no deliverance, no signing of acquittal. Once lost, lost for ever; once damned, damned to all eternity. Wilt thou choose this and despise Christ? or wilt thou have Christ and have heaven? I charge you by him that shall judge the quick and the dead, whose I am, and whom I serve, who is the searcher of all hearts, choose ye this day whom ye will serve. If sin be best serve sin, and reap its wages. If you can make your bed in hell, if you can endure eternal burnings, be honest with yourself, and look at the wages while you do the work. But if you would have heaven, if you would be amongst the many who shall be glorified with Christ, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; believe now, today "If ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Men, brethren, and fathers, believe and live; cast yourself at Jesus' feet, put your trust in him,

"Renounce thy works and ways with grief,
And fly to this most sure relief;"

giving up all you are to come to him, to be saved by him now, and saved eternally. O Lord, bless my weak but earnest appeal, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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The Three Clergymen of the Church of England

Article from C. H. Spurgeon's (1834-1892), *The Sword and the Trowel*,
Published Monthly

This is no fancy sketch, but is the faithful representation of three clergymen of the church of England while performing some of their favorite devotional exercises. They are presented to the reader that he may be duly impressed with the fact that **THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IS THE GREAT BULWARK OF PROTESTANTISM!** Behold before you three of the goodly buttresses of that bulwark! Disestablish and disendow the church of England, and we are told that Popery will find nothing left to stay its onward rush. It is well for us to know our benefactors; look then, gentle reader, and look again at three of the many clerical breakwaters which prevent our being deluged by the abominations of Rome! Those birettas, and copes, and girdles, are the bonds and rivets of religious liberty, the emblems of Protestant simplicity, the safeguards of the State! Unless England keeps these gentlemen and their church in its pay and patronage, it will cease to be a Christian country, and will become the unhappy victim of the Pope! The watchword is given, "No Popery!" Defend the church, whose precious priests so elegantly adorn their persons, and perfume themselves with incense, and then Protestantism will be safe! Disestablish their church, or even a branch of it, and the deluge has arrived!

In truth, this fooling about Protestantism is too transparent to deceive any but the most idiotic. The church of England has done and is doing very much to lead back this nation to that reverence of priests and sacraments from which our martyred forefathers delivered us. The evangelical clergy dare not deny this; and the Tractarians glory in it. The distinction between the Popery of Rome and the Popery of Oxford is only the difference between prussic acid and arsenic: they are both equally deadly, and are equally to be abhorred. It is undeniable that some of the most eminent divines in the Anglican church are straining their utmost to effect the union of their community with Rome, and their admiration for everything Popish is undisguised. As a rule they are bold, outspoken men, and are acting upon earnest convictions when they oppose Protestantism. Yet we are to recognize this English Popery as the great bulwark of Protestantism! We will believe it when we believe wolves to be the guardians of sheepfolds, felons to be the defenders of property, and fallen

angels to be the bodyguard of heaven—and not till then. Many of the clergy avowedly reject the very name of Protestant, and yet we are to accept them as its defenders! Protestantism has been wounded and betrayed by the church of England, and has found within its walls its most skilled and energetic foes. Bulwark of Protestantism indeed! Twin sister of Rome is nearer the mark. Look on the three graces in the woodcut, and see whether the sons of the Anglican mother do not bear a strong family likeness to those of the renowned scarlet lady of the seven hills! Indeed, so far from being scandalized at this remark, the gentlemen would own the soft impeachment with a smile, and think it a deserved commendation, for whatever other parties in the church may be, the men of this school are not cowards, and do not conceal their Romanising tendencies. Yet a church abounding with undisguised Romanisers is the bulwark of Protestantism! Who believes it?

The fact is, that a strong and purely evangelical Episcopalian church never will be seen in this country again till the church is set free from the state. Then those hundreds of godly men who now remain in communion with Romanisers will form themselves into a truly Protestant church, and will in brotherly union with the other free churches form the true bulwark of Protestantism, against which, by God's grace, the gates of hell shall not prevail. It is a great misfortune that those who know and preach the gospel, do not come out voluntarily from the Anglican Papacy, but if they will not, every true Protestant should labor to separate the church and state so as to drive them out, that they may no longer be a shield to Romanisers, and partakers of their sins. The union of church and state is the nest for the Romish crows, down with it at once and for ever. Not one of its truths or its gospel ministers would be hurt thereby, but the truths would be separated from error, and the ministers of the word loosed from the bondage of their present connection with sacramentarianism. If Evangelical churchmen were wise they would see that the separation of the church from the state would be the birth of a pure church, the resurrection of spiritual life, the purging out of the old leaven, and by God's grace the best event that could possibly happen for Protestantism.

Reader, believe us, faith in Jesus brings salvation, not faith in priests; the church of Christ is not a state-made corporation, but a body of believers

in Jesus. Take sides with Christ and his truth, and do not be duped by the clap-trap cries of the moribund state church, which will say anything to postpone its inevitable doom.

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The Church of England the Bulwark of Our Liberties (?)

Article from C. H. Spurgeon's (1834-1892), *The Sword and the Trowel*,
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We have been very courteously admonished in the "Standard" Newspaper for taking any part in the agitation for disestablishing and disendowing the Irish church, and for expressing the hope that the like justice might, ere long, be measured out to the Establishment in England. We are thankful for the advice, but can assure our friend that it does not strike us as valuable. Our friend evidently thinks that if we and other Dissenters were better advised we should rally round the present Establishment, since its existence has been and is the great security for religious liberty; and if it were removed the Romanists would soon be in the ascendant, and persecution would follow. To this our reply is ready—we do not believe that the church of England is any more the protector of our liberties than are the Beef-eaters at the Tower, or the cream-colored horses in the royal stable. There is no sort of connection between the two by way of promotion, but very much in the way of hindrance. Historically, it will hardly be contended that Episcopacy, which hanged and imprisoned our forefathers in Elizabeth's day, was then the bulwark of Dissenting liberty; nor can it be pretended that, under James I. and Charles I., it guarded sacredly the freedom of consciences. Clipped ears, slit noses, and branded cheeks were not very convincing proofs that an established church was tender and tolerant, and careful to give freedom to Dissenters. Nonconformists would hardly have dealt out such severe measures to Episcopacy in the time of Cromwell, if they had found it to be their shield and bulwark. Did the Act of Uniformity tenderly respect the liberty of Dissenters, or the Five Mile Act, and other such edicts? Were Claverhouse, and other butchers, the advocates and promoters of liberty? Does Scotland owe her liberty to Episcopacy or to the Covenanters? Was the act of Catholic emancipation the work of bishops and deans? The fact

is that the existence of a sect, fondled by the state and supported by its wealth, in proportion as it dignifies the favored church, is an insult to the honor of all other, and a shackle to their freedom. It is an idle tale that the Episcopal sect guards our liberties as a body; in its midst are many noble and liberal men, who are always on the people's side, but the bulk of its adherents incline in an opposite direction, and, as a church, it is almost always obstructive and disinclined to reform. Dissenters do not owe it, in political matters, the turn of a brass farthing, and have long enough been duped by the pretension that it is their friend and guardian.

At the present moment we also fail to discover how the Establishment is the fortress under whose guns we dwell in safety. Our notion is, that, under God, our liberties are in the hands of the people of the United Kingdom, and that they know too well the value of them to let them slip. The sons of the Ironsides are not yet departed from among us, and we who could not use the carnal weapon have yet our free press, our unfettered pulpit, and our open Bibles, and feel safe enough while these are our munitions of war. While the freely chosen representatives of the people are our rulers, and a limited monarchy our form of government, we do not see how it can be said that our freedom rests with an Establishment which has no power to legislate for itself, much less for the nation. As well might the mistletoe pretend that its parasitical verdure is the true security of the oak, or the fox that its existence is the guarantee of the fertility of the land. We are at a loss to conceive where our friends see the connection. Is it in the fact that the bishops sit in the House of Lords, and always vote for every measure of a broad and liberal character? Or is it that the payment of tithes makes every man a lover of the constitution which enforces them? There may possibly be some recondite connection between a state-church and liberty, but we cannot see it. We are asked to go to Spain and Rome, but we prefer traveling to America, and there, without a state-church, we find a freedom certainly not less unlimited than our own. What can be done across the ocean can be done here. Americans can maintain their freedom without a state-church, and Englishmen are not less liberty-loving and not less able to take care of themselves. If, indeed, the state-church be such a bulwark of the constitution, why deprive the colonies of the blessing? Why act upon a wrong policy abroad, and save up all the good things for home? The case does not bear half a moment's investigation.

But the Catholics will be in the ascendant as soon as the church is disestablished. WHY? In the name of reason, why? Will they become the majority of the nation and of the House of Commons? Are we to believe that the Episcopal body is only pretendedly Protestant, and will go over to the Catholics as soon as their state pay is stopped? Then the nation will be the better for being rid of such mercenary defenders of her Protestantism. But, on the other hand, if the Protestant section of the church remains firm, what difference will be made? How will the numerical power of Protestantism be affected? Does the spiritual efficiency of the church in keeping back Popery depend upon tithes? Would not the Evangelical clergy pray and preach if they were disestablished? We are puzzled to know what is the foundation upon which the assertion rests as to this supposed hindrance of Catholic dominancy. We have no doubt Popery would like to mount the throne, and we could not trust its priests for an instant with power, but all the influence which now really operates to restrain their pretensions would remain still, and would gain immeasurably by the change. The church of England has in it a horde of Papists, and is doing Rome's work daily, and yet it is set up before us as the bulwark against Rome: disestablish the church, and it would purify itself at once. The true church will prevail against the gates of hell without the state's patronage. The issue is with God, and he needs no injustice to be perpetrated that his cause may be maintained. If the worst came to the worst, and the people of God were called to suffer, by God's grace they could do it triumphantly, and would rather do so than be found guilty of forgetting that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. Take away a state-church, and we are ready to bear the blame of all the consequences necessarily arising out of it; but we are not ready to aid and abet so glaring an act of oppression as compelling the many among the people of Ireland to support a religion in which scarcely one in ten of them believes.

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All Joy In All Trials

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. - James 1:2-4

James calls the converted among the twelve tribes his brethren. Christianity has a great uniting power: it both discovers and creates relationships among the sons of men. It reminds us of the ties of nature, and binds us with the bonds of grace. Every one that is born of the Spirit of God is brother to every other that is born of the same Spirit. Well may we be called brethren, for we are redeemed by one blood; we are partakers of the same life; we feed upon the same heavenly food; we are united to the same living head; we seek the same ends; we love the same Father: we are heirs of the same promises; and we shall dwell for ever together in the same heaven. Wherefore, let brotherly love continue; let us love one another with a pure heart fervently, and manifest that love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth. Whatever brotherhood may be a sham, let the brotherhood of believers be the most real thing beneath the stars.

Beginning with this word "brethren," James shows a true brotherly sympathy with believers in their trials, and this is a main part of Christian fellowship. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." If we are not tempted ourselves at this moment, others are: let us remember them in our prayers; for in due time our turn will come, and we shall be put into the crucible. As we would desire to receive sympathy and help in our hour of need, let us render it freely to those who are now enduring trial. Let us remember those that are in bonds, as bound with them, and those that suffer affliction as being ourselves in the body. Remembering the trials of his brethren, James tries to cheer them, and therefore he says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials." It is a part of our high calling to rise ourselves into confidence; and it is also our duty to see that none of our brethren despond, much less despair. The whole tendency of our holy faith is to elevate and to encourage. Grace breeds no sorrow, except the healthy sorrow which comes with saving repentance and leads to the joy of pardon: it comes not

to make men miserable, but to wipe all tears from their eyes. Our dream is not of devils descending a dreary staircase to hell, but of angels ascending and descending upon a ladder, the top of which leads to the shining throne of God. The message of the gospel is one of joy and gladness, and were it universally understood and received this world would be no longer a wilderness, but it would rejoice and blossom as the rose. Let grace reign in all hearts, and this earth will become a temple filled with perpetual song; and even the trials of life will become causes of the highest joy, so beautifully described by James as "all joy," as if every possible delight were crowded into it. Blessed be God, it is our work, not to upbraid, but to cheer all the brotherhood: we walk in a light which glorifies everything upon which it falls, and turns losses into gains. We are able in sober earnest to speak with the afflicted, and bid them be patient under the chastening hand of God; yea, to count it all joy when they fall into divers trials because those trials will work out for them such signal, such lasting good. They may be well content to sow in tears since they are sure to reap in joy.

Without further preface we will come at once to the text; and observe that in speaking about affliction, for that is the subject of the text, the apostle notes, first, the essential point which is assailed by temptation, namely, your faith. Your faith is the target that all the arrows are shot at; the furnace is kindled for the trial of your faith. Notice, secondly, the invaluable blessing which is thus gained, namely, the proving of your faith, discovering whether it be the right faith or no. This proof of our faith is a blessing of which I cannot speak too highly. Then, thirdly, we may not overlook the priceless virtue which is produced by this process of testing, namely, patience; for the proving of your faith produces patience, and this is the soul's surest enrichment. Lastly, in connection with that patience we shall note the spiritual completeness which is thus promoted: - "That ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." Perhaps you have noticed that little variations I have made in the text; but I am now following the Revised Version, which gives an admirable rendering. I will read it. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing."

I. First, let us think a little upon THE ESSENTIAL POINT WHICH IS ASSAILED by temptation or trial. It is your faith which is tried. It is supposed that you have that faith. You are not the people of God, you are not truly brethren unless you are believers. It is this faith of yours which is peculiarly obnoxious to Satan and to the world which lieth in the wicked one. If you had not faith they would not be enemies of yours; but faith is the mark of the chosen of God, and therefore his foes become the foes of all the faithful, spitting their venom specially upon their faith. God Himself hath put enmity between the serpent and the woman, between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed; and that enmity must show itself. The serpent bites at the heel of the true seed: hence mockings, persecutions, temptations, and trials are sure to beset the pathway to faith. The hand of faith is against all evil, and all evil is against faith. Faith is that blessed grace which is most pleasing to God, and hence it is the most displeasing to the devil. By faith God is greatly glorified, and hence by faith Satan is greatly annoyed. He rages at faith because he sees therein his own defeat and the victory of grace.

Because the trial of your faith brings honour to the Lord, therefore the Lord Himself is sure to try it that out of its trial praise may come to his grace by which faith is sustained. Our chief end is to glorify God, and if our trials enable us more fully to answer the end of our being it is well that they should happen unto us. So early in our discourse we see reason to count it all joy when we fall into manifold trials.

It is by our faith that we are saved, justified, and brought near to God, and therefore it is no marvel that it is attacked. It is by believing in Christ that we are delivered from the reigning power of sin, and receive power to become the sons of God. Faith is as vital to salvation as the heart is vital to the body: hence the javelins of the enemy are mainly aimed at this essential grace. Faith is the standard bearer, and the object of the enemy is to strike him down that the battle may be gained. If the foundations be removed what can the righteous do? If the cable can be snapped whither will the vessel drift? All the powers of darkness which are opposed to right and truth are sure to fight against our faith, and manifold temptations will march in their legions against our confidence in God.

It is by our faith that we live; we began to live by it, and continue to live by it, for "the just shall live by faith." Once let faith go and our life is gone; and hence it is that the powers which war against us make their main assault upon this royal castle, this key of the whole position. Faith is your jewel, your joy, your glory; and the thieves who haunt the pilgrim way are all in league to tear it from you. Hold fast, therefore, this your choice treasure.

It is by faith, too, that Christians perform exploits. If men of old wrought daring and heroic deeds it was by faith. Faith is the fighting principle and the conquering principle: therefore it is Satan's policy to slay it even as Pharaoh sought to kill the male children when Israel dwelt in Egypt. Rob a Christian of his faith and he will be like Samson when his locks were cut away: the Philistines will be upon him and the Lord will have departed from him. Marvel not if the full force of the current shall beat upon your faith, for it is the foundation of your spiritual house. Oh that your faith may abide steadfast and unmovable in all present trials, that so it may be found true in the hour of death and in the day of judgment. Woe unto that man whose faith fails him in this land of peace, for what will he do in the swelling of Jordan?

Now, think of how faith is tried. According to the text we are said to fall into "manifold temptations" or into "divers temptations" - that is to say, we may expect very many and very different troubles. In any case these trials will be most real. The twelve tribes to whom this epistle was written were a specially tried people, for in the first place they were, as Jews, greatly persecuted by all other nations, and when they became Christians they were cruelly persecuted by their own people. A Gentile convert was somewhat less in peril than a Jewish Christian, for the latter was crushed between the upper and nether millstones of Paganism and Judaism. The Israelitish Christian was usually so persecuted by his own kith and kin that he had to flee from them, and whither could he go, for all other people abhorred the Jews? We are not in such a plight, but God's people even to this day will find that trial is no sham word. The rod in God's house is no toy to play with. The furnace, believe me, is no mere place of extra warmth to which you may soon accustom yourself: it is often heated

seven times hotter, like the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar and God's children are made to know that the fire burns and devours. Our temptations are no inventions of nervousness nor hobgoblins of dreamy fear. Ye have heard of the patience of Job - his was real patience, for his afflictions were real. Could each tried believer among us tell his own story I do not doubt we would convince all who heard us that the troubles and temptations which we have endured are no fictions of romance, but must be ranked among the stern realities of actual life.

Ay, and note too, that the trials of Christians are such as would in themselves lead us into sin, for I take it that our translators would not have placed the word "temptation" in the text, and the Revisionists would not have retained it, if they had not felt that there was a colouring of temptation in its meaning, and that "trial" was hardly the word. The natural tendency of trouble is not to sanctify, but to induce sin. A man is very apt to become unbelieving under affliction: that is a sin. He is apt to murmur against God under it: that is a sin. He is apt to put forth his hand to some ill way of escaping from his difficulty: and that would be sin. Hence we are taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation; because trial has in itself a measure of temptation"; and if it were not neutralized by abundant grace it would bear us towards sin. I suppose that every test must have in it a measure of temptation. The Lord cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man; but this is to be understood of his end and design. He entices no man to do evil; but yet He tries the sincerity and faithfulness of men by placing them where sin comes in their way, and does its best or its worst to ensnare them: His design being that the uprightness of His servants may thus be proved, both to themselves and others. We are not taken out of this world of temptation, but we are kept in it for our good. Because our nature is depraved it makes occasions for sin, both out of our joys and our trials, but by grace we overcome the tendency of nature, and so derive benefit from tribulation. Do I not speak to many here who at times feel strong impulses towards evil, especially in the darksome hour when the spirit of evil walks abroad? Have you not been made to tremble for yourselves in season of fierce trial, for your feet were almost gone, your steps had well-nigh slipped. Is there any virtue that has not been weather-beaten? Is there any love that has not at times been so tried that it threatened to curdle into hate? Is there any good

thing this side heaven which has marched all the way in silver slippers? Did ever a flower of grace blossom in this wretched clime without being tried with frost or blight? Our way is up the river; we have to stem the current, and struggle against a flood which would readily bear us to destruction. Thus, not only trials, but black temptations assail the Christian's faith.

As to what shape they take, we may say this much: the trial or temptation of each man is distinct from that of every other. When God did tempt Abraham he was bidden to take his son, his only son, and offer him upon a mountain for a sacrifice. Nobody here was ever tried in that way: nobody ever will be. We may have the trial of losing our child, but certainly not the trial of having a command to offer him in sacrifice. That was a trial peculiar to Abraham: necessary and useful to him, though never proposed to us. In the case of the young man in the gospels, our Lord Jesus tried him with, "If thou wouldest be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Some have dreamed that it must therefore be the duty of everybody to part with their possessions: but this is idle. It would not be the duty of any man to offer up his only son; and it is not the duty of every man to part with all his goods. These were tests to particular persons; and others equally special and searching have been applied in other cases. We are not to try ourselves, nor to desire other men's trials; it will be well if we endure those which the Lord appoints for us, for they will be wisely chosen. That which would most severely test me would perhaps be no trial to you; and that which tries you might be no temptation to me. This is one reason why we often judge one another so severely, because feeling ourselves to be strong in that particular point we argue that the fallen one must have been strong in that point too, and therefore must have willfully and earnestly have determined to do wrong. This may be a cruel supposition. We hastily conclude that the temptation must have been as feeble in his case as it would have been in our own; which is a great mistake, for a temptation which to you or to me would be no temptation at all, may be to another individual, of a peculiar constitution and under singular circumstances, a most fierce and terrible blast from the adversary, before which he falls mournfully, but not with malice aforethought. Divers trials, says the apostle, and he knew what he said.

And, dear friends, sometimes these divers trials derive great force from their seemingly surrounding us, and cutting off escape: James says, - "Ye fall into divers temptations": like men who fall into a pit, and do not know how to get out; or like soldiers who fall into an ambuscade; or travellers in the good old times when two or three footpaths surrounded them and made them feel that they had fallen into bad hands. The tempted see not which way to turn; they appear to be hemmed in; they are as a bird that is taken in the fowler's snare. This it is that makes calamity of our manifold temptations, that they hedge up our way, and unless faith finds the clue we wander in a thorny maze.

At times temptation comes suddenly upon us, and so we fall into it. When we were at rest, and were quiet, suddenly the evil came, like a lion leaping from the thicket. When Job's children were eating and drinking in their elder brother's house, then suddenly a wind came from the wilderness, and the patriarch was bereaved: the cattle were ploughing, the sheep were grazing, the camels were at their service, and in a moment, by fire from heaven, and by robber bands, the whole of these possessions vanished. One messenger had not told his story before another followed at his heels; Job had no breathing time, the blows fell thick and fast. The trial of our faith is most severe when divers trials happen to us when we look not for them. It is not strange in the light of these things that James should say, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials"?

Those were the days of tumults, imprisonment, crucifixion, sword, and fire. Then the amphitheatre devoured Christians by thousands. The general cry was "The Christians to the lions!" Do you wonder if sometimes the bravest were made to say, Is our faith really true? This faith which is abhorred of all mankind, can it be divine? Has it come from God? Why, then, does He not interpose and deliver His people? Shall we apostatise? Shall we deny Christ and live, or shall we go on with our confession through innumerable torments even to a bloody death? Will fidelity answer after all? Is there a crown of glory? is there an eternity of bliss? Is there in very deed a resurrection of the dead? These questions came into men's minds then, and were fairly faced: the faith of martyrs was not taken up at second hand, or borrowed from their parents; they

believed for themselves in downright earnest. Men and women in those days believed in such a way that they never flinched nor started aside from fear of death; indeed, they pressed forward to confess their faith in Jesus in such crowds that at last the heathen cried, "There must be something in it: it must be a religion of God, or how could these men so gladly bear their troubles?" This was the faith of God's elect, the work of the Holy Ghost.

You see, then, the main point of attack is our faith, and happy is the man whose shield can catch and quench all the fiery darts of the enemy.

II. That we may make the text more clear we shall next notice THE INVALUABLE BLESSING WHICH IS GAINED BY THE TRIAL OF OUR FAITH. The blessing gained is this, that our faith is tried and proved. Two Sabbaths ago I addressed you upon the man whose bad foundations led to the overthrow of his house; and I know that many said after the sermon: - "God grant that we may not be like him: may we have a firm foundation for our soul to rest on." Then you went home, and you sat down and said, "Have I this sure foundation?" You began to question, argue, reason, and so on, and your design was a good one. But I do not reckon that much came of it; our own looking within seldom yields solid comfort. Actual trial is far more satisfactory; but you must not try yourself. The effectual proof is by trials of God's sending. The way of trying whether you are a good soldier is to go down to the battle: the way to try whether a ship is well built is, not merely to order the surveyor to examine her, but to send her to sea: a storm will be the best test of her staunchness. They have built a new lighthouse upon the Eddystone: how do we know that it will stand? We judge by certain laws and principles, and feel tolerably safe about the structure; but, after all, we shall know best if after-years when a thousand tempests have beaten upon the lighthouse in vain. We need trials as a test as much as we need divine truth as our food. Admire the ancient types placed in the ark of the covenant of old: two things were laid close together, - the pot of manna and the rod. See how heavenly food and heavenly rule go together: how our sustenance and our chastening are equally provided for! A Christian cannot live without the manna nor without the rod. The two must go together. I mean this, that it is as great a mercy to have your salvation

proved to you under trial as it is to have it sustained in you by the consolations of the Spirit of God. Sanctified tribulations work the proof of our faith, and this is more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried by fire.

Now, when we are able to bear it without starting aside, the trial proves our sincerity. Coming out of a trouble the Christian says to himself, "Yes, I held fast mine integrity, and did not let it go. Blessed be God, I was not afraid of threatening; I was not crushed by losses; I was kept true to God under pressure. Now, I am sure that my religion is not a mere profession, but a real consecration to God. It has endured the fire, being kept by the power of God."

Next, it proves the truthfulness of our doctrinal belief. Oh, yes, you may say, "I have heard Mr. Spurgeon expound the doctrines, and I have believed them." This is poor work; but if you have been sick, and found a comfort in those doctrines, then you are assured of their truth. If you have been on the borders of the grave, and the gospel has given you joy and gladness, then you know how true it is. Experimental knowledge is the best and surest. If you have seen others pass through death itself triumphantly you have said, "This is proof to me: my faith is no guess-work: I have seen for myself." Is not this assurance cheaply purchased at any price? May we not count it all joy when the Lord puts us in the way of getting it? It seems to me that doubt is worse than trial. I had sooner suffer any affliction than be left to question the gospel or my own interest in it. Certainly it is a jewel worth purchasing even with our heart's blood.

Next, your own faith in God is proved when you can cling to Him under temptation. Not only your sincerity, but the divinity of your faith is proved; for a faith that is never tried, how can you depend upon it? But if in the darkest hour you have still said, "I cast my burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain me," and you find He does sustain you, then is your faith that of God's elect. If in temptation you cry to God in prayer that you may keep your garment unspotted, and He helps you to do so, then also are you sure that yours is the faith which the Spirit begets in the soul. After a great fight of affliction, when I come forth a conqueror, I know that I do believe in God, and I know that this faith makes me a partaker of

covenant blessings; from this I may fairly argue that my faith is of the right kind.

I find it especially sweet to learn the great strength of the Lord in my own weakness. We find out under trial where we are most weak, and just then in answer to prayer strength is given answerable to the need. The Lord suits the help to the hindrance, and puts the plaster on the wound. In the very hour when it is needed the needed grace is given. Does this not tend to breed assurance of faith?

It is a splendid thing to be able to prove even to Satan the purity of your motives. That was the great gain of Job. There was no question about his outward conduct, but the question was about his motive. "Ah," says the devil, "he serves God for what he gets out of Him. Hast Thou not set a hedge about him and all that he has? His is cupboard love: he cares nothing for God Himself, he only cares for the reward of his virtue." Well, he is tried, and everything is taken away, and when he cries, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," when he blesses the taking as well as the giving God, then the devil himself could not have the prudence to accuse him again. As to Job's own conscience, it would be quite settled and confirmed as to his pure love to God. My brethren, I reckon that the endurance of every imaginable suffering and trial would be a small price to pay for a settled assurance, which would for ever prevent the possibility of doubt. Never mind the waves if they wash you upon this rock. Therefore, when you are tempted, "Count it all joy" that you are tried, because you will thus receive a proof of your love, a proof of your faith, a proof of your being the true-born children of God.

James says, "Count it." A man requires to be trained to be a good accountant; it is an art which needs to be learned. What muddles some of us would make if we had to settle accounts and manage disbursements and incomings without the aid of a clerk! How we should get entangled with balances and deficits! We could much easier spend money than count it. But when a man once knows the science of book-keeping, and gets into the way of it, he readily arrives at the true position of affairs. He has learned to count, and no error escapes his eye. James gives us a ready reckoner, and teaches us in our troubles how to count. He sets before us a

different kind of measure from that which carnal reason would use: the shekel of the sanctuary was very different from the shekel in common commerce, and so is the counting of faith far other than that of human judgment. He bids us take our pen and sit down quickly and write at his correct dictation. You are going to write down, "Manifold temptations;" that would be so much on the wrong side: but instead thereof he bids you set down the proving of your faith, and this one asset transforms the transaction into a substantial gain. Trials are like a fire; they burn up nothing in us but the dross, and they make the gold all the purer. Put down the testing process as a clear gain, and, instead of being sorry about it, count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials, for this bestows upon you a proof of your faith. So far there is sufficient ground for counting all trials joy. Now, let us go a little further.

III. Let us think of THE PRICELESS VIRTUE WHICH IS PRODUCED BY TRIAL, namely, patience; for the proof of your "faith worketh patience." Patience! We all have a large stock of it - until we need it, and then we have none. The man who truly possesses patience is the man that has been tried. What kind of patience does he get by the grace of God? First, he obtains a patience that accepts the trials as from God without a murmur. Calm resignation does not come all at once; often long years of physical pain, or mental depression, or disappointment in business, or multiplied bereavements, are needed to bring the soul into full submission to the will of the Lord. After much crying the child is weaned; after much chastening the son is made obedient to his Father's will. By degrees we learn to end our quarrel with God, and to desire that there may not be two wills between God and ourselves, but that God's will may be our will. Oh, brother, if your troubles work you to that, you are a gainer, I am sure, and you may count them all joy.

The next kind of patience is when experience enables a man to bear ill-treatment, slander, and injury without resentment. He feels it keenly, but he bears it meekly. Like his Master, he opens not his mouth to reply, and refuses to return railing for railing. Contrariwise he gives blessing in return for cursing; like the sandal-wood tree which perfumes the axe which cuts it. Blessed is that holy charity which hopeth all things, endureth all things, and is not easily provoked. Ah, friend, if the grace of

God by trial shall work in you the quiet patience which never grows angry, and never ceases to love, you may have lost a trifle of comfort, but you have gained a solid weight of character.

The patience which God works in us by tribulation also takes another form, namely, that of acting without undue haste. Before wisdom has balanced our zeal we are eager to serve God all in a hurry, with a rush and a spurt, as if everything must be done within the hour or nothing would ever be accomplished. We set about holy service with somewhat more of preparedness of heart after we have been drilled in the school of trial. We go steadily and resolutely about work for Jesus, knowing what poor creatures we are, and what a glorious Master we serve. The Lord our God is in no hurry because He is strong and wise. In proportion as we grow like the Lord Jesus we shall cast aside disturbance of mind and fury of spirit. His was a grand life-work, but He never seemed to be confused, excited, worried, or hurried, as certain of His people are. He did not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. He knew His hour was not yet come, and there were so many days in which He could work, and therefore He went steadily on till He had finished the work which His Father had given Him to do. That kind of patience is a jewel more to be desired than the gem which glitters on the imperial brow. Sometimes we blunder into a deal of mischief, making more haste than speed; and we are sure to do so when we forget to pray, and fail to commit our matters into the Divine hands. We may run with such vehemence that we may stumble, or lose our breath: there may be in our random efforts as much undoing as doing, for want of possessing our souls in patience.

That is a grand kind of patience, too, when we can wait without unbelief. Two little words are good for every Christian to learn and to practise - pray and stay. Waiting on the Lord implies both praying and staying. What if the world is not converted this year! What if the Lord Jesus does not come to-morrow! What if still our tribulations are lengthened out! What if the conflict is continued! He that has been tried and by grace has obtained the true profit of his trials, both quietly waits and joyfully hopes for the salvation of God. Patience, brother! Is this high virtue scarce with thee? The Holy Spirit shall bestow it upon thee through suffering.

This patience also takes the shape of believing without wavering, in the very teeth of strange providences and singular statements, and perhaps inward misgivings. The established Christian says, "I believe my God, and therefore if the vision tarry I will wait for it. My time is not yet come. I am to have my worst things first and my best things afterwards, and so I sit me down at Jesus' feet and tarry his leisure."

Brothers and sisters, if, in a word, we learn endurance we have taken a high degree. You look at the weather-beaten sailor, the man who is at home on the sea: he has a bronzed face and mahogany-coloured flesh, he looks as tough as heart of oak, and as hardy as if he were made of iron. How different from us poor landsmen. How did the man become so inured to hardship, so able to breast the storm, so that he does not care whether the wind blows south-west or north-west? He can go out to sea in any kind of weather; he has his sea legs on: how did he come to this strength? By doing business in great waters. He could not have become a hardy seaman by tarrying on shore. Now, trial works in the saints that spiritual hardihood which cannot be learned in ease. You may go to school for ever, but you cannot learn endurance there: you may colour your cheek with paint, but you cannot give it that ingrained brown which comes of stormy seas and howling winds. Strong faith and brave patience come of trouble, and a few men in the church who have thus been prepared are worth anything in times of tempest. To reach that condition of firm endurance and sacred hardihood is worth all the expense of all the heaped-up troubles that ever come upon us from above or from beneath. When trial worketh patience we are incalculably enriched. The Lord give us more of this choice grace. As Peter's fish had the money in its mouth, so have sanctified trials spiritual riches for those who endure them graciously.

IV. Lastly, all this works something better still, and this is our fourth head: THE SPIRITUAL COMPLETENESS PROMOTED. "That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Brethren, the most valuable thing a man can get in this world is that which has most to do with his truest self. A man gets a good house; well, that is something: but suppose he is in bad health, what is the good of his fine mansion? A man is well clothed and well fed: that is something: but suppose he shivers with ague, and

has no appetite through indigestion. That spoils it all. If a man is in robust health this is a far more valuable boon. Health is far more to be prized than wealth, or honour, or learning: we all allow that, but then suppose that a man's innermost self is diseased while his body is healthy, so that he is disgraced by vice or fevered with passion, he is in a poor plight, notwithstanding that he has such a robust frame? The very best thing is that which will make the man himself a better man; make him right, and true, and pure, and holy. When the man himself is better, he has made an unquestionable gain. So, if our afflictions tend, by trying our faith, to breed patience, and that patience tends to make us into perfect men in Christ Jesus, then we may be glad of trials. Afflictions by God's grace make us all-around men, developing every spiritual faculty, and therefore they are our friends, our helpers, and should be welcomed with "all joy."

Afflictions find out our weak points, and this makes us attend to them. Being tried, we discover our failures, and then going to God about those failures we are helped to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Moreover, our trials, when blessed of God to make us patient, ripen us. I do not know how to explain what I mean by ripening, but there is a sort of mellowness about believers who have endured a great deal of affliction that you never meet in other people. It cannot be mistaken or imitated. A certain measure of sunlight is wanted to bring out the real flavour of fruits, and when a fruit has felt its measure of burning sun it develops a lusciousness which we all delight in. So is it in men and women: a certain amount of trouble appears to be needful to create a certain sugar of graciousness in them, so that they may contain the rich, ripe juice of a gracious character. You must have known such men and such women, and have said to yourselves, "I wish I could be like them, so calm, so quiet, so self-contained, so happy, and when not happy, yet so content not to be happy; so mature in judgment, so spiritual in conversation, so truly ripe." This only comes to those in whom the proof of their faith works experience, and then experience brings forth the fruits of the Spirit. Dear brothers and sisters, there is a certain all-roundness of spiritual manhood which never comes to us except by manifold temptations. Let me attempt to show you what I mean. Sanctified trials

produce a chastened spirit. Some of us by nature are rough and untender; but after awhile friends notice that the roughness is departing, and they are quite glad to be more gently handled. Ah, that sick chamber did the polishing; under God's grace, that depression of spirit, that loss, that cross, that bereavement, - these softened the natural ruggedness, and made the man meek and lowly, like his Lord. Sanctified trouble has a great tendency to breed sympathy, and sympathy is to the church as oil to machinery. A man that has never suffered feels very awkward when he tries to sympathize with a tried child of God. He kindly does his best, but he does not know how to go to work at it; but those repeated blows from the rod make us feel for others who are smarting, and by degrees we are recognized as being the Lord's anointed comforters, made meet by temptation to succour those who are tempted.

Have you never noticed how tried men, too, when their trouble is thoroughly sanctified, become cautious and humble? They cannot speak quite so fast as they used to do: they do not talk of being absolutely perfect, though they are the very men who are Scripturally perfect; they say little about their doings, and much about the tender mercy of the Lord. They recollect the whipping they had behind the door from their Father's hands, and they speak gently to other erring ones. Affliction is the stone which our Lord Jesus throws at the brow of our giant pride, and patience is the sword which cuts off its head.

Those, too, are the kind of people who are most grateful. I have known what it is to praise God for the power to move one leg in bed. It may not seem much to you, but it was a great blessing to me. They that are heavily afflicted come to bless God for everything. I am sure that woman who took a piece of bread and a cup of water for her breakfast, and said, "What, all this, and Christ too!" must have been a tried woman, or she would not have exhibited so much gratitude. And that old Puritan minister was surely a tried man, for when his family had only a herring and a few potatoes for dinner, he said, "Lord, we bless Thee that Thou hast ransacked sea and land to find food for us this day." If he had not been a tried man, he might have turned up his nose at the meal, as many do at much more sumptuous fare. Troubled men get to be grateful men, and that is no small thing.

As a rule, where God's grace works, these come to be hopeful men. Where others think the storm will destroy the vessel, they can remember storms equally fierce which did not destroy it, and so they are so calm that their courage keeps others from despair.

These men, too, become unworldly men. They have had too much trouble to think that they can ever build their nest in this black forest. There are too many thorns in their nest for them to reckon that this can be their home. These birds of paradise take to their wings, and are ready to fly away to the land of unfading flowers.

And these much-tempted ones are frequently the most spiritual men, and out of this spirituality comes usefulness. Mr. Greatheart, who led the band of pilgrims up to the celestial city, was a man of many trials, or he would not have been fit to lead so many to their heavenly rest; and you, dear brother, if ever you are to be a leader and a helper, as you would wish to be, in the church of God, it must be by such means as this that you must be prepared for it. Do you not wish to have every virtue developed? Do you not wish to become a perfect man in Christ Jesus? If so, welcome with all joy divers trials and temptations; fly to God with them; bless Him for having sent them: ask Him to help you to bear them with patience, and then let that patience have its perfect work, and so by the Spirit of God you shall become "perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." May the Comforter bless this word to your hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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Sweet Comfort for Feeble Saints

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench,
till he send forth judgment unto victory - Matthew 12:20

Babbling fame ever loves to talk of one man or another. Some there be whose glory it trumpets forth, and whose honor it extols above the heavens. Some are her favorites, and their names are carved on marble, and heard in every land, and every clime. Fame is not an impartial judge; she has her favorites. Some men she extols, exalts, and almost deifies; others, whose virtues are far greater, and whose characters are more deserving of commendation, she passes by unheeded, and puts the finger of silence on her lips. You will generally find that those persons beloved by fame are men made of brass or iron, and cast in a rough mould. Fame caresseth Caesar, because he ruled the earth with a rod of iron. Fame loves Luther, because he boldly and manfully defied the Pope of Rome, and with knit brow dared laugh at the thunders of the Vatican. Fame admires Knox; for he was stern, and proved himself the bravest of the brave. Generally, you will find her choosing out the men of fire and mettle, who stood before their fellow-creatures fearless of them; men who were made of courage; who were consolidated lumps of fearlessness, and never knew what timidity might be. But you know there is another class of persons equally virtuous, and equally to be esteemed - perhaps even more so - whom fame entirely forgets. You do not hear her talk of the gentle-minded Melancthon - she says but little of him - yet he did as much, perhaps, in the Reformation, as even the mighty Luther. You do not hear fame talk much of the sweet and blessed Rutherford, and of the heavenly words that distilled from his lips; or of Archbishop Leighton, of whom it was said, that he was never out of temper in his life. She loves the rough granite peaks that defy the storm-cloud: she does not care for the more humble stone in the valley, on which the weary traveller resteth; she wants something bold and prominent; something that courts popularity; something that stands out before the world. She does not care for those who retreat in shade. Hence it is, my brethren, that the blessed Jesus, our adorable Master, has escaped fame. No one says much about Jesus, except his followers. We do not find his name written amongst the great and mighty men; though, in truth, he is the greatest, mightiest, holiest, purest, and best of men that ever lived; but because he was

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," and was emphatically the man whose kingdom is not of this world; because he had nothing of the rough about him, but was all love; because his words were softer than butter, his utterances more gentle in their flow than oil; because never man spake so gently as this man; therefore he is neglected and forgotten. He did not come to be a conqueror with his sword, nor a Mohammed with his fiery eloquence; but he came to speak with a "still small voice," that melteth the rocky heart; that bindeth up the broken in spirit, and that continually saith, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Jesus Christ was all gentleness; and this is why he has not been extolled amongst men as otherwise he would have been. Beloved! our text is full of gentleness; it seems to have been steeped in love; and I hope I may be able to show you something of the immense sympathy and the mighty tenderness of Jesus, as I attempt to speak from it. There are three things to be noticed: first, *mortal frailty*; secondly, *divine compassion*; and thirdly, *certain triumph* - "till he send forth judgment unto victory."

I. First, we have before us a view of MORTAL FRAILITY - bruised reed and smoking flax - two very suggestive metaphors, and very full of meaning. If it were not too fanciful - and if it is I know you will excuse me - I should say that the *bruised reed is an emblem of a sinner in the first stage of his conviction*. The work of God's Holy Spirit begins with bruising. In order to be saved, the fallow ground must be ploughed up; the hard heart must be broken; the rock must be split in sunder. An old divine says there is no going to heaven without passing hard by the gates of hell - without a great deal of soul-trouble and heart-exercise. I take it then that the bruised reed is a picture of the poor sinner when first God commences his operation upon the soul; he is as a bruised reed, almost entirely broken and consumed; there is but little strength in him. *The smoking flax I conceive to be a backsliding Christian*; one who has been a burning and a shining light in his day, but by neglect of the means of grace, the withdrawal of God's Spirit, and falling into sin, his light is almost gone out - not quite - it never can go out, for Christ saith, "I will not quench it;" but it becomes like a lamp when ill supplied with oil - almost useless. It is not quite extinguished - it smokes - it was a useful

lamp once, but now it has become as smoking flax. So I think these metaphors very likely describe the contrite sinner as a bruised reed, and the backsliding Christian as smoking flax. However, I shall not choose to make such a division as that, but I shall put both the metaphors together, and I hope we may fetch out a few thoughts from them.

And first, the encouragement offered in our text applies to *weak ones*. What in the world is weaker than the bruised reed, or the smoking flax? A reed that groweth in the fen or marsh, let but the wild duck light upon it, and it snaps; let but the foot of man brush against it and it is bruised and broken; every wind that comes howling across the river makes it shake to and fro, and well nigh tears it up by the roots. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence depends more upon circumstances than a bruised reed. Then look at smoking flax - what is it? It has a spark within it, it is true, but it is almost smothered; an infant's breath might blow it out; or the tears of a maiden quench it in a moment; nothing has a more precarious existence than the little spark hidden in the smoking flax. *Weak things*, you see, are here described. Well, Christ says of them, "The smoking flax I will not quench; the bruised reed I will not break." Let me go in search of the weaklings. Ah! I shall not have to go far. There are many in this house of prayer this morning who are indeed weak. Some of God's children, blessed be his name, are made strong to do mighty works for him; God hath his Samsons here and there who can pull up Gaza's gates, and carry them to the top of the hill; he hath here and there his mighty Gideons, who can go to the camp of the Midianites, and overthrow their hosts; he hath his mighty men, who can go into the pit in winter, and slay the lions; but the majority of his people are a timid, weak race. They are like the starlings that are frightened at every passer by; a little fearful flock. If temptation comes, they fall before it; if trial comes, they are overwhelmed by it; their frail skiff is danced up and down by every wave; and when the wind comes, they are drifted along like a sea-bird on the crest of the billows; weak things, without strength, without force, without might, without power. Ah! dear friends, I know I have got hold of some of your hands now, and your hearts too; for you are saying, "Weak! Ah, that I am. Full often I am constrained to say, I would, but cannot sing; I would, but cannot pray; I would, but cannot believe." You are saying that you cannot do anything; your best resolves

are weak and vain; and when you cry, "My strength renew," you feel weaker than before. You are weak, are you? Bruised reeds and smoking flax? Blessed be God, this text is for you then. I am glad you can come in under the denomination of weak ones, for here is a promise that he will never break nor quench them, but will sustain and hold them up. I know there are some very strong people here - I mean strong in their own ideas. I often meet with persons who would not confess any such weakness as this. They are strong minds. They say, "Do you think that we go into sin, sir? Do you tell us that our hearts are corrupt? We do not believe any such thing; we are good, and pure, and upright; we have strength and might." To you I am not preaching this morning; to you I am saying nothing; but take heed - your strength is vanity, your power is a delusion, your might is a lie - for however much you may boast in what you can do, it shall pass away; when you come to the real contest with death, you shall find that you have no strength to grapple with it: when one of these days of strong temptation shall come, it will take hold of you, moral man, and down you will go; and the glorious livery of your morality will be so stained, that though you wash your hands in snow water, and make yourselves never so clean, you shall be so polluted that your own clothes shall abhor you. I think it is a blessed thing to be weak. The weak one is a sacred thing; the Holy Ghost has made him such. Can you say, "No strength have I?" Then this text is for you.

Secondly, the things mentioned in our text are not only weak, but *worthless* things. I have heard of a man who would pick up a pin as he walked along the street, on the principle of economy; but I never yet heard of a man who would stop to pick up bruised reeds. They are not worth having. Who would care to have a bruised reed - a piece of rush lying on the ground? We all despise it as worthless. And smoking flax, what is the worth of that? It is an offensive and noxious thing; but the worth of it is nothing. No one would give the snap of a finger either for the bruised reed or smoking flax. Well, then, beloved, in our estimation there are many of us who are worthless things. There are some here, who, if they could weigh themselves in the scales of the sanctuary, and put their own hearts into the balance of conscience, would appear to be good for nothing - worthless, useless. There was a time when you thought yourselves to be the very best people in the world - when if any one had

said that you had more than you deserved, you would have kicked at it, and said, "I believe I am as good as other people." You thought yourselves something wonderful - extremely worthy of God's love and regard; but you now feel yourselves to be worthless. Sometimes you imagine God can hardly know where you are, you are such a despicable creature - so worthless - not worth his consideration. You can understand how he can look upon an animalcule in a drop of water, or upon a grain of dust in the sunbeam, or upon the insect of the summer evening; but you can hardly tell how he can think of you, you appear so worthless - a dead blank in the world, a useless thing. You say, "What good am I? I am doing nothing. As for a minister of the gospel, he is of some service; as for a deacon of the church, he is of some use; as for a Sabbath-school teacher, he is doing some good; but of what service am I?" But you might ask the same question here. What is the use of a bruised reed? Can a man lean upon it? Can a man strengthen himself therewith? Shall it be a pillar in my house? Can you bind it up into the pipes of Pan, and make music come from a bruised reed? Ah! no; it is of no service. And of what use is smoking flax? the midnight traveller cannot be lighted by it; the student cannot read by the flame of it. It is of no use; men throw it into the fire and consume it. Ah! that is how you talk of yourselves. You are good for nothing, so are these things. But Christ will not throw you away because you are of no value. You do not know of what use you may be, and you cannot tell how Jesus Christ values you after all. There is a good woman there, a mother, perhaps, she says, "Well, I do not often go out - I keep house with my children, and seem to be doing no good." Mother, do not say so, your position is a high, lofty, responsible one; and in training up children for the Lord, you are doing as much for his name as yon eloquent Apollos, who so valiantly preached the word. And you, poor man, all you can do is to toil from morning till night, and earn just enough to enable you to live day by day, you have nothing to give away, and when you go to the Sabbath-school, you can just read, you cannot teach much - well, but unto him to whom little is given of him little is required. Do you not know that there is such a thing as glorifying God by sweeping the street crossing? If two angels were sent down to earth, one to rule an empire, and the other to sweep a street, they would have no choice in the matter, so long as God ordered them. So God, in his providence, has called you to work hard for your daily bread; do it to his glory. "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or

drink, do all to his honor." But, ah! I know there are some of you here who seem useless to the Church. You do all you can; but when you have done it, it is nothing; you can neither help us with money, nor talents, nor time, and, therefore, you think God must cast you out. You think if you were like Paul or Peter you might be safe. Ah! beloved, talk not so; Jesus Christ saith he will not quench the useless flax, nor break the worthless bruised reed; he has something for the useless and for the worthless ones. But mark you, I do not say this to excuse laziness - to excuse those that can do, but do not; that is a very different thing. There is a whip for the ass, a scourge for idle men, and they must have it sometimes. I am speaking now of those who cannot do it; not of Issacher, who is like a strong ass, crouching down between two burdens, and too lazy to get up with them. I say nothing for the sluggard, who will not plough by reason of the cold, but of the men and women who really feel that they can be of little service - who cannot do more; and to such, the words of the text are applicable.

Now we will make another remark. The two things here mentioned are *offensive* things. A bruised reed is offensive, for I believe there is an allusion here to the pipes of Pan, which you all know are reeds put together, along which a man moves his mouth, thus causing some kind of music. This is the organ, I believe which Jubal invented, and which David mentions, for it is certain that the organ we use was not then in use. The bruised reed, then, would of course spoil the melody of all the pipes; one unsound tube would so let the air out, as to produce a discordant sound, or no sound at all, so that one's impulse would be to take the pipe out and put in a fresh one. And, as for smoking flax, the wick of a candle or anything of that kind, I need not inform you that the smoke is offensive. To me no odour in all the world is so abominably offensive as smoking flax. But some say, "How can you speak in so low a style?" I have not gone lower than I could go myself, nor lower than you can go with me; for I am sure you are, if God the Holy Ghost has really humbled you, just as offensive to your own souls, and just as offensive to God as a bruised reed would be among the pipes, or as smoking flax to the eyes and nose. I often think of dear old John Bunyan, when he said he wished God had made him a toad, or a frog, or a snake, or anything rather than a man, for he felt he was so offensive. Oh! I can conceive a nest of vipers, and I think

that they are obnoxious; I can imagine a pool of all kinds of loathsome creatures, breeding corruption, but there is nothing one half so worthy of abhorrence as the human heart. God spares from all eyes but his own that awful sight - a human heart; and could you and I but once see our heart, we should be driven mad, so horrible would be the sight. Do you feel like that? Do you feel that you must be offensive in God's sight - that you have so rebelled against him, so turned away from his commandments, that surely you must be obnoxious to him? If so, my text is yours.

Now, I can imagine some woman here this morning who has departed from the paths of virtue; and, while she is standing in the throng up there, or sitting down, she feels as if she had no right to tread these hallowed courts, and stand among God's people. She thinks that God might almost make the chapel break down upon her to destroy her, she is so great a sinner. Never mind, broken reed and smoking flax! Though thou art the scorn of man, and loathsome to thyself, yet Jesus saith to thee, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." There is some man here who hath something in his heart that I know not of - who may have committed crimes in secret, that we will not mention in public; his sins stick like a leech to him, and rob him of all comfort. Here you are young man, shaking and trembling, lest your crime should be divulged before high heaven; you are broken down, bruised like a reed, smoking like flax. Ah! I have a word for thee too. Comfort! comfort! comfort! Despair not; for Jesus saith he will not quench the smoking flax, he will not break the bruised reed.

And yet, my dear friends, there is one thought before I turn away from this point. Both of these articles, however worthless they may be, *may yet be of some service*. When God puts his hand to a man, if he were worthless and useless before, he can make him very valuable. You know the price of an article does not depend so much upon the value of the raw material to begin with - bruised reeds and smoking flax; but by Divine workmanship both these things become of wondrous value. You tell me the bruised reed is good for nothing; I tell you that Christ will take that bruised reed and mend it up, and fit it in the pipes of heaven. Then when the grand orchestra shall send forth its music, when the organs of the skies shall peal forth their deep-toned sounds, we shall ask, "What was

that sweet note heard there, mingling with the rest?" And some one shall say, "It was a bruised reed." Ah! Mary Magdalene's voice in heaven, I imagine, sounds more sweet and liquid than any other; and the voice of that poor thief, who said "Lord, remember me," if it is a deep bass voice, is more mellow and more sweet than the voice of any other, because he loved much, for he had much forgiven him. This reed may yet be of use. Do not say you are good for nothing; you shall sing up in heaven yet. Do not say you are worthless; at last you shall stand before the throne among the blood-washed company, and shall sing God's praise. Ay! and the smoking flax too, what good can that be? I will soon tell you. There is a spark in that flax somewhere; it is nearly out, but still a spark remaineth. Behold the prairie on fire! See you the flames come rolling on? See you stream after stream of hot fire deluging the plain till all the continent is burnt and scorched - till heaven is reddened with the flame? Old night's black face is scarred with the burning, and the stars appear affrighted at the conflagration. How was that mass ignited? By a piece of smoking flax dropped by some traveller, fanned by the soft wind, till the whole prairie caught the flame. So one poor man, one ignorant man, one weak man, even one backsliding man, may be the means of the conversion of a whole nation. Who knows but that you who are nothing now, may be of more use than those of us who appear to stand better before God, because we have more gifts and talents? God can make a spark set a world on fire - he can light up a whole nation with the spark of one poor praying soul. You may be useful yet; therefore be of good cheer. Moss groweth upon gravestones; the ivy clingeth to the mouldering pile; the mistletoe groweth on the dead branch; and even so shall grace, and piety, and virtue, and holiness, and goodness, come from smoking flax and bruised reeds.

II. Thus, then, my dear friends, I have tried to find out the parties for whom this text is meant, and I have shown you somewhat of mortal frailty; Now I mount a step higher - to DIVINE COMPASSION.

"The bruised reed he will not break,
the smoking flax he will not quench."

Notice what is first of all stated, and then let me tell you that Jesus Christ

means a great deal more than he says. First of all, what does he say? He says plainly enough that he will not break the bruised reed. There is a bruised reed before me - a poor child of God under a deep sense of sin. It seems as if the whip of the law would never stop. It keeps on, lash, lash, lash; and though you say, "Lord, stop it, and give me a little respite," still comes down the cruel thong, lash, lash, lash. You feel your sins. Ah! I know what you are saying this morning: "If God continues this a little longer my heart will break: I shall perish in despair; I am almost distracted by my sin; if I lie down at night I cannot sleep; it appears as if ghosts were in the room - ghosts of my sins - and when I awake at midnight, I see the black form of death staring at me, and saying, 'Thou art my prey, I shall have thee;' while hell behind seems to burn." Ah! poor bruised reed, he will not break you; conviction shall be too strong; it shall be great enough to melt thee, and to make thee go to Jesus' feet; but it shall not be strong enough to break thy heart altogether, so that thou shouldst die. Thou shalt never be driven to despair; but thou shalt be delivered; thou shalt come out of the fire, poor bruised reed, and shalt not be broken.

So there is a backslider here this morning; he is like the smoking flax. Years gone by you found such happiness in the ways of the Lord, and such delight in his service, that you said, "There I would for ever stay.

'What peaceful hours I then enjoyed;
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.'

You are smoking, and you think God will put you out. If I were an Arminian, I should tell you that he would; but being a believer in the Bible, and nothing else, I tell you that he will not quench you. Though you are smoking, you shall not die. Whatever your crime has been, the Lord says, "Return ye backsliding children of men, for I will have mercy upon you." He will not cast thee away, poor Ephraim; only come back to him - he will not despise thee, though thou hast plunged thyself in the mire and dirt, though thou art covered from head to foot with filthiness; come back, poor prodigal, come back, come back! Thy father calls thee.

Hearken poor backslider! Come at once to him whose arms are ready to receive thee.

It says he will not quench - he will not break. But there is more under cover than we see at first sight. When Jesus says he will not break, he means more than that; he means, "I will take that poor bruised reed; I will plant it hard by the rivers of waters, and (miracle of miracles) I will make it grow into a tree whose leaf shall not wither; I will water it every moment; I will watch it; there shall be heavenly fruits upon it; I will keep the birds of prey from it; but the birds of heaven, the sweet songsters of paradise shall make their dwellings in the branches." When he says that he will not break the bruised reed, he means more; he means that he will nourish, that he will help, and strengthen, and support and glorify - that he will execute his commission on it, and make it glorious for ever. And when he says to the backslider that he will not quench him, he means more than that - he means that he will fan him up to a flame. Some of you, I dare say, have gone home from chapel and found that your fire had gone nearly out; I know how you deal with it; you blow gently at the single spark, if there is one, and lest you should blow too hard, you hold your finger before it; and if you were alone and had but one match, or one spark in the tinder, how gently would you blow it. So, backslider, Jesus Christ deals with thee; he does not put thee out; he blows gently; he says, "I will not quench thee;" he means, "I will be very tender, very cautious, very careful;" he will put on dry material, so that by-and-by a little spark shall come to a flame, and blaze up towards heaven, and great shall be the fire thereof.

Now I want to say one or two things to Little-Faiths this morning. The little children of God who are here mentioned as being bruised reeds or smoking flax are just as safe as the great saints of God. I wish for a moment to expand this thought, and then I will finish with the other head. These saints of God who are called bruised reeds and smoking flax are just as safe as those who are mighty for their Master, and great in strength, for several reasons. First of all, *the little saint is just as much God's elect as the great saint*. When God chose his people, he chose them all at once, and altogether; and he elected one just as much as the other. If I choose a certain number of things, one may be less than the rest, but

one is as much chosen as the other; and so Mrs. Fearing and Miss Despondency are just as much elected as Great-Heart, or Old Father Honest. Again: *the little ones are redeemed equally with the great ones!* the feeble saints cost Christ as much suffering as the strong ones; the tiniest child of God could not have been purchased with less than Jesus' precious blood; and the greatest child of God did not cost him more. Paul did not cost any more than Benjamin - I am sure he did not - for I read in the Bible that "*there is no difference.*" Besides, when of old they came to pay their redemption-money, every person brought a shekel. The poor shall bring no less, and the rich shall bring no more than just a shekel. The same price was paid for the one as the other. Now then little child of God, take that thought to thy soul. You see some men very prominent in Christ's cause - and it is very good that they should be - but they did not cost Jesus a farthing more than you did; he paid the same price for you that he paid for them. Recollect again, *you are just as much a child of God as the greatest saint.* Some of you have five or six children. There is one child of yours, perhaps, who is very tall and handsome, and has, moreover, gifts of mind; and you have another child who is the smallest of the family, perhaps has but little intellect and understanding. But which is the most your child? "The most!" you say; "both alike are my children, certainly, one as much as the other." And so, dear friends, you may have very little learning, you may be very dark about divine things, you may but "see men as trees walking," but you are as much the children of God as those who have grown to the stature of men in Christ Jesus. Then remember, poor tried saint, that *you are just as much justified as any other child of God.* I know that I am completely justified.

His blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.

I want no other garments, save Jesus' doings, and his imputed righteousness.

The boldest child of God wants no more; and I who am "less than the least of all saints," can be content with no less, and I shall have no less. O Ready-to-Halt, thou art as much justified as Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, or the loftiest saint in heaven. There is no difference in that matter. Oh!

take courage and rejoice.

Then one thing more. *If you were lost, God's honor would be as much tarnished as if the greatest one were lost.* A queer thing I once read in an old book about God's children and people being a part of Christ and in union with him. The writer says - "A father sitteth in his room, and there cometh in a stranger; the stranger taketh up a child on his knee, and the child hath a sore finger; so he saith, 'My child, you have a sore finger;' 'Yes!' 'Well, let me take it off, and give thee a golden one!' The child looketh at him and saith, 'I will not go to that man any more, for he talks of taking off my finger; I love my own finger, and I will not have a golden one instead of it.'" So the saint saith, "I am one of the members of Christ, but I am like a sore finger, and he will take me off and put a golden one on." "No," said Christ, "no, no; I cannot have any of my members taken away; if the finger be a sore one, I will bind it up; I will strengthen it." Christ cannot allow a word about cutting his members off. If Christ lose one of his people, he would not be a whole Christ any longer. If the meanest of his children could be cast away, Christ would lack a part of his fullness; yea, Christ would be incomplete without his Church. If one of his children must be lost, it would be better that it should be a great one, than a little one. If a little one were lost, Satan would say, "Ah! you save the great ones, because they had strength and could help themselves; but the little one that has no strength, you could not save him." You know what Satan would say; but God would shut Satan's mouth, by proclaiming, "They are all here, Satan, in spite of thy malice, they are all here; every one is safe; now lie down in thy den for ever, and be bound eternally in chains, and smoke in fire!" So shall *he* suffer eternal torment, but not one child of God ever shall.

One thought more and I shall have done with this head. *The salvation of great saints often depends upon the salvation of little ones.* Do you understand that? You know that my salvation, or the salvation of any child of God, looking at second causes, very much depends upon the conversion of some one else. Suppose your mother is the means of your conversion, you would, speaking after the manner of men, say, that your conversion depended upon hers; for her being converted, made her the instrument of bringing you in. Suppose such-and-such a minister to be

the means of your calling; then your conversion, in some sense, though not absolutely, depends upon his. So it often happens, that the salvation of God's mightiest servants depends upon the conversion of little ones. There is a poor mother; no one ever knows anything about her; she goes to the house of God, her name is not in the newspapers, or anywhere else; she teaches her child, and brings him up in the fear of God; she prays for that boy; she wrestles with God, and her tears and prayers mingle together. The boy grows up. What is he? A missionary - a William Knibb - a Moffat - a Williams. But you do not hear anything about the mother. Ah! but if the mother had not been saved, where would the boy have been? Let this cheer the little ones; and may you rejoice that he will nourish and cherish you, though you are like bruised reeds and smoking flax.

Now, to finish up, there is a CERTAIN VICTORY.

"Till he send forth judgment unto victory."

Victory! There is something beautiful in that word. The death of Sir John Moore, in the Peninsular war, was very touching; he fell in the arms of triumph; and sad as was his fate, I doubt not that his eye was lit up with lustre by the shout of victory. So also, I suppose, that Wolfe spoke a truth when he said, "I die happy," having just before heard the shout, "they run, they run." I know victory even in that bad sense - for I look not upon earthly victories as of any value - must have cheered the warrior. But oh! how cheered the saint when he knows that victory is his! I shall fight during all my life, but I shall write "*vici*" on my shield. I shall be "more than conqueror through him that loved me." Each feeble saint shall win the day; each man upon his crutches; each lame one; each one full of infirmity, sorrow, sickness, and weakness, shall gain the victory. "They shall come with singing unto Zion; as well the blind, and lame, and halt, and the woman with child, together." So saith the Scripture. Not one shall be left out; but he shall "send forth judgment unto victory." Victory! victory! victory! This is the lot of each Christian; he shall triumph through his dear Redeemer's name.

Now a word about this victory. I speak first to aged men and women.

Dear brethren and sisters, you are often, I know, like the bruised reed. Coming events cast their shadows before them; and death casts the shadow of old age on you. You feel the grasshopper to be a burden; you feel full of weakness and decay; your frame can hardly hold together. Ah! you have here a special promise. "The bruised reed I will not break." "I will strengthen thee." "When thy heart and thy flesh faileth, I will be the strength of thy heart and thy portion for ever."

Even down to old age, all my people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne.

Tottering on thy staff, leaning, feeble, weak, and wan; fear not the last hour; that last hour shall be thy best; thy last day shall be a consummation devoutly to be wished. Weak as thou art, God will temper the trial to thy weakness; he will make thy pain less, if thy strength be less; but thou shalt sing in heaven, Victory! victory! victory! There are some of us who could wish to change places with you, to be so near heaven - to be so near home. With all your infirmities, your grey hairs are a crown of glory to you; for you are near the end as well as in the way of righteousness.

A word with you middle-aged men, battling in this life's rough storm. You are often bruised reeds, your religion is so encumbered by your worldly callings, so covered up by the daily din of business, business, business, that you seem like smoking flax; it is as much as you can do to serve your God, and you cannot say that you are "fervent in spirit" as well as "diligent in business." Man of business, toiling and striving in this world, he will not quench thee when thou art like smoking flax; he will not break thee when thou art like the bruised reed, but will deliver thee from thy troubles, thou shalt swim across the sea of life, and shalt stand on the happy shore of heaven, and shalt sing, "Victory" through him that loved thee.

Ye youths and maidens! I speak to you, and have a right to do so. You and I oftentimes know what the bruised reed is, when the hand of God blights

our fair hopes. We are full of giddiness and waywardness, it is only the rod of affliction that can bring folly out of us, for we have much of it in us. Slippery paths are the paths of youths, and dangerous ways are the ways of the young, but God will not break or destroy us. Men, by their over caution, bid us never tread a step lest we fall; but God bids us go, and makes our feet like hind's feet that we may tread upon high places. Serve God in early days; give your hearts to him, and then he will never cast you out, but will nourish and cherish you.

Let me not finish without saying a word to little children. You who have never heard of Jesus, he says to you, "The bruised reed I will not break; the smoking flax I will not quench." I believe there is many a little prattler, not six years old, who knows the Saviour. I never despise infantile piety; I love it. I have heard little children talk of mysteries that grey-headed men knew not. Ah! little children who have been brought up in the Sabbath-schools, and love the Saviour's name, if others say you are too forward, do not fear, love Christ still.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Still will look upon a child;
Pity thy simplicity,
And suffer thee to come to him.

He will not cast thee away; for smoking flax he will not quench, and the bruised reed he will not break.

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The Comforter

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. - John 14:26

Good old Simeon called Jesus the consolation of Israel; and so he was. Before his actual appearance, his name was the day-star; cheering the darkness, and prophetic of the rising sun. To him they looked with the same hope which cheers the nightly watcher, when from the lonely castle-top he sees the fairest of the stars, and hails her as the usher of the morn. When he was on earth, he must have been the consolation of all those who were privileged to be his companions. We can imagine how readily the disciples would run to Christ to tell him of their griefs, and how sweetly, with that matchless intonation of his voice, he would speak to them, and bid their fears be gone. Like children, they would consider him as their Father; and to him every want, every groan, every sorrow, every agony, would at once be carried; and he, like a wise physician, had a balm for every wound; he had mingled a cordial for their every care; and readily did he dispense some mighty remedy to allay all the fever of their troubles. Oh! it must have been sweet to have lived with Christ. Surely, sorrows were then but joys in masks, because they gave an opportunity to go to Jesus to have them removed. Oh! would to God, some of us may say, that we could have lain our weary heads upon the bosom of Jesus, and that our birth had been in that happy era, when we might have heard his kind voice, and seen his kind look, when he said, "Let the weary ones come unto me."

But now he was about to die. Great prophecies were to be fulfilled; and great purposes were to be answered; therefore, Jesus must go. It behoved him to suffer, that he might be made a propitiation for our sins. It behoved him to slumber in the dust awhile, that he might perfume the chamber of the grave to make it -

"No more a charnel house to fence
The relics of lost innocence."

It behoved him to have a resurrection, that we, who shall one day be the

dead in Christ, might rise first, and in glorious bodies stand upon earth. And if behoved him that he should ascend up on high, that he might lead captivity captive; that he might chain the fiends of hell; that he might lash them to his chariot-wheels, and drag them up high heaven's hill, to make them feel a second overthrow from his right arm, when he should dash them from the pinnacles of heaven down to the deeper depths beneath. "It is right I should go away from you," said Jesus, "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come." Jesus must go. Weep, ye disciples; Jesus must be gone. Mourn, ye poor ones, who are to be left without a Comforter. But hear how kindly Jesus speaks: "I will not leave you comfortless, I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter, who shall be with you, and shall dwell in you forever." He would not leave those few poor sheep alone in the wilderness; he would not desert his children, and leave them fatherless. Albeit that he had a mighty mission which did fill his heart and hand; albeit he had so much to perform, that we might have thought that even his gigantic intellect would be overburdened; albeit he had so much to suffer, that we might suppose his whole soul to be concentrated upon the thought of the sufferings to be endured. Yet it was not so; before he left, he gave soothing words of comfort; like the good Samaritan, he poured in oil and wine, and we see what he promised: "I will send you another Comforter - one who shall be just what I have been, yea, even more; who shall console you in your sorrows, remove your doubts, comfort you in your afflictions, and stand as my vicar on earth, to do that which I would have done had I tarried with you."

Before I discourse of the Holy Ghost as the Comforter, I must make one or two remarks on the different translations of the word rendered "Comforter." The Rhenish translation, which you are aware is adopted by Roman Catholics, has left the word untranslated, and gives it "Paraclete." "But the Paraclete, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." This is the original Greek word, and it has some other meanings besides "Comforter." Sometimes it means the monitor or instructor: "I will send you another monitor, another teacher." Frequently it means "Advocate;" but the most common meaning of the word is that which we have here: "I will send you another Comforter." However, we cannot pass over those other two

interpretations without saying something upon them.

"I will send you another teacher." Jesus Christ had been the official teacher of his saints whilst on earth. They called no man Rabbi except Christ. They sat at no men's feet to learn their doctrines; but they had them direct from the lips of him who "spake as never man spake." "And now," says he, "when I am gone, where shall you find the great infallible teacher? Shall I set you up a pope at Rome, to whom you shall go, and who shall be your infallible oracle? Shall I give you the councils of the church to be held to decide all knotty points?" Christ said no such thing. "I am the infallible paraclete, or teacher, and when I am gone, I will send you another teacher, and he shall be the person who is to explain Scripture; he shall be the authoritative oracle of God, who shall make all dark things light, who shall unravel mysteries, who shall untwist all knots of revelation, and shall make you understand what you could not discover, had it not been for his influence." And, beloved, no man ever learns anything aright, unless he is taught of the Spirit. You may learn election, and you may know it so that you shall be damned by it, if you are not taught of the Holy Ghost; for I have known some who have learned election to their soul's destruction; they have learned it so that they said they were of the elect, whereas, they had no marks, no evidences, and no works of the Holy Ghost in their souls. There is a way of learning truth in Satan's college, and holding it in licentiousness; but if so, it shall be to your souls as poison to your veins and prove your everlasting ruin. No man can know Jesus Christ unless he is taught of God. There is no doctrine of the Bible which can be safely, thoroughly, and truly learned, except by the agency of the one authoritative teacher. Ah! tell me not of systems of divinity; tell me not of schemes of theology; tell me not of infallible commentators, or most learned and most arrogant doctors; but tell me of the Great Teacher, who shall instruct us, the sons of God, and shall make us wise to understand all things. He is the Teacher; it matters not what this man or that man says; I rest on no man's boasting authority, nor will you. Ye are not to be carried away with the craftiness of men, nor sleight of words; this is the authoritative oracle - the Holy Ghost resting in the hearts of his children.

The other translation is advocate. Have you ever thought how the Holy

Ghost can be said to be an advocate? You know Jesus Christ is called the wonderful, the counsellor, the mighty God; but how can the Holy Ghost be said to be an advocate? I suppose it is thus; he is an advocate on earth to plead against the enemies of the cross. How was it that Paul could so ably plead before Felix and Agrippa? How was it that the Apostles stood unawed before the magistrates, and confessed their Lord? How has it come to pass, that in all times God's ministers have been made fearless as lions, and their brows have been firmer than brass; their hearts sterner than steel, and their words like the language of God? Why, it was simply for this reason; that it was not the man who pleaded, but it was God the Holy Ghost pleading through him. Have you never seen an earnest minister, with hands uplifted and eyes dropping tears, pleading with the sons of men? Have you never admired that portrait from the hand of old John Bunyan? - a grave person with eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth written on his lips, the world behind his back, standing as if he pleaded with men, and a crown of gold hanging over his head. Who gave that minister so blessed a manner, and such goodly matter? Whence came his skill? Did he acquire it in the college? Did he learn it in the seminary? Ah, no. He learned it of the God of Jacob; he learned it of the Holy Ghost; for the Holy Ghost is the great counsellor who teaches us how to advocate his cause aright.

But, beside this, the Holy Ghost is the advocate in men's hearts. Ah! I have known men reject a doctrine until the Holy Ghost began to illuminate them. We, who are the advocates of the truth, are often very poor pleaders; we spoil our cause by the words we use; but it is a mercy that the brief is in the hand of a special pleader, who will advocate successfully, and overcome the sinner's opposition. Did you ever know him fail once? Brethren, I speak to your souls; has not God in old times convinced you of sin? Did not the Holy Ghost come and prove that you were guilty, although no minister could ever get you out of your self-righteousness? Did he not advocate Christ's righteousness? Did he not stand and tell you that your works were filthy rags? And when you had well-nigh still refused to listen to his voice, did he not fetch hell's drum and make it sound about your ears; bidding you look through the vista of future years, and see the throne set, and the books open, and the sword brandished, and hell burning, and fiends howling, and the damned

shrieking forever? And did he not convince you of the judgment to come? He is a mighty advocate when he pleads in the soul - of sin, of righteousness, and of the judgment to come. Blessed advocate! Plead in my heart; plead with my conscience. When I sin, make conscience bold to tell me of it; when I err, make conscience speak at once; and when I turn aside to crooked ways, then advocate the cause of righteousness, and bid me sit down in confusion, knowing by guiltiness in the sight of God.

But there is yet another sense in which the Holy Ghost advocates, and that is, he advocates our cause with Jesus Christ, with groanings that cannot be uttered. O my soul! thou art ready to burst within me. O my heart! thou art swelled with grief. The hot tide of my emotion would well-nigh overflow the channels of my veins. I long to speak, but the very desire chains my tongue. I wish to pray, but the fervency of my felling curbs my language. There is a groaning within that cannot be uttered. Do you know who can utter that groaning? who can understand it, and who can put it into heavenly language, and utter it in a celestial tongue, so that Christ can hear it? O yes; it is God the Holy spirit; he advocates our cause with Christ, and then Christ advocates it with his Father. He is the advocate who maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered.

Having thus explained the Spirit's office as a teacher and advocate, we now come to the translation of our version - the Comforter; and here I shall have three divisions: first, the comforter; secondly, the comfort; and thirdly, the comforted.

I. First, then, the COMFORTER. Briefly let me run over in my mind, and in your minds too, the characteristics of this glorious Comforter. Let me tell you some of the attributes of his comfort, so that you may understand how well adapted he is to your case.

And first, we will remark, that God the Holy Ghost is a very loving Comforter. I am in distress, and I want consolation. Some passer-by hears of my sorrow, and he steps within, sits down, and essays to cheer me; he speaks soothing words, but he loves me not; he is a stranger; he knows me not at all; he has only come in to try his skill. And what is the

consequence? His words run o'er me like oil upon a slab of marble - they are like the pattering rain upon the rock; they do not break my grief; it stands unmoved as adamant, because he has no love for me. But let some one who loves me dear as his own life, come and plead with me, then truly his words are music; they taste like honey; he knows the password of the doors of my heart, and my ear is attentive to every word; I catch the intonation of each syllable as it falls, for it is like the harmony of the harps of heaven. Oh! there is a voice in love, it speaks a language which is its own; it has an idiom and a brogue which none can mimic; wisdom cannot imitate it; oratory cannot attain unto it; it is love alone which can reach the mourning heart; love is the only handkerchief which can wipe the mourner's tears away. And is not the Holy Ghost a loving comforter? Dost thou know, O saint, how much the Holy Spirit loves thee? Canst thou measure the love of the Spirit? Dost thou know how great is the affection of his soul towards thee? Go measure heaven with thy span; go weigh the mountains in the scales; go take the ocean's water, and tell each drop; go count the sand upon the sea's wide shore; and when thou hast accomplished this, thou canst tell how much he loveth thee. He has loved thee long, he has loved thee well, he loved thee ever, and he still shall love thee; surely he is the person to comfort thee, because he loves. Admit him, then, to your heart, O Christian, that he may comfort you in your distress.

But next, he is a faithful Comforter. Love sometimes proveth unfaithful. "Oh! sharper than a serpent's tooth" is an unfaithful friend! Oh! far more bitter than the gall of bitterness, to have a friend turn from me in my distress! Oh! woe of woes, to have one who loves me in my prosperity, forsake me in the dark day of my trouble. Sad indeed; but such is not God's Spirit. He ever loves, and loves even to the end - a faithful Comforter. Child of God, you are in trouble. A little while ago, you found him a sweet and loving Comforter; you obtained relief from him when others were but broken cisterns; he sheltered you in his bosom, and carried you in his arms. Oh, wherefore dost thou distrust him now? Away with thy fears; for he is a faithful Comforter. "Ah!, but," thou sayest, "I fear I shall be sick, and shall be deprived of his ordinances." Nevertheless he shall visit thee on thy sick bed, and sit by thy side, to give thee consolation. "Ah! but I have distresses greater than you can conceive of;

wave upon wave rolleth over me; deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of the Eternal's waterspouts." Nevertheless, he will be faithful to his promise. "Ah! but I have sinned." So thou hast, but sin cannot sever thee from his love; he loves thee still. Think not, O poor downcast child of God, because the scars of thine old sins have marred thy beauty, that he loves thee less because of that blemish. O no! He loved thee when he foreknew thy sin; he loved thee with the knowledge of what the aggregate of thy wickedness would be; and he does not love thee less now. Come to him in all boldness of faith; tell him thou hast grieved him, and he will forget thy wandering, and will receive thee again; the kisses of his love shall be bestowed upon thee, and the arms of his grace shall embrace thee. He is faithful; trust him, he will never deceive you; trust him, he will never leave you.

Again, he is an unwearied Comforter. I have sometimes tried to comfort persons, and have been tired. You, now and then, meet with a case of a nervous person. You ask, "What is your trouble?" You are told; and you essay, if possible, to remove it; but while you are preparing your artillery to battle the trouble, you find that it has shifted its quarters, and is occupying quite a different position. You change your argument and begin again; but lo, it is again gone, and you are bewildered. You feel like Hurcules, cutting off the evergrowing heads of the Hydra, and you give up your task in despair. You meet with persons whom it is impossible to comfort, reminding one of the man who locked himself up in fetters, and threw the key away, so that nobody could unlock him. I have found some in the fetters of despair. "O, I am the man," say they, "that has seen affliction; pity me, pity me, O, my friends;" and the more you try to comfort such people, the worse they get; and, therefore, out of all heart, we leave them to wander alone among the tombs of their former joys. But the Holy Ghost is never out of heart with those whom he wishes to comfort. He attempts to comfort us, and we run away from the sweet cordial; he gives us some sweet draught to cure us, and we will not drink it; he gives some wondrous potion to charm away all our troubles, and we put it away from us. Still he pursues us; and though we say that we will not be comforted, he says we shall be, and when he has said, he does it; he is not to be wearied by all our sins, nor by all our murmurings.

And oh, how wise a Comforter is the Holy Ghost. Job had comforters, and I think he spoke the truth when he said, "Miserable comforters are ye all." But I dare say they esteemed themselves wise; and when the young man Elihu rose to speak, they thought he had a world of impudence. Were they not "grave and reverend seigniors?" Did not they comprehend his grief and sorrow? If they could not comfort him, who could? But they did not find out the cause. They thought he was not really a child of God, that he was self-righteous, and they gave him the wrong physic. It is a bad case when the doctor mistakes a disease and gives a wrong prescription, and so perhaps kills the patient. Sometimes, when we go and visit people, we mistake their disease; we want to comfort them on this point, whereas they do not require any such comfort at all, and they would be better left alone, than spoiled by such unwise comforters as we are. But oh, how wise the Holy Spirit is! He takes the soul, lays it on the table, and dissects it in a moment; he finds out the root of the matter, he sees where the complaint is, and then he applies the knife where something is required to be taken away, or puts a plaster where the sore is; and he never mistakes. O how wise is the blessed Holy Ghost; from ever comforter I turn, and leave them all, for thou art he who alone givest the wisest consolation.

Then mark, how safe a Comforter the Holy Ghost is. All comfort is not safe, mark that. There is a young man over there very melancholy. You know how he became so. He stepped into the house of God and heard a powerful preacher, and the word was blessed, and convinced him of sin. When he went home, his father and the rest found there was something different about him, "Oh," they said, "John is mad, he is crazy;" and what said his mother? "Send him into the country for a week; let him go to the ball or the theatre." John, did you find any comfort there? "Ah no; they made me worse, for while I was there I thought hell might open and swallow me up." Did you find any relief in the gayeties of the world? "No," say you, "I thought it was idle waste of time." Alas! this is miserable comfort, but it is the comfort of the worldling; and, when a Christian gets into distress, how many will recommend him this remedy and the other. "Go and hear Mr. So-and-so preach;" "have a few friends at you house;" "Read such-and-such a consoling volume;" and very likely it is the most unsafe advice in the world. The devil will sometimes come to men's souls

as a false comforter; and he will say to the soul, "What need is there to make all this ado about repentance? you are no worse than other people;" and he will try to make the soul believe, that what is presumption, is the real assurance of the Holy Ghost; thus he deceives many by false comfort. Ah! there have been many, like infants, destroyed by elixirs, given to lull them to sleep; many have been ruined by the cry of "peace, peace," when there is no peace; hearing gentle things, when they ought to be stirred to the quick. Cleopatra's asp was brought in a basket of flowers; and men's ruin often lurks in fair and sweet speeches. But the Holy Ghost's comfort is safe, and you may rest on it. Let him speak the word, and there is a reality about it; let him give the cup of consolation, and you may drink it to the bottom; for in its depths there are no dregs, nothing to intoxicate or ruin, it is all safe.

Moreover, the Holy Ghost is an active Comforter; he does not comfort by words, but by deeds. Some comfort by, "Be ye warmed, and be ye filled, giving nothing." But the Holy Ghost gives, he intercedes with Jesus; he gives us promises, he gives us grace, and so he comforts us. Mark again, he is always a successful Comforter; he never attempts what he cannot accomplish.

Then, to close up, he is an ever-present Comforter, so that you never have to send for him. Your God is always near you; and when you need comfort in your distress, behold the word is nigh thee; it is in thy mouth, and in thy heart. He is an ever-present help in time of trouble. I wish I had time to expand these thoughts, but I cannot.

II. The second thing is the COMFORT. Now there are some persons who make a great mistake about the influence of the Holy Spirit. A foolish man, who had a fancy to preach in a certain pulpit, though in truth he was quite incapable of the duty, called upon the minister, and assured him solemnly, that it had been revealed to him by the Holy Ghost that he was to preach in his pulpit. "Very well," said the minister, "I suppose I must not doubt your assertion, but as it has not been revealed to me that I am to let you preach, you must go your way, until it is." I have heard many fanatical persons say the Holy Spirit revealed this and that to them. Now, that is very generally revealed nonsense. The Holy Ghost does not

reveal anything fresh now. He brings old things to our remembrance. "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have told you." The canon of revelation is closed, there is no more to be added; God does not give a fresh revelation, but he rivets the old one. When it has been forgotten, and laid in the dusty chamber of our memory, he fetches it out and cleans the picture, but does not paint a new one. There are no new doctrines, but the old ones are often revived. It is not, I say, by any new revelation that the Spirit comforts. He does so by telling us old things over again; he brings a fresh lamp to manifest the treasures hidden in Scripture; he unlocks the strong chests in which the truth has long lain, and he points to secret chamber filled with untold riches; but he coins no more, for enough is done. Believer! there is enough in the Bible for thee to live upon forever. If thou shouldst outnumber the years of Methuselah, there would be no need for a fresh revelation; if thou shouldst live till Christ should come upon the earth, there would be no need for the addition of a single word; if thou shouldst go down as deep as Jonah, or even descend as David said he did into the belly of hell, still there would be enough in the Bible to comfort thee without a supplementary sentence. But Christ says, "He shall take of mine, and show it unto you." Now, let me just tell you briefly what it is the Holy Ghost tells us.

Ah! does he not whisper to the heart, "Saint, be of good cheer; there is one who died for thee; look to Calvary, behold his wounds, see the torrent gushing from his side - there is thy purchaser, and thou art secure. He loves thee with an everlasting love, and this chastisement is meant for thy good; each stroke is working thy healing; by the blueness of the wound thy soul is made better." "Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Doubt not his grace, because of thy tribulation; but believe that he loveth thee as much in seasons of trouble, as in times of happiness. And then, moreover, he says, "What is all thy suffering compared with that of thy Lord's? or what, when weighed in the scales of Jesus' agonies, is all thy distress? And especially at times does the Holy Ghost take back the veil of heaven, and lets the soul behold the glory of the upperworld! Then it is that the saint can say, "O thou art a Comforter to me!"

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all."

Some of you could follow, were I to tell of manifestations of heaven. You, too, have left sun, moon, and stars at your feet, while, in your flight, outstripping the tardy lightning, you have seemed to enter the gates of pearl, and tread the golden streets, borne aloft on wings of the Spirit. But here we must not trust ourselves; lest, lost in reverie, we forget our theme.

III. And now, thirdly, who are the comforted persons? I like, you know, at the end of my sermon to cry out, "Divide! divide!" There are two parties here - some who are comforted, and others who are the comfortless ones - some who have received the consolations of the Holy Ghost, and some who have not. Now let us try and sift you, and see which is the chaff and which is the wheat; and may God grant that some of the chaff may, this night, be transformed into his wheat!

You may say, "How am I to know whether I am a recipient of the comfort of the Holy Ghost?" You may know it by one rule. If you have received one blessing from God, you will receive all other blessings too. Let me explain myself. If I could come here as an auctioneer, and sell the gospel off in lots, I should dispose of it all. If I could say, here is justification through the blood of Christ - free; giving away, gratis; many a one would say, "I will have justification; give it to me; I wish to be justified; I wish to be pardoned." Suppose I took sanctification, the giving up of all sin, a thorough change of heart, leaving off drunkenness and swearing; many would say, "I don't want that; I should like to go to heaven, but I do not want that holiness; I should like to be saved at last, but I should like to have my drink still; I should like to enter glory, but then I must have an oath or two on the road." Nay, but, sinner, if thou hast one blessing, thou shalt have all. God will never divide the gospel. He will not give justification to that man, and sanctification to another - pardon to one, and holiness to another. No, it all goes together. Whom he call, them he justifies; whom he justifies, them he sanctifies; and whom he sanctifies,

them he also glorifies. Oh; if I could lay down nothing but the comforts of the gospel, ye would fly to them as flies do to honey. When ye come to be ill, ye send for the clergyman. Ah! you all want your minister then to come and give you consoling words. But, if he be an honest man, he will not give some of you a particle of consolation. He will not commence pouring oil, when the knife would be better. I want to make a man feel his sins before I dare tell him anything about Christ. I want to probe into his soul and make him feel that he is lost before I tell him anything about the purchased blessing. It is the ruin of many to tell them, "Now just believe on Christ, and that is all you have to do." If, instead of dying, they get better, they rise up white-washed hypocrites - that is all. I have heard of a city missionary who kept a record of two thousand persons who were supposed to be on their death-bed, but recovered, and whom he should have put down as converted persons had they died; and how many do you think lived a Christian life afterwards out of the two thousand? Not two. Positively he could only find one who was found to live afterwards in the fear of God. Is it not horrible that when men and women come to die, they should cry, "Comfort, comfort?" and that hence their friends conclude that they are children of God, while, after all, they have no right to consolation, but are intruders upon the enclosed grounds of the blessed God. O God, may these people ever be kept from having comfort when they have no right to it! Have you the other blessings? Have you had the conviction of sin? Have you ever felt your guilt before God? Have your souls been humbled at Jesus' feet? And have you been made to look to Calvary alone for your refuge? If not, you have no right to consolation. Do not take an atom of it. The Spirit is a convincer before he is a Comforter; and you must have the other operations of the Holy Spirit, before you can derive anything from this.

And now I have done. You have heard what this babbler hath said once more. What has it been? Something about the Comforter. But let me ask you, before you go, what do you know about the Comforter? Each one of you, before descending the steps of this chapel, let this solemn question thrill through your souls - What do you know of the Comforter? O! poor souls, if ye know not the Comforter, I will tell you what you shall know - You shall know the Judge! If ye know not the Comforter on earth, ye shall know the Condemner in the next world, who shall cry, "Depart, ye cursed,

into everlasting fire in hell." Well might Whitefield call out, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!" If ye were to live here forever, ye might slight the gospel; if ye had a lease of your lives, ye might despise the Comforter. But, sirs, ye must die. Since last we met together, probably some have gone to their long last home; and ere we meet again in this sanctuary, some here will be amongst the glorified above, or amongst the damned below. Which will it be? Let you soul answer. If to-night you fell down dead in your pews, or where you are standing in the gallery, where would you be? in heaven or in hell? Ah! deceive not yourselves; let conscience have its perfect work; and if in the sight of God, you are obliged to say, "I tremble and fear lest my portion should be with unbelievers," listen one moment, and then I have done with thee. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Weary sinner, hellish sinner, thou who art the devil's castaway, reprobate, profligate, harlot, robber, thief, adulterer, fornicator, drunkard, swearer, Sabbath-breaker - list! I speak to thee as well as to the rest. I exempt no man. God hath said there is no exemption here. "Whosoever believeth on the name of Jesus Christ shall be saved." Sin is no barrier; thy guilt is no obstacle. Whosoever - though he were as black as Satan, though he were filthy as a fiend - whosoever this night believes, shall have every sin forgiven, shall have every crime effaced; shall have ever iniquity blotted out; shall be saved in the Lord Jesus Christ, and shall stand in heaven safe and secure. That is the glorious gospel. God apply it to your hearts, and give you faith in Jesus!

"We have listened to the preacher -
Truth by him has now been shown;
But we want a GREATER TEACHER,
From the everlasting throne;
APPLICATION
Is the work of God alone."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Comfort Proclaimed

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."-Isaiah 40:1.

What a sweet title: "My people!" What a cheering revelation: "Your God!" How much of meaning is couched in those two words, "My people!" Here is speciality. The whole world is God's; the heaven, even the heaven of heavens are the Lord's and he reigneth among the children of men. But he saith of a certain number, "My people." Of those whom he hath chosen, whom he hath purchased to himself, he saith what he saith not of others. While nations and kindreds are passed by as being simply nations, he says of them "My people." In this word there is the idea of proprietorship to teach us that we are the property of God. In some special manner the "Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." All the nations upon earth are his; he taketh up the isles as a very little thing; the whole world is in his power; yet are his people, his chosen, favoured people, more especially his possession; for he has done more for them than others; he has bought them with his blood; he has brought them nigh to himself; he has set his great heart upon them; he has loved them with an everlasting love, a love which many waters cannot quench, and which the revolutions of time shall never suffice in the least degree to diminish. "My people!" O my hearers, can you by faith put yourselves in that number who believe that God says of them, "My people?" Can you look up to heaven to-night, and say, "My Lord, and my God: mine by that sweet relationship which entitles me to call thee Father; mine by that hallowed fellowship which I delight to hold with thee when thou art pleased to manifest thyself unto me as thou dost not unto the world?" Canst thou, beloved, put thine hand into thine heart and find there the indentures of thy salvation? Canst thou read thy title writ in precious blood? Canst thou by humble faith lay hold of Jesus's garments, and say, "My Christ?" If thou canst, then God saith of thee, "My people;" for if God be your God, and Christ your Christ, the Lord has a special, peculiar favour to you; you are the object of his choice, and you shall be accepted, at last, in his beloved Son. How careful God is of his people; those of whom he says, "My people;" mark, how anxious he is concerning them, not only for their life, but for their comfort. He does not say, "strengthen ye, strengthen ye my people;" he does not say to the

angel, "protect my people;" he does not say to the heavens, "drop down manna to feed my people;"-all that and more also his tender regard secures to them; but on this occasion, to show us that he is not only regardful of our interests, but also of our superfluities, he says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." He would not only have us his living people, his preserved people, but he would have us be his happy people too. He likes his people to be fed, but what is more, he likes to give them "wines on the lees well refined," to make glad their hearts. He will not only give them bread, but he will give them honey too; he will not simply give them milk, but he will give them wine and milk, and all the sweet things which their hearts can desire. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;" it is the Father's yearning heart, careful even for the little things of his people. "Comfort ye, comfort ye,"-that one with a tearful eye; "Comfort ye, comfort ye,"-you child of mine with an aching heart "Comfort ye,"-that poor bemoaning one; "Comfort ye, comfort ye-my people, saith your God."

Now to night we shall notice the parties to whom the command is addressed; secondly, the reason for it; and thirdly, the means for carrying it out.

I. First, then, TO WHOM IS THIS COMMAND ADDRESSED? You know, beloved, the Holy Spirit is the great Comforter, and he it is who alone can solace the saints if their hearts be really cheered; but he uses instruments to relieve his children in their distress and to lift up their hearts from desperation. To whom, then, is this command addressed? I believe it is addressed to angels and to men.

To angels, first of all, I believe this command is addressed: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." You often talk about the insinuations of the devil; I frequently hear you bemoaning yourselves because you have been attacked by Apollyon, and have had a hard struggle with Beelzebub; you have found it hard to resist his desperate thrusts which he made against you; and you are always talking about him. Allow me to remind you that there is another side of that question, for if evil spirits assault us, doubtless good spirits guard us; and if Satan can cast us down, doubtless it is true God giveth his angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways, and they shall bear us up in their hands lest at any time we dash our feet

against a stone. It is my firm belief that angels are often employed by God to throw into the hearts of his people comforting thoughts. There are many sweet thoughts which we have by the way, when we sit down, and when we rise up, which we scarcely dare attribute immediately to the Holy Ghost, but which are still beautiful and calm, lovely, and fair, and consoling; and we attribute them to the ministry of angels. Angels came and ministered unto Jesus, and I doubt not that they minister unto us. Few of us have enough belief in the existence of spirits. I like that saying of Milton's, "Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we sleep and when we wake." And if our minds were opened, if our ears were attentive, we might hold fellowship with spirits that flit through the air every moment. Around the death-bed of saints angels hover; by the side of every struggling warrior for Christ the angels stand. In the day of battle we hear in the air the neighing of their steeds. Hark! how softly do they ride to help the elect of God, while in the stern conflict for the right and for the truth, when they would have been cast down, some angel whispers, "Courage brother, courage, I would I could stand by thy side, shoulder to shoulder, and foot to foot, to fight the battle, but I must not; it is left for men. Courage then brother, because angels watch over thee!" It is a good wish of ours, when we say at eventide, "Peace be to thee beloved! good angels guard thee! may they spread their wings o'er thee and stand around thy bed!" But it is more than a wish, it is a reality. Do ye not know It is written "the angel of the Lord encampeth round them that fear him?" "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who are heirs of salvation?" This command then, comes to angels. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." Full oft the bright winged seraph flaps his wing to earth, to comfort some desponding heart. Full oft the cherub, ceasing for a moment his mighty song to go on errands of love, descends, as Gabriel did of old, to cheer the heart of many a struggling man and to stand by the side of those who are in conflict for God and for his truth. Ye angels, ye bright spirits, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

But on earth, this is more especially addressed to the Lord's ministers. He calls his ministers angels of the churches, albeit, they should be a great deal more like angels than they are. Ministers are bound to comfort God's people. I am sure, however, they cannot do it, unless they preach the good

old doctrines of truth. Except they preach grace and gracious doctrine, I can not see how they are to console the minds of the Lord's family. Were I to adopt a lax theology which teaches that God's children may fall away, that although redeemed they may yet be lost, that they may be effectually called, and yet slide back to perdition-I want to know how I could carry out this command? I should say, "Brethren, God has told me to comfort you; that is what I have to preach; you must get what comfort you can out of it, for I really cannot find much." I have often marvelled how the Arminian can comfort himself, wherewith he can light a fire to warm his own heart! What doctrine hath he? He believes he is a child of God to-day, and he is taught to believe he is a child of the devil to-morrow. He is now, he says, in the covenant, but then that covenant is such an uncertain thing that it may at any time be broken down, and he may die beneath its ruins; he knows himself to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, yet he is taught that that will not be sufficient without the concurrence of some good thoughts, good actions, or certainly by some good grace, some faith of his own. He is led to believe that his standing depends upon his own keeping near to God, instead of remembering that his keeping near to God must be by a sweet attraction that proceeds from God himself. Whence then comfort is to be procured I cannot tell. Happy I am I have no such gospel as that to preach. Let me preach the old gospel of Chrysostom, the old gospel of Augustine, the old gospel of Athanasius; and above all the old gospel of Jesus Christ, the originator of it; for there I can find something to comfort the child of God, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." It is our duty to reprove, to exhort, to invite, but it is equally our duty to console. The minister should ask of God the Spirit, that he may be filled with his influence as a comforter; that when he ascends his pulpit on the Sabbath morning, his poor hard working people, who have been toiling, fretting with care and anxiety all the week, may say, "Here comes our minister; he is sure to have his mouth filled with good things; as soon as he opens his lips he will utter some great and glorious promise from God's Word. He has little to say himself, but he will be sure to tell us some good old truths with some fresh unction, and we shall go away refreshed." Oh! ye sons of toil, some of you understand this. With weary feet ye come to God's house; but oh how gladly do ye sing there, and how sweetly does your singing harmonize with your hearts! and when you have heard the Word you go away and say, "Would God it were Sunday all

the week! Oh! that I might sit and ever hear the words of God! Oh! that I might sit and ever drink in such comforts, so should I be satisfied as with marrow and fatness!" But sometimes you come up, and there is a flogging for you just when there needs to be consolation; or you get some dry hard metaphysical subject that has not any nourishment for your souls in it, and you go away half starved. You hear some fine discourse with rounded periods, and people say, "Oh! such an oration! never was English so beautifully spoken by Hall or Chalmers. How admirably it was delivered!" But alas! alas! what of the dish, the porcelain, the knife, the plate, the splendid damask cloth, the vase of flowers-where is the food? There is none there. You have got the garnishings and you ought to be thankful, and hold your ministers in esteem, even if they withhold from you your necessary bread! But the child of God won't like that; he says "I am weary of such things, away with these garnishings, give it me in plain rough Saxon if you will, but give me the gospel! Cut it up in any fashion you like, but do give me something to feed upon." The language may be rough, and the style homely, but the heir of heaven says, "There was 'comfort ye my people' in it; and that was what I wanted. Its style, humanly speaking, may not have exactly suited my taste, but it has fed my soul, and that will suffice me."

But, my friends, do not support your ministers as an excuse for the discharge of your own duties; many do so. They think when they have subscribed towards the support of the ministry, it is enough; imagining, as our Roman Catholic friends do, that the priest is to do everything, and the people nothing; but that is very wrong. When God said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," he spake to all his people to comfort one another. And who is there here that knows the Lord and has tasted of his grace who cannot comfort his brethren? There is my strong friend who is on the mount feasting on dying love; he is the subject of rhapsodies and high excitement; his soul is like the chariot of Amminadib; it is on fire with his Master's presence; he is living near to God and drinking in fulness of joy. Oh! my brother, go and tell out a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what sorrow there is upon the earth. When thou art happy, remember there is sure to be some one else sad. When thy cup runneth over, find out an empty cup to catch the drops that overflow. When thy soul is full of joy, go, if thou canst, and find a mourner and let

him hear thy song, or sit down by his side and tell him how glad thou art, and mayhap his poor heart may be warmed by thy sweet cheering words. But art thou weak? Art thou sad thyself? Then go to him who is the great Comforter and ask him to relieve thy distresses, and after that go out thyself and comfort others. There are none so good to comfort others as those who once were comfortless. If I were an orphan now, and needed a helper, I would seek one who had been an orphan in his youth, that he might sympathize with me. Were I houseless and poor, I would not go to the man who has rolled in wealth from earliest youth, but I would seek out the man who, like myself, has trodden with bare feet the cold pavement of the street at midnight; I would seek out the man who, penniless and poor, has begged his way from town to town, and then, by God's providence, has worked himself up; for I could believe that such an one would have a heart to sympathize with me. Go, thou poor tried one, go thou weather-beaten soul if thou canst, and call to thy mate, who is just out at sea with thee, and tell him to be of good cheer. Thou who art in the valley of the shadow of death, sing, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;" and mayhap some brother far behind thee will hear the song, and will take heart.

"Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us,
Foot-prints on the sands of time.
Foot-prints that, perhaps, another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, may take heart again."

Go, and when thou hast found any good, strive to perpetuate it by communicating it to others. When thy foot is on the rock, show others how to put their feet there. When thou art glad, tell others how thou wast made glad, and the same cordial which cheered thee may cheer them likewise. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

Now why do we not enjoy this a little more? I believe one reason is because we are most of us rather too proud to tread in our Master's footsteps. We like not to say with him, "I am not come to be ministered

unto, but to minister." "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" is a sublime admonition, but never surely intended for the meagre sympathy of fashion,-for a lady who can ride in her carriage, and send her card up, when she calls to inquire for a friend, who is sick; but were I to press home the duty, and tell her that "my people" includes the poorest of God's flock, the weakest and the meanest, she would think me a rude and vulgar young man, unacquainted with the etiquette of genteel society. Comfort the poor!-why should she? "The lower classes expect a great deal too much of the upper, I shall not demean myself by stooping to them." This kind of feeling many professing Christians have; they talk with a fine lisp, they deem it enough to say, "Poor creature, I pity your case, I am sorry for you!" But the heir of heaven reads, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." There is a poor man in the streets who has just come begging a crust at your door, and you can see by what he says, that there is something of God's grace in his heart; then comfort him. There is another up the creaking staircase in that back alley; you never went up there, you might be afraid to go; but if you hear of a child of God there do not shrink back. God's diamonds may be often found amidst heaps of rags and tatters, in the very outskirts of the city, the abodes of haggard poverty; so go after them. Whensoever you hear of a child of God, go and find him out; for this command, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," never ought to be put aside by our pride. Why, you go to your churches and chapels, sometimes, and sit in your pews, without even a thought of speaking to your neighbours. Some men will go to a chapel seven years, and scarcely know the name of the next seat-holder. Is that right? Many will sit at the Lord's table too, and not speak to each other. But that is not the fashion of communion as I understand it: it is not the fashion of the gospel either. When I was but a youth, the smallest boy almost that ever joined a church, I remember I thought that everybody believed what he said, and when I heard the minister say brother, I thought I must be his brother, for I was admitted into the church. I once sat next to a gentleman in a pew, and we received the bread and wine together; he called me "Brother," and as I thought he meant it, I afterwards acted upon it. I had no friend in the town of Cambridge, where I was; and one day when walking out, I saw this same gentleman, and I said to myself, "Well now, he called me brother; I know he is a great deal better off than I am, but I don't care for that; I will go and speak to him." So I went and said "How

do you do, brother?" "I have not the pleasure of knowing you," was his reply. I said "I sat next to you at the Lord's table last Sabbath day, sir, and you called me 'brother' when you passed the cup to me, and I was sure you meant it." "There now," said he, "it is worth while seeing some one who believes a little with sincerity in these times; come in with me." And we have been the nearest and dearest bosom friends ever since, just because he saw I took him at his word, that he meant what he said. But now-a days profession has become a pretence and a sham; people sit down at the church together, as though they were brethren, the minister calls you brethren, but he wont speak to you, or own yon as such; his people are his brethren, no doubt, but their it is in such a mysterious sense, that you will have to read some German theologian in order to comprehend it. That person is "your very dear brother," or "your very dear sister," but if you are in distress, go to them and see if they will assist you. I do not believe in such a religion as that. I would have those who profess to be brethren, believe that "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," applies to every member of Christ's church, and that they all ought to carry it out to the utmost of their abilities.

II. Secondly, WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THIS COMMAND? Why does God say "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people!"

The first reason is because God loves to see his people look happy. The Roman Catholic supposes that God is pleased with a man if he whips himself, walks barefooted for many miles, and torments his body. I am certain if I were to see anyone do that, I should say "Poor soul, give him a pair of shoes; do take that whip from him, I cannot bear to see him so." And as I believe that God is infinitely more benevolent than I am, I cannot suppose that he would take pleasure in seeing blood run down a man's back, or blisters rising on his feet. If a man would please God, he had better make himself as happy as he can. When I am by the sea-side, and the tide is coming in, I see what appears to be a little fringe, looking almost like a mist; and I ask a fisherman what it is. He tells me there is no mist there; and that what I see are all little shrimps dancing in ecstasy, throwing themselves in convulsions and contortions of delight. I think within myself, "Does God make those creatures happy, and did he make me to be miserable? Can it ever be a religious thing to be unhappy?" No;

true religion is in harmony with the whole world; it is in harmony with the sun and moon and stars; and the sun shines and the stars twinkle; it is in harmony with all the world; and the world has flowers in it and leaping hills, and carolling birds; it has joys in it; so I believe religion was meant to have joys in it; and I hold it to be an irreligious thing to go moping miserably through God's creation. You cannot help it sometimes, just as sins will overtake you, but happiness is a very virtue. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works," which means not so much eating and drinking, as the living with a joyous countenance, and walking before God, believing in his love, and rejoicing in his grace.

Again, "Comfort ye, Comfort ye my people;" because uncomfortable Christians often dishonour religion. Look at my friend who is come here to-night with such a sorrowful countenance. Yesterday, he had a new servant in his house, and when she went down into the kitchen, she said to her fellow-servant, "Is not our master a pious man?" "Yes, surely." "I thought so because he looks so miserable." Now that is a disgrace to religion. Whenever a Christian man sinks under affliction; when he does not seek grace from God to battle manfully with his sea of troubles; when he does not ask his Father to give him a great weight of consolation whereby he shall be able to endure in the evil day, we may say he does dishonour to the high, and mighty, and noble principles of Christianity, which are fitted to bear a man up in times of the very deepest affliction. It is the boast of the gospel that it lifts men above trouble; it is one of the glories of our Christianity, that it makes us say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." But when the Christian gets sad and miserable, run to him, brother; wipe that tear from his eye, tell him to cheer up, or at least if he is sad, not to let the world see it; if he fasts, let him anoint his head, and wash his face, that he appear not unto men to fast. Let his garments be always white, and let his head lack no oil; let him be happy; for so he giveth credit to religion.

Again, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;" because a Christian in an uncomfortable state cannot work for God much. Break a poor man's heart

and let him come on this platform with a grieved and agonizing spirit; and oh! what a want of power there will be in him! He wants all his time for his own sighs and groans, and will have none to spend upon God's people. We have seen broken-hearted ministers who have sadly lamented that when in trouble, they have found themselves unable to declare God's truth as they could wish. It is when the mind is happy, that it can be laborious. Nothing hurts the man whilst he can keep all right with heaven, and feel it so; whilst he can say that God is his own God, he can work night and day, and scarcely feel fatigued. But take away his comforts and his joys, and then one day's labour distracts his nerves and shatters all his mind. Then comfort God's people, because bruised reeds give little music, and the smoking flax makes little fire. "Comfort ye, comfort ye" the saints, for they will work ten times better when their minds have once been made comfortable.

Again; "Comfort ye" God's people, because ye profess to love them. You call that poor aged cripple, loitering home to-night, leaning on her crutch, your sister; do you know that she will go to bed to-night supperless? Only once has she tasted food to-day, and that was dry bread; do you know that? and is she your sister? Let your heart speak: would you allow your sister to eat dry bread once a day, and have nothing else? No; out of love to her as your relation, you would go and comfort her. There is another poor brother who will pass you on the road home, not poor in bodily things, but poor in soul, distressed in spirits. Don't do as that person has just done-he has quickened his pace, because he says that old man makes him miserable, and it makes him melancholy to talk with him. No; just go to him and say, "Brother, I hear you are in the valley of Baca; well, it is written, they that pass through the valley of Baca make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools." Join yourself to him, for it is written, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." "No, sir," you say, "I intend to go to-night with one or two very good people, and we shall enjoy ourselves together, and be very glad to-night." Yes, but if they be glad you cannot comfort them, so go and seek out some broken-hearted one if thou canst, some poor, sad, mourning one, and say, "The Lord hath appeared to thee of old, saying, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' God's mercies have not failed and, therefore, we are not consumed." Go and cheer him. What! are there no families near you where the head has lately been removed by

death? Have you no bereaved friends? have you no poor in your streets, no distressed, no desponding ones? If you have not, then yonder Scripture might be rent out of the Bible, for it would be useless; but because I am sure you have such, I bid you, in God Almighty's name, to go and seek out the needy, the distressed, and the poor, and send them portions of meat. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

III. In the last place. God never gives his children a duty to do without giving them THE MEANS TO DO IT; he never bids them make bricks without straw, and when he tells us to comfort God's people, we may be certain there are many means whereby they may be comforted. Let me just hint at those things in the everlasting gospel which have a tendency to comfort the saints. What, child of God! Art thou at a loss for a topic to comfort the aching heart? Hark thee, then; go tell of the ancient things of former days; whisper in the mourner's ear electing grace, and redeeming mercy, and dying love. When thou findest a troubled one, tell him of the covenant, in all things ordered well, signed, sealed, and ratified; tell him what the Lord hath done in former days, how he cut Rahab and wounded the dragon; tell him the wondrous story of God's dealings with his people. Tell him that God who divided the Red sea can make a highway for his people through the deep waters of affliction; that he who appeared in the burning bush which was not consumed, will support him in the furnace of tribulation. Tell him of the marvellous things which God has wrought for his chosen people: surely there is enough there to comfort him. Tell him that God watcheth the furnace as the goldsmith the refining pot."

Thy days of trial then,
Are all ordained by heaven;
If he appoint the number 'ten,'
You ne'er shall have eleven."

If that does not suffice, tell him of his present mercies; tell him that he has much left, though much is gone. Tell him there is "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" tell him that now he is accepted in the beloved; tell him that he is now adopted, and that his standing is safe. Tell him that Jesus is above, wearing the breast-plate, or pleading his cause. Tell him that though earth's pillars shake, God is a refuge for us; tell the mourner that the everlasting God faileth not,

neither is weary. Let present facts suffice thee to cheer him.

But if this is not enough, tell him of the future; whisper to him that there is a heaven with pearly gates and golden streets; tell him that "A few more rolling suns at most,
Will land him on fair Canaan's coast."

and therefore he may well bear his sorrows. Tell him that Christ is coming, and that his sign is in the heavens, his advent is near, he will soon appear to judge the earth with equity, and his people in righteousness. And if that suffice not, tell him all about that God who lived and died. Take him to Calvary; picture to him the bleeding hands, and side, and feet; tell him of the thorn-crowned King of grief; tell him of the mighty Monarch of woe and blood, who wore the scarlet of mockery which was yet the purple of the empire of grief; tell him that he himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. And if I have not said enough, go to thy Bible, read its pages, bend thy knee and ask for guidance, and then tell him some great and precious promise, that so thou mayest accomplish thy mission, and comfort one of God's people.

I have but a few words to say to some, who I grieve to think want no comfort. They want something else before they can be comforted. Some of my hearers are not God's people; they have never believed in Christ, nor fled to him for refuge. Now I will tell you briefly and plainly the way of salvation. Sinner! know that thou art in God's sight guilty, that God is just and that he will punish thee, for thy sins. Hark thee, then: there is only one way by which thou canst escape, and it is this: Christ must be thy substitute. Either thou must die, or Christ must die for thee. Thy only refuge is faith in Jesus Christ, whereby thou shalt be assured that Christ did really and actually shed his blood for thee. And if you are able to believe that Christ died for you, I know it will cause you to hate sin, to seek for Christ, and to love and serve him world without end. May God bless us all, forgive us our sins, and accept our souls for Jesus's sake!

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The Statute of David for the Sharing of the Spoil

"And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart. Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day. And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord"—1 Samuel 30:21-26.

Those who associate themselves with a leader must share his fortunes. Six hundred men had quitted their abodes in Judaea; unable to endure the tyranny of Saul they had linked themselves with David, and made him to be a captain over them. They were, some of them, the best of men, and some of them were the worst: in this, resembling our congregations. Some of them were choice spirits, whom David would have sought, but others were undesirable persons, from whom he might gladly have been free. However, be they who they may, they must rise or fall with their leader and commander. If he had the city Ziklag given to him, they had a house and a home in it; and if Ziklag was burned with fire, their houses did not escape. When David stood amid the smoking ruins, a penniless and a wifeless man they stood in the same condition. This rule holds good with all of us, who have joined ourselves to Christ and his cause; we must be partakers with him. I hope we are prepared to stand to this rule to-day.

If there be ridicule and reproach for the gospel of Christ, let us be willing to be ridiculed and reproached for his sake. Let us gladly share with him in his humiliation, and never dream of shrinking. This involves a great privilege, since they that are with him in his humiliation shall be with him in his glory. If we share his rebuke in the midst of an evil generation we shall also sit upon his throne, and share his glory in the day of his appearing. Brethren, I hope the most of us can say we are in for it, to sink or swim with Jesus. In life or death, where he is, there will we, his servants, be. We joyfully accept both the cross and the crown which go with our Lord Jesus Christ: we are eager to bear our full share of the blame, that we may partake in his joy.

It frequently happens that when a great disaster occurs to a band of men, a mutiny follows thereupon. However little it may be the leader's fault, the defeated cast the blame of the defeat upon him. If the fight is won, "it was a soldiers' battle"; every man at arms claims his share of praise. But if the battle is lost, cashier the commander! It was entirely his fault; if he had been a better general he might have won the day. This is how people talk: fairness is out of the question. So in the great disaster of Ziklag, when the town was burned with fire, and wives and children were carried away captive; then we read that they spoke of stoning David. Why David? Why David more than anybody else, it is hard to see, for he was not there, nor any one of them. They felt so vexed, that it would be a relief to stone somebody, and why not David? Brethren, it sometimes happens, even to the servants of Christ, that when they fall into persecution and loss for Christ's sake, the tempter whispers to them to throw up their profession. "Since you have been a Christian, you have had nothing but trouble. It seems as if the dogs of hell were snapping at your heels more than ever since you took upon you the name of Christ. Therefore, throw it up, and leave the ways of godliness." Vile suggestion! Mutiny against the Lord Jesus? Dare you do so? Some of us cannot do so, for when he asks us, "Will ye also go away?" we can only answer, "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." No other leader is worth following. We must follow the Son of David. Mutiny against him is out of the question.

Through floods or flames, if Jesus lead,
We'll follow where he goes."

When a dog follows a man, we may discover whether the man is his master by seeing what happens when they come to a turn in the road. If the creature keeps close to its master at all turnings, it belongs to him. Every now and then you and I come to turns in the road, and many of us are ready, through grace, to prove our loyalty by following Jesus even when the way is hardest. Though the tears stand in his eyes and in ours; though we weep together till we have no more power to weep, we will cling to him when the many turn aside, and witness that he hath the living Word, and none upon earth beside. God grant us grace to be faithful unto death!

If we thus follow our leader and bear his reproach, the end and issue will be glorious victory. It was a piteous sight to see David leaving two hundred men behind him, and marching with his much diminished forces after an enemy who had gone, he scarce knew where, who might be ten times stronger than his little band, and might slay those who pursued them. It was a melancholy spectacle for those left behind to see their leader a broken man, worn and weary like themselves, hastening after the cruel Amalekite. How very different was the scene when he came back to the brook Besor more than a conqueror! Do you not hear the song of them that make merry? A host of men in the front are driving vast herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, and singing as they march, "This is David's spoil!" Then you see armed men, with David in the midst of them, all laden with spoil, and you hear them singing yet another song; those that bring up the rear are shouting exultingly, "David recovered all! David recovered all!" They, the worn-out ones that stayed at the brook Besor, hear the mingled song, and join first in the one shout, and then in the other; singing, "This is David's spoil! David recovered all!"

Yes, we have no doubt about the result of our warfare. He that is faithful to Christ shall be glorified with him. That he will divide the spoil with the strong is never a matter of question. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

The old truth by which we stand shall never be blotted out.
Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines;

Nor shall the powers of darkness raise
Those everlasting lines."

We are certain as we live that the exiled truth shall celebrate its joyful return. The faith once for all delivered to the saints may be downtrodden for a season; but rejoice not over us, O our adversaries: though we fall we shall rise again! Wherefore we patiently hope, and quietly wait, and calmly believe. We drink of the brook Besor by the way and lift up our heads.

This morning I want to utter God-given words of comfort to those who are faint and weary in the Lord's army. May the divine Comforter make them so!

I. I shall begin by saying, first, that FAINT ONES OCCUR EVEN IN THE ARMY OF OUR KING. Among the very elect of David's army heroes who were men of war from their youth up—there were hands that hung down, and feeble knees that needed to be confirmed. There are such in Christ's army at most seasons. We have among us soldiers whose faith is real, and whose love is burning; and yet, for all that, just now their strength is weakened in the way, and they are so depressed in spirit, that they are obliged to stop behind with the baggage.

Possibly some of these weary ones had grown faint because they had been a good deal perplexed. David had so wrongfully entangled himself with the Philistine king, that he felt bound to go with Achish to fight against Israel. I dare say these men said to themselves, "How will this end? Will David really lead us to battle against Saul? When he could have killed him in the cave he would not, but declared that he would not lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed; will he now take us to fight against the anointed of God? This David, who was so great an enemy of Philistia, and slew their champion, will he wax on their behalf?" They were perplexed with their leader's movements. I do not know whether you agree with me, but I find that half-an-hour's perplexity takes more out of a man than a month's labour. When you cannot see your bearings, and know not what to do, it is most trying. When to be true to God it seems that you must break faith with man, and when to fulfil your unhappy covenant with evil would make you false to your Christian professions, things are

perplexing. If you do not walk carefully, you can easily get into a snarl. if Christians walk in a straight line it is comparatively easy going, for it is easy to find your way along a straight road; but when good men take to the new out, that by-path across the meadow, then they often get into ditches that are not in the map, and fall into thickets and sloughs that they never reckoned upon. Then is the time for heart-sickness to come on. These warriors may very well have been perplexed; and perhaps they feared that God was against them, and that now their cause would be put to shame; and when they came to Ziklag, and found it burned with fire, the perplexity of their minds added intense bitterness to their sorrow, and they felt bowed into the dust. They did not pretend to be faint, but they were really so; for the mind can soon act upon the body, and the body fails sadly when the spirits are worried with questions and fears. This is one reason why certain of our Lord's loyal-hearted ones are on the sick list, and must keep in the trenches for a while.

Perhaps, also, the pace was killing to these men. They made forced marches for three days from the city of Achish to Ziklag. These men could do a good day's march with anybody; but they could not foot it at the double quick march all day long. There are a great many Christians of that sort—good, staying men who can keep on under ordinary pressure, doing daily duty well, and resisting ordinary temptations bravely; but at a push they fare badly: who among us does not? To us there may come multiplied labours, and we faint because our strength is small.

Worst of all, their grief came in just then. Their wives were gone. Although, as it turned out, they were neither killed nor otherwise harmed; yet they could not tell this, and they feared the worse. For a man to know that his wife is in the hands of robbers, and that he may never see her again, is no small trouble. Their sons and daughters also were gone: no prattlers climbed their father's knee no gentle daughters came forth to bid them "Welcome home." Their homes were still burning, their goods were consumed, and they lifted up their voice and wept: is it at all wonderful that some of them were faint after performing that doleful miserere? Where would you be if you went home this morning, and found your home burned, and your family gone, you knew not where? I know many Christians who get very faint under extraordinary troubles. They

should not, but they do. We have reason to thank God that no temptation has happened to us but such as is common to men; and yet it may not seem, so; but we may feel as if we were specially tried, like Job. Messenger after messenger has brought us evil tidings, and our hearts are not fixed on the Lord as they ought to be. To those who are faint through grief I speak just now. You may be this, and yet you may be a true follower of the Lamb; and as God has promised to, bring you out of your troubles, he will surely keep his word. Remember, he has never promised that you shall have no sorrows, but that he will deliver you out of them all. Ask yon saints in heaven! Ask those to step out of the shining ranks who came thither without trial. Will one of the leaders of the shining host give the word of command that he shall stop forward who has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, but who never knew what affliction meant while here below? No one stirs in all that white-robed host. Does not one come forward? Must we wait here for ever without response? See! instead of anyone stirring from their ranks, I hear a voice that says, "These are they which came out of great tribulation." All of them have known, not only tribulation, but great tribulation. One promise of the New Testament is surely fulfilled before our eyes—"In the world ye shall have tribulation." When trouble came so pressingly on David's men they felt their weakness and needed to halt at the margin of the brook.

Perhaps, also, the force of the torrent was too much for them. As I have told you, in all probability the brook Besor was only a hollow place, which in ordinary times was almost dry; but in a season of great rain it filled suddenly with a rushing muddy stream, against which only strong men could stand. These men might have kept on upon dry land, but the current was too fierce for them, and they feared that it would carry them off their feet and drown them. Therefore, David gave them leave to stop there and guard the stuff. Many there are of our Lord's servants who stop short of certain onerous service: they are not called to do what their stronger comrades undertake with joy. They can do something, but they fail to do more; they can also bear certain trials, but they are unable to bear more; they faint because they have not yet come to fulness of growth in grace. Their hearts are right in the sight of God, but they are not in condition to surmount some peculiar difficulty. You must not overdrive

them, for they are the feeble of the flock. Many are too faint for needful controversy. I have found a great many of that sort about lately: the truth is very important, but they love peace. It is quite necessary that certain of us should stand up for the faith once delivered to the saints; but they are not up to the mark for it. They cannot bear to differ from their fellows; and they hold their tongues rather than contend for the truth. There are true hearts that, nevertheless, cannot defend the gospel. They wish well to the champions; but they seek the rear rank for themselves. And some cannot advance any further with regard to knowledge; they know the fundamentals, and feel as if they could master nothing more. It is a great blessing that they know the gospel, and feel that it will save them; but the glorious mysteries of the everlasting covenant, of the sovereignty of God, of his eternal love and distinguishing grace, they cannot compass—these are a brook Besor which as yet they cannot swim. It would do them a world of good if they could venture in; but, still, they axe not to be tempted into these blessed deeps. To hear of these things rather wearies them than instructs them: they have not strength enough of mind for the deep things of God. I would have every Christian wish to know all that he can know of revealed truth. Somebody whispers that the secret things belong not to us. You may be sure you will never know them if they are secret; but all that is revealed you ought to know, for these things belong to you and to your children. Take care you know what the Holy Ghost teaches. Do not give way to a fainthearted ignorance lest you be great losers thereby. That which is fit food for babes should not be enough for young men and fathers: we should eat strong meat, and leave milk to the little ones.

Yet these fainting ones were, after all, in David's army. Their names were in their Captain's Register as much as the names of the strong. And they did not desert the colours. They had the same captain as the stoutest-hearted men in the whole regiment; they could call David "Master " and "Lord " as truly as the most lion-like man amongst them. They were in for the same dangers; for if the men in front had been beaten and had retreated, the enemy would have fallen on those who guarded the stuff. If the Amalekites had slain the four hundred, they would have made short work of the two hundred. They had work to do as needful as that of the others. Though they had not to fight, they had to take care of the stuff;

and this eased the minds of the fighting men. I will be bound to say it was a great trial to them not to be allowed to march into the fight. For a brave man to see the troops go past him, and hear the last footfall of his comrades, must have been sickening. Who could pleasantly say, "I am left out of it. There is a glorious day coming, and I shall be away. I shall, until I die, think myself accursed I was not there, and hold my manhood cheap that I fought not with them on that glorious day"? It is hard to brave men to be confined to hospital, and have no drive at the foe. The weary one wishes he could be to the front, where his Captain's eye would be upon him. He pants to smite down the enemies, and win back the spoil for his comrades.

Enough of this. I will only repeat my first point: fainting ones do occur even in the army of our King.

II. Secondly, THESE FAINTING ONES REJOICE TO SEE THEIR LEADER RETURN. Do you see, when David went back they went to meet him, and the people that were with him. I feel very much like this myself. That was one reason why I took this text. I felt, after my illness, most happy to come forth and meet my Lord in public. I hoped he would be here; and so he is. I am glad also to meet with you, my comrades. We are still spared for the wax. Though laid aside a while, we are again among our brethren. Thank God! It is a great joy to meet you. I am sorry to miss so many of our church-members who are laid aside by this sickness; but it is a choice blessing to meet so many of our kindred in Christ. We are never happier than when we are in fellowship with one another and with our Lord.

David saluted the stay-at-homes. Oh, that he might salute each one of us this morning, especially those who have been laid aside! Our King's salutations are wonderful for their heartiness. He uses no empty compliments nor vain words. Every syllable from his lips is a benediction. Every glance of his eye is an *inspiration. When the King himself comes near, it is always a feast day to us! It is a high day and a holiday, even with the faintest of us, when we hear his voice. So they went to meet David, and he came to meet them, and there was great joy. Yes, I venture to mend that, and say there is great joy among us now. Glory be to his

holy name, the Lord is here! We see him, and rejoice with joy unspeakable.

David's courtesy was as free as it was true. Possibly those who remained behind were half afraid that their leader might say, "See here, you idle fellows, what we have been doing for you!" No; he saluted them, but did not scold them. Perhaps they thought, "He will upbraid us that we did not manage to creep into the fray." But no; "he giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." He speaks not a word of upbraiding, for his heart pities them, and therefore he salutes them" My brethren, God has been gracious to us. All hail! " David would have them rejoice together; and give praise unto the most High. He will not clash their cup with a drop of bitter. Oh, for a salutation from our Lord at this good hour! When Christ comes into a company his presence makes a heavenly difference. Have you never seen an assembly listening to an orator, all unmoved and stolid? Suddenly the Holy Ghost has fallen on the speaker, and the King himself has been visibly set forth among them in the midst of the assembly, and all have felt as if they could leap to their feet and cry, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" Then hearts beat fast, and souls leap high; for where Jesus is found his presence fills the place with delight. Now, then, you weary ones, if you be here, any of you, may you rejoice as you now meet your Leader, and your Leader reveals himself to Von! If no one else has a sonnet, I have mine. He must, he shall be praised. " Thou art the King of glory, O Christ! All heaven and earth adores thee. Thou shalt reign for ever and ever."

III. Thirdly, FAINT ONES HAVE THEIR LEADER FOR THEIR ADVOCATE. Listen to those foul-mouthed men of Belial, these wicked men: how they rail against those whom God has addicted! They came up to David and began blustering—"These weaklings who were not in the fight, they shall not share the spoil. Let them take their wives and children and begone." These fellows spoke with loud, harsh voices, and greatly grieved the feebler ones. Who was to speak up for them? Their leader became their advocate.

First, do you notice, he pleads their unity? The followers of the son of Jesse are one and inseparable. David said, "Ye shall not do so, my

brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us." "We are all one," says David. "God has given the spoil, not to you alone, but to us all. We are all one company of brothers." The unity of saints is the consolation of the feeble. Brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ would refresh his wearied ones by the reflection that we are all one in him. I may be the foot, all dusty and travel-stained; and you may be the hand, holding forth some precious gem; but we are still one body. Yonder friend is the brow of holy thought, and another is the lip of persuasion, and a third is the eye of watchfulness; but still we are one body in Christ. We cannot do, any one of us, without his fellow; each one ministers to the benefit of all. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of thee." We are all one in Christ Jesus. Surely this ought to comfort those of you who, by reason of feebleness, are made to feel as if you were very inferior members of the body: you are still living members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ your Lord, and let this suffice you. One life is ours, one love is ours, one heaven shall be ours in our one Saviour.

David further pleaded free grace, for he said to them, "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us." He did not say, "With that which you have conquered, and fairly earned in battle," but "that which the Lord hath given us." Look upon every blessing as a gift, and you will not think anyone shut out from it, not even yourself. The gift of God is eternal life; why should you not have it? Deny not to anyone of your brethren any comfort of the Covenant of grace. Think not of any man, "He ought not to have so much joy." It is all of free grace; and if free grace rules the hour, the least may have it as well as the greatest. If it is all of free grace, then, my poor struggling brother, who can hardly feel assured that you are saved, yet if you are a believer, you may claim every blessing Of the Lord's gracious covenant. God freely gives to you as well as to me the provisions of his love; therefore let us be glad, and not judge ourselves after the manner of the law of condemnation.

Then he pleaded their needfulness. He said, "These men abided by the Stuff." No army fights well when its camp is unguarded. It is a great thing for a church to know that its stores are well guarded by a praying band. While some of us are teaching in the school or preaching in the street, we have great comfort; in knowing that a certain number of our friends are

praying for us. To me it is a boundless solace that I live in the prayers of thousands. I will not say which does the better service—the man that preaches, or the man that prays; but I know this, that we can do better without the voice that preaches than without the heart that prays. The petitions of our bed-ridden sisters are the wealth of the church. The kind of service which seems most commonplace among men is often the most precious unto God. Therefore, as for those who cannot come into the front places of warfare, deny them not seats of honour, since, after all, they may be doing the greater good. Remember the statute, "They shall part alike."

Notice that David adds to his pleading a statute. I like to think of our great Commander, the Lord Jesus, making statutes. For whom does he legislate? For the first three? For the captains of thousands? No. He makes a statute for those who are forced to stay at home because they are faint. Blessed be the name of our Lord Jesus, he is always looking to the interests of those who have nobody else to care for them! If you can look after your own cause, you may do so; but if you are so happy as to be weak in yourself, you shall be Strong in Christ. Those who have Christ to care for them are better off than if they took care of themselves. He that can leave his concerns with Christ has left them in good hands. Vain is the help of self, but all-sufficient is the aid of Jesus.

To sum up what I mean: I believe the Lord will give to the sick and the suffering an equal reward with the active and energetic, if they are equally concerned for his glory. The Lord will also make a fair division to the obscure and unknown as well as to the renowned and honoured, if they are equally earnest. Oh, tell me not that she who rears her boy for Christ shall miss her reward from him by whom an apostle is recompensed! Tell me not that the woman who so conducts her household that her servants come to fear God, shall be forgotten in the day when the "Well dones" are distributed to the faithful! Homely and unnoticed service shall have honour as surely as that with which the world is ringing.

Some of God's people are illiterate, and they have but little native talent. But if they serve the Lord as best they can, with all their heart, they shall take their part with those that are the most learned and accomplished. He

that is faithful over a little shall have his full reward of grace. It is accepted according to what a man hath. We may possess no more than two mites, but if we cast them into the treasury, our Lord will think much of them.

Some dear servants of God seem always to be defeated. They seem sent to a people whose hearts are made gross and their ears dull of hearing. Still, if they have truthfully proclaimed the Word of the Lord their reward will not be according to their apparent success, but according to their fidelity.

Some saints are constitutionally depressed and sad; they are like certain lovely ferns, which grow best under a constant drip. Well, well, the Lord will gather these beautiful ferns of the shade as well as the roses of the sun; they shall share his notice as much as the blazing sunflowers and the saddest shall rejoice with the gladdest. You Little-Faiths, you Despondencies, you Much-Afraids, you Feeble-Minds, you that sigh more than you sing, you that would but cannot, you that have a great heart for holiness, but feel beaten back in your struggles, the Lord shall give you his love, his grace, his favour, as surely as he gives it to those who can do great things in his name. Certain of you have but a scant experience of the higher joys and deeper insights of the kingdom, and it may be that you are in part faulty because you are so backward; and yet, if true to your Lord, your infirmities shall not be reckoned as iniquities. If lawfully detained from the field of active labour this Statute stands last for ever, for you as well as for others: "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike."

IV. Now, fourthly, FAINT ONES FIND JESUS TO BE THEIR GOOD LORD IN EVERY WAY. Was he not a good Lord when he first took us into his army of salvation? What a curious crew they were that enlisted under David! "Every one that was in debt. and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them." He was a captain of ragamuffins; but our Lord had not a better following. I was a poor wretch when I came to Christ; and I should not wonder if that word is near enough to the truth to describe you. I was a good-for-nothing, over head and ears in debt, and without a penny to pay. I came to Jesus so utterly down at the heel, that no one else would

have owned me. He might well have said,—“No, I have not come to this—to march at the head of such vagrant beggars as these.” Yet he received us graciously, according to his promise, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Since then, how graciously has he borne with us! We are not among those self-praising ones who have wrought such wonders of holiness; but we mourn our shortcomings and transgressions; and yet he hath not cast away the people whom he did foreknow. When we look back upon our character as soldiers of Christ, we feel ashamed of ourselves' and amazed at his grace. If anybody had told us that we should have been such poor soldiers as we have been, we should not have believed them. We do not excuse ourselves: we are greatly grieved to have been such failures. Yet our gracious Lord has never turned us out of the ranks. He might have drummed us out of the regiment long ago; but here we are still enrolled, upheld, and smiled upon. What a captain we have! None can compare with him for gentleness. He still owns us, and he declares, They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels.”

Brethren, let us exalt the name of our Captain. There is none like him. We have been in distress since then: and he has been in distress with us. Ziklag Smoked for him as well as for us. In all, their affliction he was afflicted. Have you not found it so? When we have come to a great difficulty like the brook Besor he has gently eased his commands, and has not required of us what we were unable to yield. He has not made some of you pastors and teachers, for you could not have borne the burden. He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. He has suited the march to the foot, or the foot to the march. How sweetly he has smiled on what we have done! Have you not wondered to see how he has accepted your works and your prayers? You have been startled to find that he did answer your feeble petitions. When you have spoken a word for Jesus, and God has blessed it, why you have thought, “Surely there is a mistake about this! How could my feeble word have a blessing on it?” Beloved, we follow a noble Prince. Jesus is the chief among ten thousand for tenderness as well as for everything else. How tenderly considerate he is! How gentle and generous! He has never said a stinging word to us ever since we knew him. He is that riches which has no sorrow added to it. He has rebuked us; but his rebukes have been like an excellent oil, which has never broken our heads. When we have left him, he has turned and

looked upon us, and so he has cut us to the quick; but he has never wounded us with any sword except that which cometh out of his mouth, whose edge is love. When he goes away from us, as David did from those two hundred who could not keep up with him, yet he always comes back again in mercy, and salutes us with favour. We wonder to ourselves that we did not hold him, and vow that we would never let him go; but we wonder still more that he should come back so speedily, so heartily, leaping over the mountains, hastening like a roe or a young hart over the hills of division. Lo! he has come to us. He has come to us, and he makes our hearts glad at his coming. Let us indulge our hearts this morning as we take our share in the precious spoil of his immeasurable love. He loves the great and the small with like love; let us be joyful all round.

There is one choice thing which he will do, that should make us love him beyond measure. David, after a while, went up to Hebron to be made king over Judah. Shall I read you in the second book of Samuel, the second chapter, and the third verse? "And his men that were with him" (and among the rest these weak ones who could not pass over the brook Besor), "and his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household; and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron." Yes, he will bring me up, even me! He will bring you up, you faintest and weakest of the band. There is a Hebron wherein Jesus reigns as anointed King, and he will not be there and leave one of us behind. There is no kingdom for Jesus without his brethren, no heaven for Jesus without his disciples. His poor people who have been with him in faintness and weariness shall be with him in glory, and their households. Hold on to that additional blessing. I pray you, hold on to it. Do not let slip that word—"and their households." I fear we often lose a blessing on our households through clipping the promise. When the jailer asked what he must do to be saved, what was the answer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You have heard that answer hundreds of times, have you not? Did you ever hear the rest of it? Why do preachers and quoters snip off corners from gospel promises? It runs thus: "Thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Lay hold of that blessed enlargement of grace, "and thy house." Why leave out the wives and the children? Will you let the Amalekites have them? Do not be satisfied without household salvation. Let us plead this word of the Lord this morning:—O thou blessed David, whom we

have desired to follow, who has helped us so graciously even unto this day, when thou art in thy kingdom graciously remember us, and let it be said of us, "and David went up thither, and his men that were with him David brought up (they did not go up of themselves) every man with his household; and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron;" "Every man with his household." I commend that word to your careful notice. Fathers, have you yet seen your children saved? Mothers, are all those daughters brought in yet? Never cease to pray until it is so, for this is the crown of it all, "Every man with his household."

What I have to say lastly is this: how greatly I desire that you who are not yet enlisted in my Lord's band would come to him because you see what a kind and gracious Lord he is! Young men, if you could see our Captain, you would down on your knees and beg him to let you enter the ranks of those who follow him. It is heaven to serve Jesus. I am a recruiting sergeant, and I would fain find a few recruits at this moment. Every man must serve somebody: we have no choice as to that fact. Those who have no master are slaves to themselves. Depend upon it, you will either serve Satan or Christ, either self or the Saviour. You will find sin, self, Satan, and the world to be hard masters; but if you wear the livery of Christ, you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was his like among the choicest of princes. He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle. When the wind blows cold he always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of the cross lies ever on his shoulders. If he bids us carry a burden, he carries it also. If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind, and tender, yea lavish and superabundant in love, you always find it in him. These forty years and more have I served him, blessed be his name! and I have had nothing but love from him. I would be glad to continue yet another forty years in the same dear service here below if so it pleased him. His service is life, peace, joy. Oh, that you would enter on it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus even this day! Amen.

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Consolation in Christ

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies."—Philippians 2:1. The language of man has received a new coinage of words since the time of his perfection in Eden. Adam could scarce have understood the word consolation, for the simple reason that he did not understand in Eden the meaning of the word sorrow. O how has our language been swollen through the floods of our griefs and tribulations! It was not sufficiently wide and wild for man when he was driven out of the garden into the wide, wide world. After he had once eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as his knowledge was extended so must the language be by which he could express his thoughts and feelings. But, my hearers, when Adam first needed the word consolation, there was a time when he could not find the fair jewel itself. Until that hour when the first promise was uttered, when the seed of the woman was declared as being the coming man who should bruise the serpent's head, Adam might masticate and digest the word sorrow, but he could never season and flavour it with the hope or thought of consolation, or if the hope and thought might sometimes flit across his mind like a lightning flash in the midst of the tempest's dire darkness, yet it must have been too transient, too unsubstantial, to have made glad his heart, or to soothe his sorrows. Consolation is the dropping of a gentle dew from heaven on desert hearts beneath. True consolation, such as can reach the heart, must be one of the choicest gifts of divine mercy; and surely we are not erring from sacred Scripture when we avow that in its full meaning, consolation can be found nowhere save in Christ, who has come down from heaven, and who has again ascended to heaven, to provide strong and everlasting consolation for those whom he has bought with his blood.

You will remember, my dear friends, that the Holy Spirit, during the present dispensation, is revealed to us as the Comforter. It is the Spirit's business to console and cheer the hearts of God's people. He does convince of sin; he does illuminate and instruct; but still the main part of his business lies in making glad the hearts of the renewed, in confirming

the weak, and lifting up all those that be bowed down. Whatever the Holy Ghost may not be, he is evermore the Comforter to the Church; and this age is peculiarly the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in which Christ cheers us not by his personal presence, as he shall do by-and-bye, but by the indwelling and constant abiding of the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Now, mark you, as the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, Christ is the comfort. The Holy Spirit consoles, but Christ is the consolation. If I may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the Physician, but Christ is the medicine. He heals the wound, but it is by applying the holy ointment of Christ's name and grace. He takes not of his own things, but of the things of Christ. We are not consoled to-day by new revelations, but by the old revelation explained, enforced, and lit up with new splendour by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost the Comforter. If we give to the Holy Spirit the greek name of Paraclete, as we sometimes do, then our heart confers on our blessed Lord Jesus the title of the Paracletus. If the one be the Comforter, the other is the comfort.

I shall try this morning, first, to show how Christ in his varied positions is the consolation of the children of God in their varied trials; then we shall pass on, secondly, to observe that Christ in his unchanging nature is a consolation to the children of God in their continual sorrows; and lastly, I shall close by dwelling awhile upon the question as to whether Christ is a consolation to us—putting it personally, "Is Christ a present and available consolation for me."

I. First, CHRIST IN HIS VARIED POSITIONS IS A CONSOLATION FOR THE DIVERS ILLS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Our Master's history is a long and eventful one; but every step of it may yield abundant comfort to the children of God. If we track him from the highest throne of glory to the cross of deepest woe, and then through the grave up again the shining steps of heaven, and onward through his mediatorial kingdom, on to the day when he shall deliver up the throne to God even our Father, throughout every part of that wondrous pathway there may be found the flowers of consolation growing plenteously, and the children of God have but to stoop and gather them. "All his paths drop fatness, all his garments which he wears in his different offices,

smell of myrrh, and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby he makes his people glad."

To begin at the beginning, there are times when we look upon the past with the deepest grief. The withering of Eden's flowers has often caused a fading in the garden of our souls. We have mourned exceedingly that we have been driven out to till the ground with the sweat of our brow—that the curse should have glanced on us through the sin of our first parent, and we have been ready to cry, "Woe worth the day in which our parent stretched forth his hand to touch the forbidden fruit." Would to God that he had rested in unsullied purity, that we his sons and daughters might have lived beneath an unclouded sky, might never have mourned the ills of bodily pain or of spiritual distress. To meet this very natural source of grief, I bid you consider Christ in old eternity. Open now the eye of thy faith, believer, and see Christ as thine Eternal Covenant-head stipulating to redeem thee even before thou hadst become a bond-slave, bound to deliver even before thou hadst worn the chain. Think, I pray thee, of the eternal council in which thy restoration was planned and declared even before thy fall, and in which thou wast established in an eternal salvation even before the necessity of that salvation had begun. O, my brethren, how it cheers our hearts to think of the anticipating mercies of God! He anticipated our fall, foreknew the ills which it would bring upon us, and provided in his eternal decree of predestinating love an effectual remedy for all our diseases, a certain deliverance from all our sorrows. I see thee, thou fellow of the Eternal, thou equal of the Almighty God! Thy goings forth were of old. I see thee lift thy right hand and engage thyself to fulfil thy Father's will—"In the volume of the book it is written of me, 'I delight to do thy will, O God.'" I see thee forming, signing, and sealing that eternal covenant by which the souls of all the redeemed were there and then delivered from the curse, and made sure and certain inheritors of thy kingdom and of thy glory. In this respect Christ shines out as the consolation of his people.

Again, if ever your minds dwell with sadness upon the fact that we are at this day absent from the Lord, because we are present in the body, think of the great truth that Jesus Christ of old had delights with the sons of men, and he delights to commune and have fellowship with his people

now. Remember that your Lord and Master appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre under the disguise of a pilgrim. Abraham was a pilgrim, and Christ to show his sympathy with his servant, became a pilgrim too. Did he not appear also to Jacob at the brook Jabbok? Jacob was a wrestler, and Jesus appears there as a wrestler too. Did he not stand before Moses under the guise and figure of a flame in the midst of a bush? Was not Moses at the very time the representative of a people who were like a bush burning with fire and yet not consumed? Did he not stand before Joshua—Joshua the leader of Israel's troops, and did he not appear to him as the captain of the Lord's host? And do you not well remember that when the three holy children walked in the midst of the fiery furnace, he was in the midst of the fire too, not as a king, but as one in the fire with them? Cheer then thy heart with this consoling inference. If Christ appeared to his servants in the olden time, and manifested himself to them as bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, in all their trials and their troubles, he will do no less to thee to-day; he will be with thee in passing through the fire; he will be thy rock, thy shield, and thy high tower; he will be thy song, thy banner, and thy crown of rejoicing. Fear not, he who visited the saints of old will surely not be long absent from his children to-day; his delights are still with his people, and still will he walk with us through this weary wilderness. Surely this makes Christ a most blessed consolation for his Israel.

And now to pursue the Master's footsteps, as he comes out of the invisible glories of Deity, and wears the visible garment of humanity. Let us view the babe of Bethlehem, the child of Nazareth, the Son of Man. See him, he is in every respect a man. "Of the substance of his mother" is he made; in the substance of our flesh he suffers; in the trials of our flesh he bows his head; under the weakness of our flesh he prays, and in the temptation of our flesh he is kept and maintained by the grace within. You to-day are tried and troubled, and you ask for consolation. What better can be afforded you than what is presented to you in the fact that Jesus Christ is one with you in your nature—that he has suffered all that you are now suffering—that your pathway has been aforetime trodden by his sacred foot—that the cup of which you drink is a cup which he has drained to the very bottom—that the river through which you pass is one through which he swam, and every wave and billow which rolls over your head did in old

time roll over him. Come! art thou ashamed to suffer what thy Master suffered? Shall the disciple be above his Master, and the servant above his Lord? Shall he die upon a cross, and wilt not thou bear the cross? Must he be crowned with thorns, and shalt thou be crowned with laurel? Is he to be pierced in hands and feet, and are thy members to feel no pain? O cast away the fond delusion I pray thee, and look to him who "endured the cross, despising the shame," and be ready to endure and to suffer even as he did.

And now behold our Master's humanity clothed even as ours has been since the fall. He comes not before us in the purple of a king, in the garb of the rich and the respectable, but he wears a dress in keeping with his apparent origin; he is a carpenter's son, and he wears a dress which becomes his station. View him, ye sons of poverty, as he stands before you in his seamless garment, the common dress of the peasant; and if you have felt this week the load of want—if you have suffered and are suffering this very day the ills connected with poverty, pluck up courage, and find a consolation in the fact that Christ was poorer than you are—that he knew more of the bitterness of want than you ever yet can guess. You cannot say, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I have not where to lay my head;" or if you could go as far as that, yet have you never known a forty-day's fast. You have some comforts left to you; you do know at least the sweet taste of bread to the hungry man, and of rest to the weary; but these things were often denied to him. Look at him, then, and see if there be not to you comfort in Christ.

We pass now, O Jesus, from thy robe of poverty to that scene of shame in which thy garments were rent from thee, and thou didst hang naked before the sun. Children of God, if there be one place more than another where Christ becomes the joy and comfort of his people, it is where he plunged deepest into the depths of woe. Come, see him, I pray you, in the garden of Gethsemane; behold him, as his heart is so full of love that he cannot hold it in—so full of sorrow that it must find a vent. Behold the bloody sweat as it distils from every pore of his body, and falls in gouts of gore upon the frozen ground. See him as all red with his own blood, wrapped in a bloody mantle of his own gore, he is brought before Herod and Pilate, and the Sanhedrim. See him now as they scourge him with

their knotted whips, and afresh encrimson him, as though it were not enough for him to be dyed once in scarlet, but he must again be enwrapped in purple. See him, I say, now that they have stripped him naked. Behold him as they drive the nails into his hand and into his feet. Look up and see the sorrowful image of your dolorous Lord. O mark him, as the ruby drops stand on the thorn-crown, and make it the blood-red diadem of the King of misery. O see him as his bones are out of joint, and he is poured out like water and brought into the dust of death. "Behold and see, was there ever sorrow like unto his sorrow that is done unto him?" All ye that pass by, draw near and look upon this spectacle of grief. Behold the Emperor of woe who never had an equal or a rival in his agonies! Come and see him; and if I read not the words of consolation written in lines of blood all down his side, then these eyes have never read a word in any book; for if there be not consolation in a murdered Christ, there is no joy, no peace to any heart. If in that finished ransom price, if in that efficacious blood, if in that all-accepted sacrifice, there be not joy, ye harpers of heaven, there is no joy in you, and the right hand of God shall know no pleasures for evermore. I am persuaded, men and brethren, that we have only to sit more at the Cross to be less troubled with our doubts, and our fears, and our woes. We have but to see his sorrows, and lose our sorrows; we have to see his wounds, and heal our own. If we would live, it must be by contemplation of his death; if we would rise to dignity it must be by considering his humiliation and his sorrow.

"Lord, thy death and passion give
Strength and comfort in my need,
Every hour while here I live,
On thy love my soul shall feed."

But come now, troubled heart, and follow the dead body of thy Master, for though dead, it is as full of consolation as when alive. It is now no more naked; the loving hands of Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, and the Magdalene and the other Mary, have wrapped it in cerements, and have laid it in the new tomb. Come, saints, not to weep, but to dry your tears. You have been all your lifetime subject to fear of death: come, break your bonds asunder; be free from this fear. Where your Master sleeps, you may surely find an easy couch. What more could you desire than to lie upon the bed of your royal Solomon? The grave is now no

more a charnel-house or a dark prison; his having entered it makes it a blessed retiring-room, a sacred bath in which the King's Esthers purify their bodies, to make them fit for the embraces of their Lord. It becomes now not the gate of annihilation, but the portal of eternal bliss,—a joy to be anticipated, a privilege to be desired. "Fearless we lay us in the tomb, and sleep the night away, for thou art here to break the gloom, and call us back to day."

I am certain, brethren, that all the consolations which wise men can ever afford in a dying hour will never be equal to that which is afforded by the record, that Jesus Christ ascended from the tomb. The maxims of philosophy, the endearments of affection, and the music of hope, will be a very poor compensation for the light of Jesus' grave. Death is the only mourner at Jesus' tomb, and while the whole earth rejoices at the sorrow of its last enemy, I would be all too glad to die, that I might know him, and the power of his resurrection. Heir of heaven! if thou wouldst be rid once for all of every doubting thought about the hour of thy dissolution, look, I pray thee, to Christ risen from the dead. Put thy finger into the print of the nails, and thrust thy hand into his side, and be not faithless but believing. He is risen; he saw no corruption; the worms could not devour him; and as Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, he has become the first fruits of them that slept. Inasmuch as he has risen, thou shalt rise. He has rolled the stone away, not for himself alone, but for thee also. He has unwrapped the grave-clothes, not for his own sake, but for thy sake too, and thou shalt surely stand in the latter day upon the earth, when he shall be here, and in thy flesh thou shalt see God.

Time would fail us, if we should attempt to track the Master in his glorious pathway after his resurrection. Let it suffice us briefly to observe that, having led his disciples out unto a mountain, where he has delighted often to commune with them, he was suddenly taken up from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight. We think we may conjecture, by the help of Scripture, what transpired after that cloud had covered him. Did not the angels

"Bring his chariot from on high
To bear him to his throne,
Clap their triumphant wings and cry,

His glorious work is done?"

Do you not see him, as he mounts his triumphal chariot,

"And angels chant the solemn lay,

Lift up your heads, ye golden gates,

Ye everlasting doors give away?"

Behold angels gazing from the battlements of heaven, replying to their comrades who escort the ascending Son of Man. "Who is the King of Glory?" And this time those who accompany the Master sing more sweetly and more loudly than before, while they cry, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in."

And now the doors

"Loose all their bars of massy light,

And wide unfold the radiant scene,"

and he enters. "He claims those mansions as his right," and all the angels rise to "receive the King of Glory in." Behold him, as he rides in triumph through heaven's streets; see Death and Hell bound at his chariot wheels. Hark to the "Hosannas" of the spirits of the just made perfect! Hear how cherubim and seraphim roll out in thunders their everlasting song—"Glory be unto thee; glory be unto thee, thou Son of God, for thou wast slain and thou hast redeemed the world by thy blood." See him as he mounts his throne and near his Father sits. Behold the benignant complacency of the paternal Deity. Hear him as he accepts him and gives him a name which is above every name. And I say, my brethren, in the midst of your tremblings, and doubtings, and fearings, anticipate the joy which you shall have, when you shall share in this triumph, for know you not that you ascended up on high in him? He went not up to heaven alone, but as the representative of all the blood-bought throng. You rode in that triumphal chariot with him; you were exalted on high, and made to sit far above principalities and powers in him; for we are risen in him, we are exalted in Christ. Even at this very day in Christ that Psalm is true—"Thou hast put all things under his feet; thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands." Come, poor trembler, thou art little in thine own esteem, and but a worm and no man! Rise, I say, to the height of thy nobility; for thou art in Christ greater than angels be, more magnified and glorified by far. God gives you grace, ye who have faith, that ye may now, in the fact of Jesus Christ's exaltation, find consolation

for yourself!

But now to-day methinks I see the Master, as he stands before his Father's throne, dressed in the garments of a priest; upon his breast I see the Urim and Thummim glittering with the bejewelled remembrances of his people. In his hand I see still the remembrance of his sacrifice, the nail mark; and there I see still upon his feet the impress of the laver of blood in which he washed himself not as the priest of old with water but with his own gore. I hear him plead with authority before his Father's face, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." O my poor prayers, ye shall be heard! O my faint groans, ye shall be answered! Oh, my poor troubled soul, thou art safe, for

"Jesus pleads and must prevail,
His cause can never, never fail."

Come, my poor heart, lift up thyself now from the dunghill; shake thyself from the dust; ungird thy sackcloth and put on thy beautiful garments. He is our advocate to-day, our eloquent and earnest pleader, and he prevails with God. The Father smiles—he smiles on Christ; he smiles on us in answer to Jesus Christ's intercession. Is he not here also the consolation of Israel?

I only remark once more that he who has gone up into heaven shall so come in like manner as he was seen to go up into heaven. He ascended in clouds, "Behold he cometh with clouds." He went up on high with sound of trumpet and with shout of angels. Behold he cometh! The silver trumpet shall soon sound. 'Tis midnight: the hours are rolling wearily along; the virgins wise and foolish are all asleep. But the cry shall soon be heard—"Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him." That same Jesus who was crucified shall come in glory. The hand that was pierced shall grasp the sceptre. Beneath his arm he shall gather up all the sceptres of all kings; monarchies shall be the sheaves, and he shall be the kingly reaper. On his head there shall be the many crowns of universal undisputed dominion. "He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth." His feet shall tread on the mount of Olivet, and his people shall be gathered in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Lo, the world's great battle is almost begun; the trumpet sounds the beginning of the battle of Armageddon. To the fight, ye warriors of Christ, to the fight; for it is your

last conflict, and over the bodies of your foes ye shall rush to meet your Lord—he fighting on the one side by his coming, you on the other side by drawing near to him. You shall meet him in the solemn hour of victory. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and you that are alive and remain shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last triumphant sounding of the dread tremendous trump. Then shall you know to the full how Christ can console you for all your sorrows, all your shame, and all your neglect which you have received from the hand of men. Ay, to-day bethink you, there awaits the recompense of an earthly splendour for your earthly poverty; there awaits you earthly dignity for your earthly shame. You shall not only have spiritual, but you shall have temporal blessings. He who takes away the curse will take it away not only from your soul, but from the very ground on which you tread. He who redeems you shall redeem not only your spirit, but your body. Your eyes shall see your Redeemer; your hands shall be lifted up in acclamation, and your feet shall bear your leaping joys in the procession of his glory, in your very body in which you have suffered for him you shall sit with him upon the throne and judge the nations of the earth. These things, I say, are all full of the purest and highest consolation to the children of God.

II. Having taken nearly all my time upon the first point, I can only say a word or two upon the second and on the third. The second point was to be this—CHRIST IN HIS UNCHANGING NATURE; a consolation for our continual sorrows.

Christ is to his people a surpassing consolation. Talk of the consolations of philosophy? We have all the philosopher can pretend to; but we have it in a higher degree. Speak of the charms of music which can lull our sorrows to a blessed sleep?

"Sweeter sounds than music knows,
Charm us in our Saviour's name."

"Jesus, the very thought of thee,
With rapture fills my breast."

Speak we of the joys of friendship? and sweet they are indeed; but "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother"—"a brother born for adversity." There is one who is better than all friends, more able to cheer

than those who are dearest and nearest to our hearts. Or, speak we of the joys of hope? and certainly hope can console us when nothing else can do it. He is our hope. We cast the anchor of our hope into that which is within the veil, whither the forerunner hath for us entered. The consolations of Christ are unrivalled by any which can be offered by wit, by wisdom, by mirth, by hope itself; they are incomparable, and can never be surpassed.

Again, the consolations of Christ, from the fact of his unchanging nature, are unfailing.

"When every earthly prop gives way,
He still is all our strength and stay."

Look you at Job, and see the picture of how Christ can console. The messenger rushes in—"The Sabeans have taken away the oxen and the asses!" "Well, well," Job might console himself and say, "but the sheep are left." "But the fire of God hath fallen on the sheep! and the Chaldeans have carried away the camels and slain the servants!" "Alas!" the good man might say, "but my children are left, and if they be spared, then I can still have joy." "The wind has come from the wilderness, and smitten the four corners of the house, and all thy sons and daughters are dead!" Ah! well-a-day, penniless and childless, the patriarch might weep; but, looking on his wife, he would say, "There still remaineth one sweet comforter, my well-beloved spouse." She bids him "curse God and die;" "speaking as one of the foolish women speaketh." Yet might Job say, "Though my wife hath failed me, there remaineth at least three friends; there they sit with me on the dunghill, and they will console me." But they speak bitterness, till he cries, "Miserable comforters are ye all." Well, but at least he has his own body in health, has he not? No, he sits down upon a dunghill, and scrapes himself with a potsherd, for his sores become intolerable. Well, well, "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." He may at least cheer himself with the fact, that he lives. "Why should a living man complain?" Yes, but he fears he is about to die. And now comes out the grandeur of his hope: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though the worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." All the other windows are darkened; but the sun shines in at the oriel window of redemption. All the other doors are shut; but this great door of hope and joy still stands wide open. All other wells are dry; but

this flows with an unceasing stream. Brothers and sisters, when all things else depart, an unchanging Christ shall be your unchanging joy.

Furthermore, the consolations of Christ are all powerful consolations. When a poor soul is so deep in the mire that you cannot lift it with the lever of eloquence, nor draw it up with the hands of sympathy, nor raise it with wings of hope, he can touch it with his finger and it can spring up from the mire, and put his feet upon a rock, and feel the new song in its mouth and its goings well established. There is no form of melancholy which will not yield before the grace of God; there is no shape of distress which will not give way before the divine energy of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, when he uses Christ as the consolation.

Again: this consolation is everlasting consolation. It consoled you, O aged sire, when as a youth you gave your heart to Christ; it was your joy in the mid-winter of your manhood; it has become your strength and your song in the days of your old age; when tottering on your staff you shall go down to Jordan's brink, he will be your consolation then. In the prospect of your coming dissolution, yea, when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you shall fear no evil, for he is with you; his rod and his staff shall comfort you. All other things shall pass away as a dream when you awaketh; but this substantial support shall abide with you in the midst of the swellings of Jordan, in the hour of the departure of your spirit from your body.

And then remember that this is a consolation which is always within the believer's reach. He is "a very present help in time of trouble." Ye may always cheer your heart with Christ when other things are far away. When a friend visits you not, and your chamber becomes lonely—when spouse has forgotten to speak the kind word to you, and children have become ungrateful, he will make your bed in your sickness, he will be your never-failing friend and abide with you in every dark and gloomy hour, till he brings you into his dear arms, where you will be emparadised for ever and ever.

III. I close now with my last point—the grave and serious question, IS CHRIST AN AVAILABLE CONSOLATION FOR ME?

Who art thou, friend? Art thou one who needs no consolation? Hast thou a righteousness of thine own? Let me put it in thine own words. You are a good man, kind to the poor, charitable, upright, generous, holy. You believe there may be some faults in yourself, but they must be very few, and you trust that what with your own merits and with God's mercy you may enter heaven. In the name of God, I do solemnly assure you, that Christ is not an available consolation for you. Christ will have nothing to do with you, so long as you have anything to do with yourself. If you are trusting in any measure whatever upon aught that you have ever done or hope to do, you are trusting in a lie, and Christ will never be friends with a lie. He will never help you to do what he came to do himself. If you will take his work as it is, as a finished work, well and good; but if you must needs add to it your own, God shall add unto you the plagues which are written in this Book, but he shall by no means give to you any of the promises and the comforts which Christ can afford.

But instead thereof, I will suppose that I address myself this morning to a man who says, "I was once, I think, a believer in Christ; I made a profession of religion, but I fell from it, and I have lost for years all the hope and joy I ever had; I think I was a presumptuous man, that I pretended to have what I never had, and yet at the time I really thought I had it. May I think that there is consolation in Christ for a backslider and a traitor like me? Often, sir, do I feel as if the doom of Judas must be mine—as if I must perish miserably, like Demas, who loved this present world." Ah! backslider, backslider, God speaks to thee this morning, and he says, "Return ye backsliding children of men, for I am married to you;" and if married, there has never been a divorce between Christ and you. Has he put you away? Unto which of his creditors has he sold you? Where do you read in his Word, that he has divided from the affection of his heart one whose name was ever written in his Book? Come, come, backslider, come again to the cross. He who received you once will receive you again. Come where the flood is flowing; the blood that washed you once, can wash you yet once more. Come, come, thou art naked, and poor, and miserable; the raiment which was given to thee once, shall array thee again with beauty. The unsearchable riches which were opened up to thee aforetime, shall be thine again.

"To thy Father's bosom press'd,
Once again a child confess'd,
From his hand no more to roam,
Come, backsliding sinner, come."

But I hear another say, "I am not a backslider, but simply one who desires to be saved. I can say honestly, I would give my right arm from its socket if I might but be saved. Why, sir, if I had ten thousand worlds I would freely cast them away as pebble stones, and worthless, if I might but find Christ." Poor soul, and does the devil tell thee thou shalt never have Christ? Why, thou hast a warrant to lay hold on Christ to-day. "No," sayest thou, "I have no right whatever." The fact that thou sayest thou hast no right should at least comfort the minister in addressing himself freely to thee. The right of a sinner to come to Christ does not lie in the sinner, nor in any feelings which the sinner may have had; it lies in the fact that Christ commands him to come. If one of you should receive as you went out of yonder door a command to go at once to Windsor, and have an interview with the Queen, as soon as you had received the order and were sure it came from her, you might say, "Well, but if I had known this, I should have put on other clothes;" but the order is peremptory, "Come now; come just as you are;" you would, I think, without any very great doubt, though greatly wondering, take your place and ride there at once. When you came to the gate, some tall grenadier might ask you what you were at. "Why," he might say, "you are not fit to come and see Her Majesty; you are not a gentleman; you have not so many hundreds a year; how can you expect to be admitted?" You show the command, and he lets you pass on. You come to another door, and there is an usher there. "You are not in a court dress," says he; "you are not properly robed for the occasion." You show the command, and he lets you pass on. But suppose when at last you should come into the ante-room you should say, "Now I dare not go in; I am not fit; I feel I shall not know how to behave myself." Suppose you are silly enough not to go, you would be disobedient and ten times more foolish in disobeying than you could have been by any blunders in behaviour if you had obeyed. Now it is just so with you to-day. Christ says, "Come unto me." He does not merely invite you, because he knows you would think you did not deserve the invitation; but he gives the command, and he bids me say to you, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you;" he bids me command you in his name, "Believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Of his grace and mercy he puts it as a command. "But," you say. Ah! what right have you to say "but" to the Lord's commands? Again, I say, away with your "buts." What right have you to be "butting" at his laws and his commands. "But," you say, "do hear me for a moment." I will hear you then. "Sir, I cannot imagine that if such a hard-hearted sinner as I am were really to trust Christ I should be saved." The English of that is, that you give God the lie. He says you shall be, and do you think he speaks an untruth? "Ah!" says another, "but it is too good to be true. I cannot believe that just as I am, if I trust in Christ, my sin shall be forgiven." Again, I say, the simple English of that is, that you think you know better than God; and so you do in fact stand up and say to his promise, "Thou art false." He says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "Ah!" you say, "but that does not mean me?" Can any language speak more plainly? "Him. What him? Why, any "him" in the world.

"Yes," says one, "but the invitations are made to character—'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden;' I am afraid I am not heavy laden enough?" Yes, but you will mark, while the invitation is given to character, yet the promise is not given to the character; it is given to those who come—"Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" and while that one invitation may be confined to the weary and heavy laden, yet there are scores of others that stand as wide and free as the very air we breathe. If you have that qualification, do not come even with it, because you are unqualified when you think you are qualified; you are unfit when you think you are fit; and if you have a sense of need, which you think makes you fit to come to Christ, it shows you are not fit and do not know your need; for no man knows his need till he thinks he does not know his need, and no man is in a right state to come to Christ till he thinks he is not in a right state to come to Christ. But he who feels that he has not one good thought or one good feeling to recommend him, he is the man who may come. He who says, "But I may not come," is the very man that is bidden to come. Besides, my friends, it is not what you think, or what I think; it is what Christ says; and is it not written by the hand of the Apostle John, "This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent?" Men who say it is not the duty of sinners to believe, I cannot think what they make out of such a text as that—"This is the commandment,

that ye believe on Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent;" and that one where God expressly says, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not." Why, I should think I was addressing heathens, if I addressed a company of men who thought that God did not command men to repent; for Scripture is so plain upon the point, and I say, if God commands thee to do it, thou mayest do it. Let the devil say "Nay," but God says "Yes." Let him stand and push you back; but say to him, "Nay, Satan, nay, I come here in God's name;" and as devils fear and fly before the name of Christ, so will Satan and thy fears all fly before his command. He commands thee to believe—that is, to trust him. Trust him, soul, trust him; right or wrong, trust him.

But some of you want a great temptation, and a great deal of despair, before you will trust him. Well, the Lord will send it to you, if you will not trust him without it. I remember John Bunyan says he had a black temptation, and it did him a great deal of good; for, said he, "Before I had the temptation I used always to be questioning a promise, and saying, 'May I come, or may I not come?'" But at last he said, "Yea, often when I have been making to the promise, I have seen as if the Lord would refuse my soul for ever: I was often as if I had run upon the pike, and as if the Lord had thrust at me, to keep me from him as with a flaming sword." Ah! and perhaps you may be driven to that. I pray you may; but I would infinitely rather that the sweet love and grace of God would entice you now to trust Jesus Christ just as you are. He will not deceive you, sinner; he will not fail you. Trusting him, you shall build on a sure foundation, and find him who is the consolation of Israel and the joy of all his saints. Amen.

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A Little Sanctuary

"Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far

off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them, as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."—Ezekiel 11:16.

The text begins with "therefore." There was a reason for God's speaking in this way. It is profitable to trace the why and the wherefore of the gracious words of the Lord. The way by which a promise comes usually shines with a trail of light. Upon reading the connection we observe that those who had been carried captive were insulted by those who tarried at Jerusalem. They spoke in a very cruel manner to those with whom they should have sympathized. How often do prosperous brothers look with scorn on the unfortunate! Did not Job of old complain, "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease"?

The Lord hears the unkind speeches of the prosperous when they speak bitterly of those who are plunged in adversity. Read the context—"Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession." This unbrotherly language moved the Lord to send the prophet Ezekiel with good and profitable words to the children of the captivity. Many a time the cruel word of man has been the cause of a tender word from God. Because of the unkindness of these people, therefore God, in lovingkindness, addressed in words of tender grace those whom they despised. As, in our Saviour's days, the opposition of the Pharisees acted upon the Saviour like a steel to the flint, and fetched bright sparks of truth out of him, so the wickedness of man has often been the cause why the grace of God has been more fully revealed. This is some solace when under the severe chastisement of human tongues.

Personally, I am glad of this comfort. I would gladly be at peace with all men: I would not unnecessarily utter a word of provocation; but it is a world in which you cannot live at peace unless you are willing to be unfaithful to your conscience. Offences, therefore, will come. But why should we fret unduly under this trial when we perceive that out of opposition to the cause of God occasions arise for the grandest displays of God's love and power? If from the showers we gain our harvests, we will

not mourn when the heavens gather blackness, and the rain pours down. If the wrath of man is made to praise the Lord, then let man be wrathful if he wills. Brethren, let us brace ourselves to bear the bruises of slanderous tongues! Let us take all sharp speeches and cutting criticisms to God. It may be that he will hear what the enemy has said, and that he will be very pitiful to us. Because of the bitterness of the oppressor he will bring home to our heart by the Spirit, with greater tenderness and power, some sweet word of his which has lain hidden from us in his Book. Be not dismayed, but go to him who is the God of all comfort, who comforteth all those that are bowed down, and he will give you a word which shall heal your wounds, and breathe peace into your spirit.

Now to proceed at once to our text, seeing that the occasion of it is a sufficient preface. Let us notice, first, where God's people may be, and yet be God's people. They may be by God's own hand "scattered among the countries, and cast far off among the heathen." And, secondly, what God will be to them when they are in such circumstances. "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." May the Holy Spirit, who spake by Ezekiel, speak through these words to our hearts!

I. First, then, WHERE GOD'S PEOPLE MAY BE.

If you ask where they may be, the answer to the question is, first, they may be under chastisement.

If you will remember, in the Book of Deuteronomy, God threatened Israel that if they, as a nation, sinned against him, they should be scattered among the nations, and cast far off among the heathen. Many a time they so sinned. I need not recapitulate the story of their continued transgressions and multiplied backslidings. The Lord was slow to fulfil his utmost threatenings, but put forth his utmost patience, till there was no more room for long-suffering. At last the threatened chastisement fell upon them, and fierce nations carried them away in bonds to the far-off lands of their dread. They were not utterly destroyed: their being scattered among the people showed that they still existed. Though they were a people scattered and peeled, yet they were a people, even as Israel

is to this day. For all that tyrants and persecutors have ever done, yet the Jew is still extant among us, even as the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed. Israel is still to the front, and will be to the world's end. The Lord hath not cast away his people, even though he has cast them far off among the heathen. He has scattered them among the countries, but they are not absorbed into those countries; they still remain a people separated unto the living God, in whom he will yet be glorified.

But, assuredly, the chosen seed came under chastisement. When, by the rivers of Babylon, they sat down and wept, yea, they wept when they remembered Zion, then were they under the Lord's heavy hand. The instructed among them knew that their being in exile was the fruit of the transgressions of their fathers, and the result of their own offences against God. And yet, though they were under chastisement, God loved them, and had a choice word for them, which I will by-and-by endeavour to explain to you; for the Lord said, "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary." Beloved, you and I may lie under the rod of God, and we may smart sorely because of our iniquities, even as David did; and yet we may be the children of God towards whom he has thoughts of grace. Our moisture may be turned into the drought of summer, while day and night the Lord's hand is heavy upon us; we may be in sore temporal trouble, and may be compelled by an enlightened conscience to trace our sorrow to our own folly. We may be in great spiritual darkness, and may be compelled to confess that our own sins have procured this unto ourselves. And yet, for all that, the Lord may have sent the chastisement in love, and in nothing else but love; and he may intend by it, not our destruction, but the destruction of the flesh; not our rejection, but our refining, not our curse, but our cleansing. Let us take comfort, seeing that God has a word to say to his mourners and to his afflicted, and that word in the text is a "yet" which serves to show that there is a clear limit to his anger. He smites, but it is with an "although" and a "yet": he scatters them to a distance, but he sends a promise after them, and says, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." In the Lord's hand towards his chosen there may be a rod, but not a sword. It is a heavy rod, but it is not a rod of iron. It is a rod that bruises, but it is not a rod that batters to pieces. God tempers our afflictions, severe though they may seem to be; and though, apparently,

he strikes us with the blows of a cruel one, yet there is a depth unutterable of infinite love in every stroke of his hand. His anger endureth but for a night: he hastens to display his favour. Listen to his own words of overflowing faithfulness: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." However, it is clear that God's own people may be under chastisement.

But, secondly, wherever they are, whether they are under chastisement or not, they are where the Lord has put them. Read the text carefully: "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries." The Lord's hand was in their banishment and dispersion: Jehovah himself inflicted the chastisement for sin. You say to me, "Why, it was Nebuchadnezzar who carried them away: the Babylonians and the Chaldeans took them captive." Yes, I know it was so; but the Lord regards these as instruments in his hand, and he says, "I have done it," just as Job, when the Chaldeans and the Sabeans had swept away his property, and his children had been destroyed through the agency of Satan, yet said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." The Lord was as truly in the taking away as he was in the giving. It is well to look beyond all second causes and instrumentalities. Do not get angry with those who are the nearer agents, but look to the First Cause. Do not get fretting about the Chaldeans and Sabeans. Let them alone, and Satan too. What have you to do with them? Your business is with God. See his hand, and bow before it. Say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Come to that, for then you will be able to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Though your trials be peculiar, and your way be hedged up, yet the hand of the Lord is still in everything; and it behoves you to recognize it for your strengthening and consolation.

Note, next, that the people of God may dwell in places of great discomfort. The Jews were not in those days like the English, who colonize and find a home in the Far West, or even dwell at ease beneath sultry skies. An ancient Hebrew out of his own country was a fish out of water: out of his proper element. He was not like the Tyrian, whose ship

went to Tarshish, and passed the Gates of Hercules, seeking the Ultima Thule. The Jew tarried at home. "I dwell among mine own people," said a noble woman of that nation; and she did but speak the mind of a home-loving people who settled each one upon his own patch of ground, and sat down under his vine and fig-tree, none making him afraid. Their Lord had driven them into a distant land, to rivers whose waters were bitter to their lips, even to the Tigris and the Euphrates. They were in a foreign country, where everything was different from their ways—where all the customs of the people were strange and singular. They would be a marked and despised people, nobody would fraternize with them, but all would pass them by in scorn. The Jews excited much prejudice, for, as their great adversary, the wicked Haman, said, "their laws were diverse from all people," and their customs had a peculiarity about them which kept them a distinct race. It must have been a great discomfort to God's people to dwell among idolaters, and to be forced to witness obscene rites and revolting practices. God's own favoured ones in these days may be living where they are as much out of place as lambs among wolves, or doves among hawks. Do not imagine that God makes a nest of down for all his eaglets. Why, they would never take to flying if he did not put thorns under them, and stir up their nest that they may take to their wings, and learn the heavenward flight to which they are predestinated! Perfect comfort on earth is no more to be expected than constant calm on the sea. Sleep in the midst of a battle, and ease when on the march, would be more in place than absolute rest in this present state. God meaneth not his children to take up their inheritance on this side Jordan. "This is not your rest: because it is polluted." And so he often puts us where we are very uncomfortable. Is there any Christian man who can say that he would, if he might, take up his lot for ever in this life? No, no. There is an irksomeness about our condition, disguise it as we may. In one way or another we are made to remember that we are in banishment. We have not yet come unto our rest. That rest "remaineth for the people of God," but as yet we have not come into the land which the Lord our God has given to us to be our place of rest. Some of God's servants feel this in a very peculiar manner, for their soul is among lions, and they dwell among those whose tongues are set on fire of hell. Abel was hated by Cain, Isaac was mocked by Ishmael, Joseph was among envious brethren, Moses was at first rejected by Israel, David was pursued by Saul, Elijah was hunted

by Jezebel, Mordecai was hated by Haman; and yet these men were wisely placed, and the Lord was eminently with them. I mention this in order that tried believers may still know that, however uncomfortable their position, it is nevertheless true that God has put them there for some good end.

The beloved of God may yet be in a place of great barrenness as to all spiritual good. "I have cast them far off among the heathen"—far off from my temple—far off from the place of my worship—far off from the shrine of my glory. "I have scattered them among the countries," where they will learn no good—where, on the contrary, they will see every abominable thing, and often feel like Lot, who was vexed with the filthy conversation of the people among whom he dwelt. We are not kept apart from the wicked by high walls, or guards of heavenly soldiery. Even our Lord did not pray that we should be taken out of the world. Grace builds neither monasteries nor nunneries. "Woe is me," is frequently the cry of God's chosen, "that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" David knew what it was to be cut off from the assemblies of the Lord's house, and to be in the cave or in the wilderness. It may be so with you, and yet you may be a child of God. You may not be out of your place, for the dear path to his abode may go straight through this barren land. You may have to pass for many a day through this great and terrible wilderness, this land of fiery serpents, and of great drought, on your way to the land that floweth with milk and honey. To make heaven the sweeter we may find our exile made bitter. Our education for eternity may necessitate spiritual tribulation, and bereavement from visible comforts. To be weaned from all reliance on outward means may be for our good, that we may be driven in upon the Lord, and made to know that he is all in all. Doubtless the jeers of Babylon endeared the quiet of Zion to the banished: they loved the courts of the Lord's house all the more for having sighed in the halls of the proud monarch.

Worse still, the Lord's chosen may be under oppression through surrounding ungodliness and sin. The captive Israelites found Babylonia and Chaldea to be a land of grievous oppression. They ridiculed them, and bade them sing them one of the songs of Zion. They required of them mirth when their hearts were heavy. On the festivals of their false gods

they demanded that the worshippers of the Eternal One should help in their choirs, and tune their harps to heathenish minstrelsy. Even Daniel, in his high position under the Persian monarch, found that he was not without adversaries, who rested not till they had cast him into a den of lions. Those who were far away, whether in Babylonia or in Persia, found themselves the constant subjects of assault from the triumphant foe. They were crushed down, until they cried by reason of their oppression. It was not the first time that the people of God had been in the iron furnace. Did they not come forth from the house of bondage at the first, even from Egypt? Neither was Babylon the last place of trial for saints; for until the end of time the seed of the serpent will war with the seed of the woman. Is it not still true of us, as well as of our Saviour, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son"? Expect still to meet with opposition and oppression while you are passing to the land where the seed shall possess the heritage. Those of us who bear public testimony may have to bear the brunt of the battle, and suffer much from angry tongues. Nevertheless, to us it shall be an evident token of the Lord's favour, inasmuch as he counts us worthy to suffer for his name's sake.

But enough of that. I am making a very long story about the grievous routes through which we wend our way to the Celestial City. We climb on hands and knees up the Hill Difficulty; we tremblingly descend the steep of Humiliation. We feel our way through the tremendous pass of the Shadow of Death, and hasten through Vanity Fair, and walk warily across the Enchanted Ground. Not much of the way could one fall in love with. Perhaps the only part of it is that Valley of Humiliation, where the shepherd boy sat down and sang his ditty among the wild flowers and the lambs. One might wish to be always there; but fierce adversaries invade even these tranquil meadows, for hard-by where the shepherd sang his happy pastoral Christian met Apollyon, and had to struggle hard for his life. Do you not remember the spot where
"The man so bravely played the man,
He made the fiend to fly"?

You see where God's people may be, and yet may be none the less, but all the more, under the divine protection. Are you in difficult places? Be not dismayed, for this way runs the road to glory. Sigh not for the dove's wing

to hurry to your rest, but take the appointed path: the footsteps of your Lord are there.

II. So, now, I hasten at once into the sweet part of the subject, which consists of this: WHAT GOD WILL BE TO HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY GET INTO THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."

Brethren, the great sanctuary stood on Mount Sion, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." That glorious place which Solomon had builded was the shrine to which the Hebrew turned his eye: he prayed with his window open toward Jerusalem. Alas! when the tribes were carried away captive, they could not carry the holy and beautiful house with them, neither could they set up its like within the brazen gates of the haughty city. "Now," says the Lord God in infinite condescension, "I will be a travelling temple to them. I will be as a little sanctuary to each one of them. They shall carry my temple about with them. Wherever they are, I will be, as it were a holy place to them." In using the word "little," the gracious God would seem to say, "I will condescend to them, and I will be as they are. I will bow down to their littleness, and I will be to each little one of them a little sanctuary." Even the temple which Solomon builded was not a fit habitation for the infinite Jehovah, and so the Lord will stoop a little further, and be unto his people, not as the sanctuary "exceedingly magnificent," but as a little temple suitable for the most humble individual, rather than as a great temple in which vast multitudes could gather. "I will be to them as a little sanctuary" is a greatly condescending promise, implying an infinite stoop of love. There is a good deal more in my text than I shall be able to bring out, and I may seem, in making the attempt, to give you the same thought twice over. Please bear with me. Let me begin at the beginning.

A sanctuary was a place of refuge. You know how Joab fled to the horns of the altar to escape from Solomon's armed men: he ran to the temple hoping to find sanctuary there. In past ages, churches and abbeys and altars have been used as places of sanctuary to which men have fled when in danger of their lives. Take that sense, and couple it with the cities of refuge which were set up throughout all Israel, to which the man who

killed another by misadventure might flee to hide himself from the manslayer. Now, beloved fellow-believer, wherever you are, wherever you dwell, God will be to you a constant place of refuge. You shall flee from sin to God in Christ Jesus. You shall flee from an accusing conscience to his pardoning love. You shall flee from daily cares to him who careth for you. You shall flee from the accusations of Satan to the advocacy of Jesus. You shall flee even from yourselves to your Lord, and he will be to you in all senses a place of refuge. This is the happy harbour of all saints in all weathers. Hither come all weather-beaten barques, and cast anchor in placid waters.

"God is our refuge, tried and proved,
Amid a stormy world:
We will not fear though earth be moved,
And hills in ocean hurled,"

O my hearer, make the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, and then shalt thou know the truth of this text: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Wherever thou art cast, God will be to thee a suitable refuge, a little haven for thy little boat: not little in the sense that he cannot well protect thee; not little in the sense that his word is a small truth, or a small comfort, or a small protection, but little in this respect—that it shall be near thee, accessible to thee, adapted to thee. It is as though the refuge were portable in all our wanderings, a protection to be carried and kept in hand in all weathers. Thou shalt carry it about with thee wherever thou art, this "little sanctuary." Thy God, and thy thoughts of thy God, and thy faith in thy God, shall be to thee a daily, perpetual, available, present refuge. Oh, it is a delightful thought to my mind, that from every danger and every storm God will be to us an immediate refuge, which we carry about with us, so that we abide under the shadow of the Almighty!

Next, a sanctuary signifies also a place of worship. It is a place where the divine presence is peculiarly manifested—a holy place. It usually means a place where God dwells, a place where God has promised to meet with his people, a place of acceptance where prayers, and praises, and offerings come up with acceptance on his altar. Now, notice, God says to his

people, when they are far away from the temple and Jerusalem, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." Not, "I have loved the people, and I will build them a synagogue, or I will lead others to build for them a meeting-place; but I myself will be to them as a little sanctuary." The Lord Jesus Christ himself is the true place of worship for saved souls. "There is no chapel in the place where I live," says one. I am sorry to hear it, but chapels are not absolutely essential to worship, surely. Another cries, "There is no place of public worship of any sort where the gospel is fully and faithfully preached." This is a great want, certainly, but still, do not say, "I am far away from a place of worship." That is a mistake. No godly man is far away from a holy place. What is a place of worship? I hope that our bed-chambers are constantly places of worship. Place of worship? Why, it is one's garden where he walks and meditates. A place of worship? It is the field, the barn, the street, when one has the heart to pray. God will meet us by a well, a stone, a bush, a brook, a tree. He has great range of trysting-places when men's hearts are right.

"Where'er we seek him he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

When a man lives near to God, and abides in him, he should shake off the folly of superstition, and talk no more of holy places. God himself, his own presence makes a place of worship. Do you not catch the fulness of the thought? Yonder is Jacob. He lies down to sleep in a desert place with a stone for his pillow. No bishop had ever been upon the spot to consecrate it, no service had been held in the place by way of dedication, and yet when he awoke in the morning, he said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." God had been to his servant a little sanctuary in that instance, as he has been oftentimes since. Whenever you go to sea, God in your cabin shall be to you a little sanctuary. When you travel by railway, the carriage shall, through the Lord's presence, be a little sanctuary. God's presence, seen in a bit of moss, made in the desert for Mungo Park a little sanctuary. How often have the streets of London been to some of us as the golden pavements of the New Jerusalem, for God has been there! The Lord himself is the temple of saints in heaven, and he is their temple on earth. When God draws near to us, we worship and rejoice. Whenever we are abroad, and cannot come to the visible sanctuary where multitudes

worship, let us ask the Lord to be to us as "a little sanctuary." Have not your hearts cried out as you have thought of this house when you have been far away—"Ziona, Ziona, the place of our solemn assemblies, when shall we return to thee? O sacred spot, where we have worshipped God, and God has met with us, and made the place of his feet glorious, when shall we again behold thee"? I shall not contend with the feeling; but I would supplant it with this higher thought: the Lord himself is our dwelling-place, and our holy temple. Hath he not said, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary"?

Now, go a little farther. Our God is to us a place of stillness. What was the sanctuary of old? The sanctuary was the most holy place, the third court, the innermost of all within the veil. It was the stillest place that ever was on earth: a closet of absolute silence. You must not think of the tabernacle in the wilderness as being a huge building. It was a small affair, and the innermost room of all was of narrow dimensions. The Holy of Holies was great for holiness, but not for space. There was this peculiarity about it, that it was the shrine of unbroken quiet. Was ever a voice heard in it? Once in the year the high-priest went in, and filled it full of the smoke of incense as he waved his censor in the mystic presence; but otherwise it was a chamber in which there was no footfall of living thing, or voice of mortal man. Here was the home of absolute quiet and silence. The stillness within the Holy of Holies of the temple must have reached the intensity of awe. What repose one might enjoy who could dwell in the secret place of the Most High! How one sighs for stillness! We cannot get it to the full anywhere in this country: even to the loneliest hill-top the scream of the railway-engine rises to the ear. Utter and entire stillness, one of the richest joys on this side heaven, one cannot readily obtain. Those who live in the wear and tear of this city life—and it is an awful wear and tear—might well pay down untold gold to be still for a while. What would we not give for quiet, absolute quiet, when everything should be still, and the whirring wheels of care should cease to revolve for at least a little while?

I sometimes propose to myself to wait upon God and be still. Alas! There is the bell! Who is this? Somebody that will chatter for a quarter of an hour about nothing! Well, that intruder has gone; let us pray. We are on

our knees. What is this? A telegram! One is half frightened at the very sight of it: it is opened, and it calls you away to matters which are the reverse of quieting. Where is stillness to be had? The only prescription I can give is this promise: "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." If you can get with God, you will then escape from men, even though you have to live among them. If you can baptize your spirit into the great deeps of Godhead, if you can take a plunge into the fathomless love of the covenant, if you can rise to commune with God, and speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend, then will he be unto you as a little sanctuary, and you shall enjoy that solemn silence of the soul which hath music in it like the eternal harmonies. The presence of the Lord will be as a calm hand for that fevered brow, and a pillow for that burdened head. Use your God in this way, for so he presents himself to you.

The sanctuary was a place of mercy. When the high-priest entered within the veil, he passed into the throne-room of mercy. The blood had been sprinkled there, and man might draw near to the God of mercy. A light was shining—a light of love and mercy, between the wings of the cherubim. Those angelic forms were ministers of mercy, attendants upon the Lord of grace. Before the high-priest stood the mercy-seat. That was the name of the cover of the sacred ark of the covenant. On that mercy-seat there was the shechinah, which symbolized the presence of a merciful God. Of that mercy-seat the Lord had said, "There will I meet with you." The holy place was a house of mercy. God was not there in power to destroy, nor in subtle wisdom to discover folly: he was there in mercy, waiting to forgive. Now, dear friends, God says, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary," that is to say, an accessible throne of mercy, an accessible place of mercy. When men have no mercy on you, go to God. When you have no mercy on yourself—and sometimes you have not—run away to God. Draw near to him, and he will be to you as a little sanctuary.

The sanctuary was the house of mercy, and hence, a place of condescension—"a little sanctuary." Brethren, to suit our needs the blessings of grace must be given in little forms. What are we great in at all except in sin? We hear of "great men." O friends, a great man! Does not the term make you laugh? Did you ever hear of a great ant, or a great emmet, or a great nothing? And that is all that the greatest of us can ever

be. Our degrees and ranks are only shades of littleness; that is all. When the Lord communes with the greatest of men, he must become little to speak with him.

I cannot convey to you quite what I see to be the meaning of this little sanctuary, laying the stress upon the adjective "little." If you are talking of anything that is very dear, the tendency is always to call it "little." The affectionate terms of language are frequently diminutives. One never says, "My dear great wife," but we are apt to say, "My dear little wife." We speak thus of things which are not "little" really, but we use the word as a term of affection. To speak very simply, there is a cosiness about a little thing which we miss in that which is on a large scale. We say, "Well, I did so enjoy that little prayer-meeting; but when it grew so much in numbers I seemed lost in it." It is to me so marvellous that I hardly dare to say what I mean; but when the Lord brings himself down to our capacity he is greatly dear to us, and he would have us feel at home with him, comfortable with him. When he becomes to us "as a little sanctuary," and we are able to compass his mercy to ourselves, and perceive its adaptation to our little trials and little difficulties, then we feel ourselves at home with him, and he is most dear to us. O thou blessed God, thou art so great, that thou must, as it were, belittle thyself to manifest thyself to me; how I love and adore thee that thou wilt deign to do this! Glory be to thy great name, though the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, yet thou dwellest in the temple of my poor heart!

Dear brethren, the sanctuary was only a little place. But then, if it had been ever so great—if it had been as spacious as this whole island, and had been shut in to be the house of God—would it have been a house fitted to contain the infinite God? If you take the arch of heaven as a roof, and floor it with the sea, or if you soar into still more boundless space, is that a house fit for him who filleth all immensity? When Jehovah makes himself little enough to be in the least comprehended by us, the descent is immeasurable. It is nothing more to him to come down to count the hairs of our head than to bow in the infinity of his mercy to take an interest in our littlenesses.

Go a stage further. That sanctuary, of which we read in the Old

Testament, was not only a place of great stillness, great mercy, and great condescension but it was a place of great holiness. "Holiness becometh thy house." This applied to the whole temple, but the inner shrine was called "sanctum sanctorum"—the Holy of Holies, for so the Hebrews make a superlative. It was the holiest place that could be. The world is an unholy place, and at times it is most grievously so. You mix up with people who defile you; how can you help it? Your daily business calls you to see and hear many things which are defiling. When these things are more than ordinarily glaring, you say to yourself, "Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness, that I might get away from the very sight of men!" I was with a mountain-climbing friend some time ago, and being thirsty, I drank some water from a fountain by the roadside. when I held the cup to my companion, he refused it, saying, "I don't drink that." I said, "Why don't you drink it?" He answered, "I wait till I have climbed up into the mountains, where mortal men never pollute the streams, and then I drink. I like drinking of fountains at which none but birds sip: where the stream pours forth from God's hand pure as crystal." Alas! I cannot climb with my Alpine friend as to material things; but what a blessed thing it is to get right away from man, and drink of the river of God which is full of water, and know the joys of his own right hand, which are for evermore! What bliss to enter into the Holy of Holies! Now, you cannot do that by getting into a cell, or by shutting yourselves up in your room; but you can enter the most holy place by communion with God. Here is the promise; the text means this—"I will be to them as a little sanctuary—a little Holy of Holies. I will put them into myself as into the most holy place, and there will I hide them. In the secret of my tabernacle will I hide them. I will set them up upon a rock." Away from the unholiness of your own hearts, and the unholiness of those about you, get to your God, and hide yourselves in him.

Again, we may regard the sanctuary as a place of cleansing. That may be gathered from the other rendering of my text. "I will be unto them a little sanctification." God is the sanctification of his people he cleanses them from daily defilements, and is himself their righteousness. Those that come to God shall find in him sanctification for the daily acts of life, cleansing from ordinary as well as extraordinary transgression. We want not only the great blood-washing, but also the lesser washing of the feet

with water; and the Lord himself will give us this blessing. Did not Jesus take a towel, and gird himself for this very purpose?

Lastly, God will be to us a place of communion and of revelation. In the Holy of Holies God spoke with man, on that one day in the year, in a wondrous manner; and he that had been there, and came forth alive, came out to bless the congregation. Every day of the year the teaching of the sanctuary was that in God there was everything his people wanted. In the holy place was the shechinah light, and "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." "The Lord is my light and my salvation." In the holy place were the cherubim: God has legions of angels at his bidding, waiting to bless his people. In the holy place was the ark: God is to us the ark of the covenant. He has entered into covenant with men, towards us he has a throne of grace, and there he meets us, even in Christ Jesus, who is our propitiation.

Within that ark there were three things: the rod of Aaron, that divine work of Christ which always buds; the pot of manna, the emblem and token of the living bread whereon his people feed; and the tablets of the law unbroken, in all their splendour, whereby the saints are justified. O brethren, if you want anything, if you want everything, go to God for it! He will be to you as a little sanctuary; that is to say, he will bring to you everything which was inside that holy place. Though but one piece of furniture, yet that ark of the covenant did really contain in itself, and round about it, all that the heirs of God can ever need while in this wilderness. Let this be a joy to you this day. Do not rely upon the creature. "All men are liars," said David; and he was not far out. Broken cisterns abound on all sides; why waste your time on them? Get you straight away to your Creator, and find your all in him. If this day you are wrapped up in the things that are seen and temporal, may God deliver you therefrom, for all these things will melt as you hold them in your hand! The joys of this life are like the ice palace of Montreal, which is fair to look upon while the winter lasts, but it all dissolves as the spring comes on. All things round about us here are myths and dreams. This is the land of fancies and of shadows. Pray God to get you our of them, and that you may find in him your sanctuary, and indeed all that you want.

If at this time you have lost many of the comforts of this life, and seem bereaved of friends, then find in God your "little sanctuary." Go home to your chamber with holy faith and humble love, and take him to be your all in all, and he will be all in all to you. Pray after this fashion—"O Lord, so work in me by thy Spirit that I may find thee in all things, and all things in thee!"

The Lord has ways of weaning us from the visible and the tangible, and bringing us to live upon the invisible and the real, in order to prepare us for that next stage, that better life, that higher place, where we shall really deal with eternal things only. God blows out our candles, and makes us find our light in him, to prepare us for that place in which they need no candle, for the glory of God is their light; and where, strange to tell, they have no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. The holy leads to the holiest: living upon God here leads to living with God hereafter. Oh, that God would gradually lift us up above all the outward, above all the visible, and bring us more and more into the inward and unseen! If you do not know anything about this, ask the Lord to teach you this riddle; and if you do know it, ask him to keep you to the life and walk of faith, and never may you be tempted to quit it for the way of sight and feeling. For Christ's sake we ask it. Amen.

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Songs in the Night

"No one says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night.'
[Job 35:10]

Elihu was a wise man, very wise, though not as wise as Jehovah, who finds order in confusion; therefore Elihu, being very puzzled at seeing the afflictions of Job, studied him to find the cause of it, and he very wisely hit upon one of the most likely reasons, although it did not happen to be

the right one in Job's case. He said within himself—"Surely, if men are tested, and tried, and extremely troubled, it is because, while they think about their troubles and distress themselves about their fears, they don't say, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?'" Elihu's reason was right in the majority of cases. The great cause of the Christian's distress, the reason for the depths of sorrow into which many believers are plunged, is simply this—that while they are looking around, on the right hand and on the left, to see how they may escape their troubles, they forget to look to the hills where all real help comes from; they don't say, "Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?" We will, however, leave that question, and dwell on those sweet words, "God my Maker, who gives songs in the night."

The world has its night. It seems necessary that it should have one. The sun shines in the day, and men go out to their labors; but they grow weary, and nightfall comes, like a sweet blessing from heaven. The darkness draws the curtains, and shuts out the light, which might prevent our eyes from slumber; while the sweet, calm stillness of the night permits us to rest on our beds, and there forget for a while our cares, until the morning sun appears, and an angel puts his hand on the curtain, and draws it open once again, touches our eyelids, and commands us to rise, and proceed to the labors of the day.

Night is one of the greatest blessings men and women enjoy; we have many reasons to thank God for it. Yet night is, to many, a gloomy time. There is "the pestilence that stalks in darkness;" there is "the terror by night;" there is the dread of robbers and of sudden disease, with all those fears that the timid know when they have no light with which they can discern objects. It is then they imagine that spiritual creatures walk the earth; though, if they really knew the truth, they would find it to be true, that— "Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth, unseen, both when we sleep and when we are awake," and that at all times they are all around us—not more by night than by day.

Night is the time of terror and alarm to most men and women. Yet even night has its songs. Have you ever stood by the seaside at night, and heard the pebbles sing, and the waves chant God's glories? Or have you

never risen from your bed, and opened your bedroom window, and listened? Listened to what? Silence—except now and then a murmuring sound, which seems like sweet music. And have you not imagined that you heard the harp of God playing in heaven? Didn't you conceive, that the distant stars, those eyes of God, looking down on you, were also lips of song—that every star was singing God's glory, singing, as it shone, its mighty Maker, and his lawful, well-deserved praise? Night has its songs. We don't need much poetry in our spirit, to catch the song of the night, and hear the planets and stars as they chant praises which are loud to the heart, though they are silent to the ear—the praises of the mighty God, who holds up the arch of heaven, and moves the stars in their courses.

Man, too, like the great world in which he lives, must have his night. For it is true that man is like the world around him; he is a little world; he resembles the world in almost every thing; and if the world has its night, so has man. And we have many a night—nights of sorrow, nights of persecution, nights of doubt, nights of bewilderment, nights of anxiety, nights of oppression, nights of ignorance—nights of all kinds, which press upon our spirits and terrify our souls. But, blessed be God, the Christian can say, “My God gives me songs in the night.”

It's not necessary to prove to you that Christians have nights; for if you are Christians, you will find that you have them, and you will not need any proof, for nights will come quite often enough. I will, therefore, proceed at once to the subject; and I will speak this evening on songs in the night, their source—God gives them; songs in the night, their subject—what do we sing about in the night? Songs in the night, their excellence—they are enthusiastic songs, and they are sweet ones; songs in the night, their uses—their benefits to ourselves and others.

I. First, songs in the night—WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THEM? “God,” says the text, our “Maker:” he “gives songs in the night.”

Any one can sing in the day. When the cup is full, one draws inspiration from it; when wealth rolls in abundance around them, any one can sing to the praise of a God who gives an abundant harvest. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but the skillful singer is the one who

can sing when there is not a ray of light to read by—who sings from their heart, and not from a book that they can see, because they have no means of reading, except from that inward book of their living spirit, where notes of gratitude pour out in songs of praise. No one can create a song in the night by themselves; they may attempt it, but they will learn how difficult it is. Let all things go as I please—I will weave songs, weave them wherever I go, with the flowers that grow along my path; but put me in a desert, where there are no flowers, and how will I weave a chorus of praise to God? How will I make a crown for him? Let this voice be free, and this body be full of health, and I can sing God's praise; but stop this tongue, lay me on the bed of suffering, and it is not so easy to sing from the bed, and chant high praises in the fires. Give me the bliss of spiritual liberty, and let me mount up to my God, get near the throne, and I will sing, yes, sing as sweet as angels; but confine me, chain my spirit, clip my wings, make me very sad, so that I become old like the eagle—ah! then it is hard to sing. It is not in our power to sing, when everything is difficult. It is not natural to sing in times of trouble—“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name:” for that is a daylight song. But it was a divine song which Habakkuk sang, when in the night he said — “Though the fig tree does not bud...yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior” [Habakkuk 3:17-18]. I think while walking through the Red Sea any Israelite could have sang a song like that of Moses—“The horse and his rider has he hurled into the sea;” the difficulty would have been, to compose a song before the Red Sea had been divided, and to sing it before Pharaoh's army had been drowned, while yet the darkness of doubt and fear was resting on the people of Israel. Songs in the night come only from God; they are not in the power of man.

But what does the text mean, when it asserts that God gives songs in the night? We think we find two answers to that question.

1. The first is, that usually in the night of a Christian's experience God is his only song.

If it is daylight in my heart, I can sing songs touching my graces—songs touching my sweet experience—songs touching my duties—songs touching my labors; but let the night come—my graces appear to have

withered; my evidences, though they are there, are hidden; I can not clearly read my title to my mansion in heaven. And now I have nothing left to sing of but my God. It is strange, that when God gives his children mercies, they normally set their hearts more on the mercies than on the Giver of them; but when the night comes, and he sweeps all the mercies away, then right away they say, "Now, my God, I have nothing to sing of but you; I must come to you; and to you only. I had wells once; they were full of water; I drank from them then; but now the wells are dry; sweet Lord, I drink nothing but your own self, I drink from no fountain but yours." Yes, child of God, you know what I am saying; or if you don't understand it yet, you will in time. It is in the night that we sing of God and of God alone. Every string is tuned, and ever power has its attribute to sing, while we praise God, and nothing else. We can sacrifice to ourselves in the daylight—we only sacrifice to God at night; we can sing high praises to our dear selves when everything is joyful, but we can not sing praise to any except our God, when circumstances are troublesome, and providences appear adverse. God alone can furnish us with songs in the night.

2. And yet again: not only does God give the song in the night, because he is the only subject on which we can sing then, but because he is the only one who inspires songs in the night.

When a poor, depressed, distressed child of God comes to our church: I come into the pulpit, I seek to tell him sweet promises, and whisper to him sweet words of comfort; he doesn't listen to me; he is like the deaf snake, he does not listen to the voice of the charmer. Send him around to all the comforting preachers and they will do very little—they will not be able to squeeze a song out of him, no matter how hard they try. He is drinking the bitterness of suffering; he says, "O Lord, you have made me drunk with weeping, I have eaten ashes like bread;" and comfort him as you may, it will be only a woeful note or two of mournful resignation that you will get from him; you will get no psalms of praise, no hallelujahs, and no sonnets. But let God come to his child in the night, let him whisper in his ear as he lies on his bed, and how you see his eyes flash fire in the night! Don't you hear him say,—
"It is paradise, if you are here;

If you depart, it is hell”

I could not have cheered him: it is God that has done it; and God “gives songs in the night.” It is marvelous; brothers and sisters, how one sweet word of God will make whole songs for Christians. One word of God is like a piece of gold, and that golden promise last for weeks. I can testify; I have lived on one promise for weeks, and need no other. I only want to hammer that promise out into gold-leaf, and plate my whole existence with joy from it. The Christian gets his songs from God: God gives him inspiration, and teaches him how to sing: “God my Maker, who gives songs in the night.”

So, then, poor Christian, you needn't go pumping up your poor heart to make it glad. Go to your Maker, and ask him to give you a song in the night. You are a poor dry well: you have heard it said, that when a pump is dry, you must pour water down it first of all, to prime the pump, and then you will get some up; and so, Christian, when you are dry, go to God, ask him to pour some joy down you, and then you will get some joy up from your own heart. Don't go to this comforter or to that one, for you will find them Job's comforters, after all; but go first and foremost to your Maker, for he is the great composer of songs and teacher of music; he is the One who can teach you how to sing: “God, my Maker, who gives me songs in the night.”

II. Thus we have dwelt upon the first point. Now the second: WHAT IS THE NORMAL SUBJECT OF A SONG IN THE NIGHT? What do we sing about?

Why, I think, when we sing in the night, there are three things we sing about. Either we sing about yesterday that is over, or else about the night itself, or else about tomorrow that is to come. Each of these are sweet themes, when God our Maker gives us songs in the night.

1. In the midst of the night the most usual subject for Christians to sing about is the day that is over.

“Well,” they say, “it is night now, but I can remember when it was

daylight. Neither moon nor stars appear at present; but I can remember when I saw the sun. I have no evidence right now; but there was a time when I could say, 'I know that my Redeemer lives.' I have my doubts and fears at this present moment; but it has not been long since I could say, with full assurance, 'I know that he shed his blood for me; I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God'" [Job 19:25-26].

It may be darkness now; but I know the promises were sweet; I know I had blessed seasons in his church. I am quite sure of this; I used to enjoy myself in the ways of the Lord; and though now my paths are strewn with thorns, I know it is the King's highway. It was a way of pleasantness once; it will be a way of pleasantness again. 'I will remember the days of old; I will meditate upon the years at the right hand of the Most High.'" Christian, perhaps the best song you can sing, to cheer you in the night, is the song of yesterday morning. Remember, it was not always night with you: night is a new thing to you. Once you had a joyful heart, a buoyant spirit; once your eye was full of fire; once your foot was light; once you could sing with joy and ecstasy of heart. Well, then, remember that God, who made you sing yesterday, has not left you in the night. He is not a daylight God, who can't know his children in darkness; but he loves you now as much as ever: though he has left you for a little while, it is to make you trust him better, and serve him more. Let me tell you some of the sweet things a Christian can sing about when he is in the night.

If we are going to sing of the things of yesterday, let us begin with what God did for us in the past. My beloved brothers and sisters, you will find it a sweet subject for song at times, to begin to sing of electing love and covenant mercies. When you yourself are low, it is good to sing of the fountain-head of mercy; of that blessed decree in which you were ordained to eternal life, and of that glorious Son of Man who undertook your redemption; of that solemn covenant signed, and sealed, and ratified; of that everlasting love which, before the universe was created, chose you, loved you firmly, loved you completely, loved you well, loved you eternally. I tell you, believer, if you can go back to the years of eternity past; if you can in your mind run back to the years of eternity

past; if you can in your mind run back to that period before the universe was created, and if you can see your God writing your name in his eternal Book;—if you can read in his loving heart eternal thoughts of love to you, you will find this a charming means of giving you songs in the night. There are no songs, like those which come from electing love; no love songs like those that are dictated by meditations on discriminating mercy. Some, indeed, cannot sing of election: Oh Lord, open their mouths a little wider! There are some that are afraid of the very term. In our darker hours it is our joy to sing:

“We are God’s children through God's election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe;
By eternal destination,
Sovereign grace we now receive.
Lord, your favor,
Will both grace and glory give.”

Think, Christian, of yesterday, I say, and you will receive a song in the night. But if you don’t have a voice tuned to so high a key as that, let me suggest some other mercies you may sing of; and they are the mercies you have experienced. Can’t you sing a little of that blessed hour when Jesus met you; when, as a blind slave, you were sporting with death, and he saw you, and said: “Come, poor slave, come with me?” Can’t you sing of that rapturous moment when he broke your chains, and threw them to the earth, and said: “I am the Breaker; I came to break your chains, and set you free?” Even though you are so gloomy now, can you forget that happy Sunday morning, when in church your voice was loud, almost like an angel’s voice, in praise? For you could sing: “I am forgiven! I am forgiven:”

“A monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood.”

Go back, brother and sister, sing of that moment, and then you will have a song in the night. Or if you have almost forgotten that, then surely you have some precious milestone along the road of life that is not quite grown over with moss, on which you can read some happy inscription of his mercy towards you! Did you ever have a sickness like that which you

are suffering now, and didn't he raise you up from that? Were you ever poor before, and didn't he supply your needs? Were you ever in trouble before, and didn't he deliver you? Come!, I beseech you, go to the river of your experience, and pull up some pieces of grass, and weave them into an ark, where your infant faith may safely float on the stream. I beg you not to forget what God has done. Find your diary? I beg you; look into the book of your remembrance. Can't you see some sweet moment with Christ? Can't you think of some blessed hour when the Lord met with you? Have you never been rescued from the lion's den? Have you never escaped the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear? No? O, I know you have; go back, then, a little way, and take the mercies of yesterday; and though it is dark now, light up the lamps of yesterday, and they will glitter through the darkness, and you will find that God has given you a song in the night.

"Yes," says one, "but you know, that when we are in the dark, we cannot see the mercies God has given us. It is easy for you to tell us this; but we cannot get a hold of them." I remember an old Christian speaking about the great pillars of our faith; he was a sailor; we were on board ship, and there were a number of huge posts on the shore, to which the ships were usually fastened, by throwing a cable over them. After I had told him a great many promises, he said, "I know they are good strong promises, but I cannot get near enough to shore to throw my cable around them; that is the problem. Now, it often happens that God's past mercies and kindness would be good strong posts to hold on to, but we don't have enough faith to throw our cable around them, and so we go slipping down the stream of unbelief, because we can't secure ourselves by our former mercies.

I will, however, give you something that I think you can throw your cable over. If God has never been kind to you, one thing you surely know, and that is, he has been kind to others. Come, now; if you are experiencing great trials right now, then you can be sure that there were others with greater trials. Are you in a more serious situation than Jonah was, when he went sinking down to the bottom of the ocean? Are you worse off than your Master, when he had no place where he could lay his head? Do you conceive that you are in the worst of the worst possible situations? Look at Job there scraping himself with a broken piece of pottery, and sitting

on a pile of ashes. Are you as bad off as he? And yet Job rose up, and was richer than before; and out of the depths Jonah came, and preached the Word; and our Savior Jesus has mounted to his throne. O Christian! Only think of what he has done for others! If you can't remember that he has done any thing for you, yet remember that He is a merciful God; our King is a merciful King; go and try him. If you are down and out over your troubles, look to "the hills, from where your help comes." Others have had help from there, and so may you. Look at the many hundreds of God's children around you, who can show us their hands full of comforts and mercies; and they could say, "the Lord gave us these without money and without price; and why shouldn't he give them to you also, seeing that you also are a king's son?" Thus, Christian, you will get a song in the night out of other people, if you can't get a song from yourself. Never be ashamed of taking a page out of another man's book of experience. If you can't find a good page in your own, tear one out of some one's else; and if you have no reason to be grateful to God in darkness, or can't find reasons in your own experience, go to some one else, and, if you can, sing his praise in the dark, and like the nightingale sing his praise sweetly when all the world has gone to sleep. We can sing in the night of the mercies of the past.

2. I think, beloved, no matter how dark the night is, there is always something to sing about, even concerning that night.

There is one thing I am sure we can sing about, even in the darkest night, and that is, "It is because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail" [Lamentations 3:22]. If we can't sing very loud, still we can sing a little low tune, something like this—"He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities" [Psalm 103:10]. "O!" says one, "I don't know where to get my dinner from tomorrow. I am a poor wretch." So you may be, my dear friend; but you are not so poor as you deserve to be. Don't be offended about that; if you are, you are no child of God; for the child of God acknowledges that he has no right to the least of God's mercies, but that they come through the channel of grace alone. As long as I am still out of hell, I have no right to grumble; and if I were in hell I still would have no right to complain, for I feel, when convinced of sin, that no creature ever deserved to go there

more than I do. We have no reason to murmur; we can lift up our hands, and say, "Night! you are dark, but you might have been darker. I am poor, and if I could not have been poorer, I might have been sick. I am poor and sick—well, I have some friends left, my situation in life is not so bad, but it might have been worse." And therefore, Christian, you will always have one thing to sing about—"Lord, I thank you, it's not all darkness!" Besides, Christian, however dark the night is, there is always a star or moon. There is hardly ever a night that we have, when there are only just one or two little lights burning in the sky. However dark it may be, I think you may find some little comfort, some little joy, some little mercy left, and some little promise to cheer your spirit. The stars are not forever extinguished, are they? No, even when you can't see them, they are there; but I think one or two must be shining on you; therefore give God a song in the night. If you have only one star, bless God for that one, perhaps he will make it two; and if you have only two stars, bless God twice for the two stars, and perhaps he will make them four. Try, then, to see if you could sing a song in the night.

3. But, beloved, there is another thing we can sing about and, even more sweetly; and that is, we can sing of the days that are to come.

I am preaching tonight for the poor people of Spitalfields. Perhaps there is not to be found a class of people in our city who are suffering a darker night than they are; for while many classes have been acknowledged and defended, there are very few who speak up for the poor of Spitalfields, they are generally ground down within an inch of their lives. In an inquiry by the government last week, it was given in evidence, that their average wages are less than a man's basic subsistence; and then they have to furnish themselves with a room, and work on expensive articles of clothing, which many ladies are now wearing, and which they buy as cheaply as possible; but perhaps they don't realize that they are made with the blood and sweat of the Spitalfields clothiers. I met with some of them the other day; I was very pleased with one of them. He said, "Well, sir, it is very hard, but I hope there are better times coming for us." "Well, my friend," I said, "I am afraid you can't hope for much better times, unless the Lord Jesus Christ returns." "That is just what we hope for," he said. "We don't see there is any chance of deliverance, unless the Lord

Jesus Christ comes to establish his kingdom on earth; and then he will judge the oppressed, and break the oppressors in pieces with an iron rod.” I was glad my friend had found a song in the night, and was singing about the morning that was coming.

I often cheer myself with the thought of the coming of the Lord. We preach now, perhaps, with little success; “the kingdoms of this world” are not “the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;” we send out missionaries; they are for the most part unsuccessful. We are laboring, but we don’t see the fruit of our labors. Well, what then? Wait a little while; we will not always labor in vain, or spend our strength for nothing. A day is coming when every minister of Christ will speak with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, when all the servants of God will preach with power, and when the massive systems of heathenism will tumble from their pedestals, and mighty, gigantic delusions will be scattered to the winds. The shout will be heard, “Alleluia! Alleluia! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” For I look to that day; it is to the bright horizon of that Second Coming that I turn my eyes. My anxious expectation is, that the sweet sunshine of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, that the oppressed will be set free, that tyranny will be destroyed, that liberty will be established, that lasting peace will arrive, and that the glorious liberty of the gospel of God will be extended throughout the known world. Christian! If you are in a dark night, think of tomorrow; cheer your heart with the thought of the coming of your Lord. Be patient, for

“Look, he is coming with the clouds” [Revelation 1:7].

Be patient! Jesus is coming! Be patient; for you know who has said, “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done” [Revelation 22:12].

One more thought on that point. There is another sweet tomorrow of which we hope to sing in the night. Soon, beloved, you and I will each lie down on our own death bed, and we will need a song in the night then; and I don’t know where we will get it, if we do not get it from the tomorrow. Kneeling by the bed of a dying saint, last night, I said, “Well, sister, Jesus has been precious to you; you can rejoice in his covenant

mercies and his past love and kindness to you.” She put out her hand, and said, “Ah! sir, don’t talk about them now; I want the sinner’s Savior as much now as ever; it is not a saint’s Savior I want; it is still a sinner’s Savior that I am in need of, for I am still a sinner.” I found that I could not comfort her with the past; so I reminded her of the golden streets, of the gates of pearl, of the walls of jasper, of the harps of gold, of the songs of bliss; and then her eye glistened; she said, “Yes, I will be there soon; I will see them tomorrow;” and then she seemed so glad! Ah! Believer, you may always cheer yourself with that thought; for if you are ever going through a dark night, remember that
“A few more rolling suns, at most,
Will land you on fair Canaan’s coast.”

Your head may be crowned with thorny troubles now, but it will wear a starry crown soon; your hand may be filled with cares—it will hold a harp soon, a harp full of music. Your clothes may be soiled with dust now; they will be pure white in the future. Wait a little longer. Ah! Beloved, how despicable our troubles and trials will seem when we look back on them! Looking at them here today, they seem immense; but when we get to heaven, our earthly trials will seem to us to have been nothing at all. Let us go on, therefore; and if the night is very dark, remember there is not a night that will not have a morning; and that morning is to come soon. When sinners are lost in darkness, we will lift up our eyes in everlasting light. Surely I need not dwell longer on this thought. There is plenty enough here for songs in the night in the past, the present, and the future.

III. And now I want to tell you, very briefly, WHAT MAKE THE SONGS IN THE NIGHT MORE EXCELLENT THAN ALL OTHER SONGS.

1. In the first place, when you hear a Christian singing a song in the night—I mean in the night of trouble—you may be quite sure it is an enthusiastic song.

Many of you sang very beautifully tonight, before this sermon began, didn’t you? I wonder whether you would sing beautifully, if you were condemned to be burned at the stake for your faith in Christ? If you sang under pain and penalty, that would show your heart to be in your song.

We can all sing very nicely when every body else sings. It is the easiest thing in the world to open your mouth, and let the words come out; but when the devil puts his hand over your mouth, can you sing then? Can you say, "Though he slays me, yet will I hope in him?" That is hearty singing; that is a real song that springs up in the night. The nightingale sings most sweetly because she sings in the night. We know a poet has said, that if she sang in the day, she might be thought to sing no more sweetly than the sparrow. It is the stillness of the night that makes her song so sweet. And likewise a Christian's song becomes sweet and enthusiastic, because it is sung in the night.

2. Again, the songs we sing in the night will be lasting.

Many songs we hear our fellow-creatures singing in the streets will not be a song for the future; I guess they will sing a different kind of tune soon. They can sing today any rowdy, drinking songs; but they will not sing them when they are on their death bed; they are not exactly the songs with which to cross Jordan's waters. It will not do to sing one of those light songs when death and you are having the last tug of war. It will not do to enter heaven singing one of those impure, unholy songs. No; but the Christian who can sing in the night will not have to stop singing their song; they may keep on singing it forever. They may put their foot in Jordan's stream, and continue their melody; they may wade through it, and keep on singing, and land themselves safe in heaven; and when they are there, there need not be a gap in their song, but in a nobler, sweeter tune, they will still continue singing Jesus' power to save.

There are a great many of you that think Christian people are a very miserable group, don't you? You say, "Let me sing my song." Yes, but, my dear friends, we like to sing a song that will last; we don't like your songs; they are all foam, like bubbles, and they will soon evaporate to nothing. Give me a song that will last; give me one that will not melt. O, don't give me dreamer's gold! He hoards it up, and says, "I'm rich;" and when he wakes up, his gold is gone. But give me songs in the night, for they are songs I will sing forever.

3. Again, the songs we sing in the night are those that show we have real

faith in God.

Many men and women have just enough faith to trust God as far as they can see him, and they always sing as long as providentially everything goes right: but those with true faith can sing when they can't see. They can maintain faith in God when they can't detect his presence.

4. Songs in the night also prove that we have true courage.

Many sing in the day who are silent at night; they are afraid of thieves and intruders; but the Christian who sings in the night proves himself to be a courageous character. It is the bold Christian who can sing God's songs in the darkness.

5. He who can sing songs in the night, too, proves that he has true love to Christ.

It is not love to Christ to praise him while every body else praises him; to walk arm in arm with him when he has the crown on his head is no great deed, but to walk with Christ in rags is something. To believe in Christ when he is shrouded in darkness, to stick close to the Savior when all those around you mock him and forsake him—that is true faith. They who sing a song to Christ in the night, sings the best song in the entire world; for they sing from the heart.

IV. Lastly, I will SHOW YOU THE USE OF SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

1. Well, beloved, it is very useful to sing in the night of our troubles, first, because it will cheer us up.

When you were young children, and had to walk alone at night, don't you remember how you use to whistle and sing to keep your courage up? Well, what we do in the natural world we ought to do in the spiritual. There is nothing like singing to keep your spirits alive. When we have been in trouble, we have often thought ourselves to be nearly overwhelmed with difficulty; and we have said, "Let's sing a song." We began to sing; and Martin Luther says, "The devil cannot stand singing." That is the truth; he does not like any Christ-honoring music. It was that

way in Saul's days: an evil spirit rested on Saul; but when David played on his harp, the evil spirit left him. This is usually the case: if we can begin to sing we will chase away our fears. I like to hear people sometimes humming a tune at their work; I love to hear a farmer in the county singing as he plows his fields. Why not? You say he has no time to praise God; but he can sing a song—surely he can sing a Psalm, it won't take any more time. Singing is the best thing to purge ourselves of evil thoughts. Keep your mouth full of songs and you will often keep your heart full of praises; keep on singing as long as you can; you will find it a good way to drive away your fears.

2. Sing when you are in trouble, again, because God loves to hear his people sing in the night.

God never loves his children's singing as much as when they give a serenade of praise to him, when he has hidden his face from them, and will not appear to them at all. They are completely in darkness; but they come to him, and they begin to sing. "Ah!" says God, "that is true faith, that can make them sing praises when I will not look at them; I know there is some faith in them, that makes them lift up their hearts, even when I seem to remove all my tender mercies and all my compassions from them." Sing, Christian, for singing pleases God. In heaven, we read, the angels are engaged in singing: do you want to be engaged in the same way; for there is no better way that you can delight the Almighty God, who stoops from his high throne to observe the poor creatures of the earth.

3. Sing, again, for another reason: because it will cheer your companions.

If any of them are in the valley and in the darkness with you, it will be a great comfort to them. John Bunyan tells us, that as "Christian" was going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he found it to be a dreadful dark place, and terrible demons were all around him, and poor "Christian" thought he would perish for certain; but just when his doubts were the strongest, he heard a sweet voice; he listened to it, and it was from a man walking somewhere in front of him singing, "Yes, when I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Now, that

man did not know who was near him, but he was unknowingly singing to cheer and encourage a man following behind him.

Christian, when you are in trouble, sing; you don't know who is near you. Sing! Perhaps you will help and maybe get a good companion by doing it. Sing! Perhaps there will be many hearts cheered by your song. There is some broken spirit, it may be, that will be lifted up by your songs. Sing! There is some poor distressed brother, perhaps, shut up in the Castle of Despair, who, like King Richard, will hear your song inside the walls, and sing back to you, and you may be the means of getting him a ransom. Sing, Christian, wherever you go; try, if you can, to wash your face every morning in a bath of praise. When you wake up in the morning, never seek out another human until you have first sought out your God; and after you have spent time with him, then seek out others with your face beaming with joy; carry a smile, for you will cheer up many a poor pilgrim by it. And when you fast, Christian—when you have an aching heart, don't appear to others that you are fasting; appear cheerful and happy, wash your face; dress with a sparkle; be happy for the sake of other Christians; it will tend to cheer them up, and help them through the valley.

4. One more reason; and I know it will be a good one for you. Try and sing in the night, Christian, for that is one of the best arguments in the entire world in favor of your religion.

Many theologians today, spend a great deal of time in trying to prove Christianity against those who disbelieve it. I would like to have seen Paul trying that! Elymas the sorcerer opposed him: how did our friend Paul treat him? He said "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?" [Acts 13:10]. That is about all the politeness such men ought to have towards those who deny God's truth. We start with this assumption: we will prove that the Bible is God's Word, but we are not going to prove God's word. If you don't like to believe it, we will leave; we will not argue with you. The gospel has gained little by discussion. The greatest piece of folly on earth has been to send a man around the country, to debate with a false teacher

who has been lecturing on sin and infidelity just to make himself notorious.

Why, let them lecture on; this is a free country; why should we follow them around to try to debate them? The truth will win the day. Christianity needn't wish for controversy; it is strong enough for it, if it wishes it; but that is not God's way. God's direction is to, "Preach, teach, and to express yourself dogmatically." Don't just stand there disputing; claim a divine mission; tell men and women that God says it, and there leave it. Say to them, "He that believes will be saved, and he that does not believe will be damned;" and when you have finished that, you have done enough. Why should our missionaries argue with Hindus? Why should they be wasting their time by attempting to refute first this dogma, and then another, of heathenism? Why not just go and say, "The God whom you fail to worship, I declare to you; believe me, and you will be saved; do not believe me and the Bible declares you are lost." And then, having thus declared God's word, say, "I leave it there, I declare it to you; it is a thing for you to believe, not a thing for you to try to reason about. Religion is not a thing merely for your intellect; it is a thing that demands your faith. As a messenger of heaven, I demand that faith; if you don't choose to give it, then your own doom will be your own head. I have done my duty; I have told you the truth; that is enough, and there I leave it." O, Christian, instead of arguing with unbelievers, let me tell you how to prove the truth of your religion to them. Live it out! Live it out! Give the external as well as the internal evidence; give the external evidence of your own life.

You are sick; there is your neighbor, who laughs at religion; let him come to your house. When he was sick, he said, "O, send for the doctor;" and there he was fretting, and fuming, and whining, and making all kinds of noises. When you are sick, send for him; tell him that you are resigned to the Lord's will; that you will kiss the chastening rod; that you will take the cup, and drink it, because your Father gives it. You needn't make a boast of this, or it will lose all its power; but do it because you can't help doing it. Your neighbor will say, "There is something in that." And when you come near to your grave—he was there once, and you heard how he shrieked, and how frightened he was—give him your hand, and say to him, "Ah! I have a Christ that will be with me in my death; I have a

religion that will make me sing in the night.” Let him hear how you can sing, “Victory, victory, victory!” through him that loved you.

I tell you, we may preach fifty thousand sermons to prove the gospel, but we will not prove it half as well as you will by singing in the night. Keep a cheerful disposition; keep a happy heart; keep a contented spirit; keep your eyes looking up, and your heart aloft, and you will prove Christianity better than all the wise men that ever lived. Give them the analogy of a holy life, and then you will prove religion to them; give them the evidence of internal holiness, developed externally, and you will give the best possible proof of Christianity. Try and sing songs in the night; for they are so rare, that if you can sing them, you will honor your God, and bless your friends.

So far I have been preaching this sermon to the children of God, and now there is a sad turn that this subject must take, just one moment or so, and then we will be done. There is a night coming, in which there will be no songs of joy—a night in which no one will even attempt to lead a chorus. There is a night coming when a song will be sung, of which misery will be the subject, set to the music of wailing and gnashing of teeth; there is a night coming when misery, and unutterable despair, will be the subject of an awful song of gloom—when the orchestra will be composed of damned men and women, and howling fiends, and yelling demons; and mark you, I speak what I know to be true, and testify the truth of the Scriptures. There is a night coming for a poor soul within this church tonight; and unless they repent, it will be a night where they will have to growl, and howl, and sigh, and cry, and moan and groan forever. “Who is that?” you say. It is you, my friend, if you are godless and Christless. “What!” you say, “am I in danger of the fires of hell?” In danger, my friend! Yes and more: you are already damned. So says the Bible. You say, “And can you leave me without telling me what I must do to be saved? Can you believe that I am in danger of perishing, and not speak to me?” I trust not; I hope I will never preach a sermon without speaking to the ungodly, for O! How I love them. O you blasphemer, your mouth is black with cursing and swearing; and if you die, you will go on blaspheming throughout eternity, and be punished for it throughout eternity. But listen to me, blasphemer! Will you repent tonight? Do you feel that you have sinned against God?

Do you feel a desire to be saved? Listen you! You can be saved; you can be saved as much as any one that is here now.

There is another: she has sinned against God enormously, and she blushes even now, while I mention her case. Do you repent of your sin? There is hope for you. Remember him who said, "Go, and sin no more." Drunkard! Just a little while ago you were reeling down the street, and now you need to repent. Drunkard! There is hope for you.

"Well," you say, "What must I do to be saved?" Then again let me tell you the old way of salvation. It is this, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" [Acts 16:31]. We can get no further than that, do what we will; this is the sum and substance of the gospel. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be willing to be baptized, and you will be saved. So says the Scripture. Do you ask, "What is it to believe?" Am I to tell you again? I can't tell you, except that it is to look at Christ. Do you see that Savior there? He is hanging on the cross; there are his dear hands, pierced with nails, nailed to a tree, as if they were waiting for your tardy footsteps, because you would not come. Do you see his dear head there? It is hanging on his breast, as if he would lean over, and kiss your poor soul. Do you see his blood, gushing from his head, his hands, his feet, his side? It is running after you; because he knew that you would never run after it. Sinner! To be saved, all that you have to do is, to look at Jesus Christ. Can you do it now? "No," you say, "I don't believe it will save me." Ah! my poor friend, try it; and if you don't succeed, when you have tried it, then I will willingly share your doom. I promise you: if you cast yourself on Christ, and he deserts you, I will be willing to go halves with you in all your misery and woe. For he will never do it: never, never, NEVER!

"No sinner was ever sent back empty,
who came seeking mercy for Jesus' sake."

I beg you, therefore, try him, and you will not try him in vain, but will find him "able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" [Hebrews 7:25]. You will be saved now, and saved forever.

May God give you his blessing! I can't preach as earnestly as I could wish;

but, nevertheless, may God accept these words, and send them home to some hearts this night! And may you, my dear brothers and sisters, have songs in the night!

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Beauty for Ashes

"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."—Isaiah 61:3.

When soldiers are on the march, or advancing to the battle, military men think it wise to let the trumpet sound, that the warriors may be stimulated by the thrilling music. Many a weary soldier has tramped on with new vigor when the band has struck up a lively march, or a soul-moving tune. In the midst of our present Christian service, my brethren, when I trust all of you have resolved to come to the help of the Lord—to the help of the Lord against the mighty—we would bid the silver trumpets of gospel promise sound aloud, that the hosts of God as they march on in battle array may feel their pulses quickened and their souls cheered. May times of revival be also seasons of refreshing. In times of great toil and eminent service much extra refreshment may with wisdom be dealt out. Harvest men require substantial meals amid their exhausting toil; and, as I feel that the Lord of the harvest would not have his laborers treated niggardly, I have to regale each of you with a portion of bread, a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. Melchisedek met Abraham with bread and wine—not on some fine holiday when he had been musing in the plains of Mamre, but when he returned from the slaughter of the kings. After hard fighting comes sweet refreshment, and any here who have striven diligently to serve the Master, and have been pursuing their sacred calling even unto faintness, will be entitled to come and sit down, and partake of the nourishing bread and wine, which such a text as this

prepares for all the sons of the Father of the faithful. Elijah ate of bread brought by angelic hands, for a forty days' journey was before him; such a trial of strength may be ordained for brethren to whom this word shall come. Precious promises are for poverty-stricken saints. The strong drink of divine consolation is for the heavy of heart, as saith Solomon—"Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." May he who uttered the words which are now open before us speak them with power to the heart of each one here present. They came from the lips of Jesus; may they drop again into our hearts fresh from his mouth (that well of comfort undefiled), and fall with all their ancient life-giving power.

We will read our text again, and then meditate thereon. "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

Our first consideration will be, who gives this word? Secondly, to whom doth he give it? Thirdly, what saith he in it? And, fourthly, what will come of it?

I. First then, WHO GIVES THIS WORD? It is a word to mourners in Zion, meant for their consolation. But who gives it? The answer is not far to seek. It comes from him who said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," "he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." Now, in a very inferior and subordinate sense, Christian ministers have the Spirit of God resting upon them, and they are sent to bind up the broken-hearted; but they can only do so in the name of Jesus, and in strength given from him. This word is not spoken by them, nor by prophets or apostles either, but by the great Lord and Master of apostles and prophets, and ministers, even by Jesus Christ himself. If he declares that he will comfort us, then we may rest assured we shall be comforted! The stars in his right hand may fail to penetrate the darkness, but the rising of the Sun of Righteousness effectually scatters the gloom. If the consolation of Israel himself comes forth for the uplifting of his downcast people, then their doubts and fears may well fly apace, since his presence is light and peace.

But, who is this anointed one who comes to comfort mourners? He is described in the preface to the text as a preacher. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek." Remember what kind of preacher Jesus was. "Never man spake like this man." He was a son of consolation indeed. It was said of him, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." He was gentleness itself: his speech did not fall like a hail shower, it dropped like the rain, and distilled as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb. He came down like the soft vernal shower upon the new-mown grass, scattering refreshment and revival wherever his words were heard. The widow at the gates of Nain dried her eyes when he spake, and Jairus no longer mourned for his child. Magdalene gave over weeping, and Thomas ceased from doubting, when Jesus showed himself. Heavy hearts leaped for joy, and dim eyes sparkled with delight at his bidding. Now, if such be the person who declares he will comfort the broken-hearted, if he be such a preacher, we may rest assured he will accomplish his work.

In addition to his being a preacher, he is described as a physician. "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." Some hearts want more than words. The choicest consolations that can be conveyed in human speech will not reach their case; the wounds of their hearts are deep, they are not flesh cuts, but horrible gashes which lay bare the bone, and threaten ere long to kill unless they be skilfully closed. It is, therefore, a great joy to know that the generous friend who, in the text, promises to deal with the sorrowing, is fully competent to meet the most frightful cases. Jehovah Rophi is the name of Jesus of Nazareth; he is in his own person the Lord that healeth us. He is the beloved physician of men's souls. "By his stripes we are healed." Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses, and he is able now with a word to heal all our diseases, whatever they may be. Joy to you, ye sons of mourning; congratulation to you, ye daughters of despondency: he who comes to comfort you can not only preach with his tongue, but he can bind up with his hand. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names."

As if this were not enough, our gracious helper is next described as a liberator. "He hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." There were many downcast persons in Israel in the olden times—persons who had become bankrupt, and, therefore, had lost their estates, and had even sunk yet further into debt, till they were obliged to sell their children into slavery, and to become themselves bondsmen. Their yoke was very heavy, and their trouble was very sore. But the fiftieth year came round, and never was there heard music so sweet in all Judea's land, as when the silver trumpet was taken down on the jubilee morn, and a loud shrill blast was blown in every city, and hamlet, and village, in all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba. What meant that clarion sound? It meant this: "Israelite, thou art free. If thou hast sold thyself, go forth without money for the year of jubilee has come." Go back, go back, ye who have lost your lands; seek out the old homestead, and the acres from whence ye have been driven: they are yours again. Go back, and plough, and sow, and reap once more, and sit each man under his vine and his fig-tree, for all your heritages are restored. This made great joy among all the tribes, but Jesus has come with a similar message. He, too, publishes a jubilee for bankrupt and enslaved sinners. He breaks the fetters of sin, and gives believers the freedom of the truth. None can hold in captivity the souls whom Jesus declares to be the Lord's free men.

Surely, if the Savior has power, as the text declares, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and if he can break open prison doors, and set free those convicted and condemned, he is just the one who can comfort your soul and mine, though we be mourning in Zion. Let us rejoice at his coming, and cry Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Happy are we that we live in an age when Jesus breaks the gates of brass and cuts the bars of iron in sunder.

As if this were not all and not enough, one other matter is mentioned concerning our Lord, and he is pictured as being sent as the herald of good tidings of all sorts to us the sons of men. Read the second verse: "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." God has taken upon himself human flesh. The infinite Jehovah came down from heaven and became an infant, lived among us, and then died for us. Behold in the person of

the incarnate God the sure pledge of divine benevolence. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Beloved, the very fact that a Savior came to the world should be a source of hope to us, and when we think what a Savior he was, how he suffered, how he finished the work that was given him to do, and what a salvation it is which he has wrought out for us, we may well feel that the comfort of mourners is work for which he is well suited, and which he can execute most effectually. How beautiful upon Olivet and Calvary are the feet of him that bringeth, in his person and his world "good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation." But I must not linger. I have spoken of you enough to lead your thoughts to the blessed person who here declares that he will comfort the mourner. May the Holy Ghost reveal him unto you in all the power of his arm, the love of his heart, the virtue of his blood, the prevalence of his plea, the majesty of his exaltation, and the glory of his character.

II. Secondly, TO WHOM IS THIS WORD SPOKEN? It is spoken to those who mourn in Zion. They are in Zion. They are the Lord's people, but they mourn. To mourn is not always a mark of grace. Nature mourns. Fallen human nature will have to mourn for ever, except grace shall change it. But the mourning here meant is a mourning in Zion—a mourning of gracious souls. Let me try and describe what kind of mourning it is. It assumes various shapes. It begins in most hearts with lamentation over past sin. I have broken God's just commandments, I have done evil against my God, I have destroyed my soul; my heart feels this, and bitterly mourns. It is one thing to say formally, "I am a miserable sinner;" it is a very different thing to be one. To say it may be gross hypocrisy, to feel it is a mark of grace. Oh that every one of us, if we have never felt mourning for sin may feel it at this hour. May we mourn to think that we have pierced the Savior, that we have transgressed against a God so good, and a Redeemer so generous. Those who mourn for the guilt of past sin, before long, reach a higher point. Mourners are not suffered long to tarry; grace takes their load of guilt away. Their transgressions are covered. Do they leave off mourning then? Oh, no, they mourn in another way. There is a sweet mourning concerning my past sin which I would never wish to lose. It is forgiven, every sin of mine is blotted out, and my soul,

therefore, with a sweet bitterness, would mourn over it more and more.

"My sins, my sins, my Savior!
How sad on thee they fall,
Seen through thy gentle patience
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven;
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on thee."

This is a kind of mourning which may accompany us even to heaven's gates, and we might almost regret to have to part with such a friend even there.

"Lord, let me weep, for nought but sin,
And after none but thee.
And then I would—oh that I might—
A constant weeper be."

True hearts, however, mourn not only for their past transgressions, but they also sorrow over their present imperfections. If you are what you should be, dear friend, I am quite certain you see a great deal in yourself to grieve over. You cannot live as you would live. Whenever I meet with a person who feels that he is perfect, I conceive at once that he has not yet attained even a remote conception of what true perfection must be. The savage of Australia is satisfied with his weapons of war so long as he has never seen a rifle or heard of a cannon: to him his hovel is a model of architecture, for he has never heard of a cathedral or a palace. I have no doubt that a barn-door fowl would be quite surprised at the complaint which an eagle might make about its inability to mount as high as it desires to do. The fowl is perfect—perfect up to the condition of its barn-door, barley-scratching life, it knows nothing higher than its roosting place, and so it concludes itself absolutely perfect and fit for all that is desirable in flight. But oh, could it know where the thunders dwell, and sail above the clouds where the callow lightnings wait the bidding of the Lord, then would the creature feel something of the aspirations and the

griefs which torment the heart of the royal bird. Men know not what God is, nor the infinity of his perfections, nor the majesty of his purity, else, when highest would they cry, "Higher, higher, higher," and mourn because they have not yet attained, and need still to mount as on eagle's wings. Brethren, I speak for you all when I say, there is not a day in which our service satisfies us, not a deed we have ever performed that contents us. We see our spots, and would fain wash them out with tears if we could, though we bless God they are removed by the precious blood of Jesus. Those are among the blessed who mourn because they cannot live a perfect life as they desire. To mourn after more holiness is a sign of holiness, to mourn after greater conformity to the image of Christ proves that we are already in a measure conformed thereunto; to sigh after more complete subordination of our entire life to the will of God is a mourning for which Jesus Christ will bring rich comfort.

The Christian mourner laments, also, because he cannot be more continually in communion with God. He knows the sweetness of fellowship with the Father and with the Son. He cannot bear to have it broken. If but the thinnest cloud pass between him and the sun of God's love, he is distressed directly, for he is sensitive lest he should lose the delights of communion. A native of sunny Italy deplores the absence of heaven's bright blue, when made to dwell in this land of the fleecy clouds; and he who has dwelt in unclouded fellowship with the Lord bemoans his hard lot, if even for awhile he beholds not that face which is as the sun shining in its strength. Love cannot endure absence, much less, coldness. True grace finds its life in fellowship, and pines if it be denied it.

The real Christian mourns, again, because he cannot be more useful. He wishes he were like a pillar of fire and light, so that he might evermore by day and by night enlighten the ignorant, and inspire the dull and laggard. He wishes not so much for more talent as for more grace to make use of the talent which he has. He would fain bring in a great rental to the owner of the vineyard who has placed him as a husbandman among the vines. He longs to bring up priceless pearls from the deep seas of sin, wherewith to adorn the diadem of his Lord and king. He sighs because thorns and thistles will spring up where he looked for a hundred-fold harvest: this makes him groan out, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the

arm of the Lord revealed?"

Moreover, like his Lord, he mourns for others. He mourns in Zion because of the deadness of the Christian church, its divisions, its errors, its carelessness towards the souls of sinners. He cries with Jeremiah, "How is the gold become dim! How is the much fine gold changed!" But, he mourns most of all for the unconverted. He sees their state of alienation from God, and knowing the danger of it, his heart shrinks within him, as with prophetic glance he sees what their end will be: when "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." His heart breaks for the sins and sorrows of others, and, like his Savior, he could weep over the cities that reject divine love; he could say like Moses that he was almost willing to have his name blotted out of the Book of Life if others might be saved: he feels such sorrow and heaviness of heart for his kinsmen according to the flesh who are strangers to Christ, that he has no rest in his death concerning them. Dear brethren, he that is quickened by the new life obtains an enlarged heritage of mourning; but, let it not be forgotten, he wins tenfold more joy as well; and, meanwhile, such weeping is in itself sweet—tears not too briny, and griefs not too bitter; such griefs we would wish to feel as long as we live, especially if the Lord Jesus alternates them with the fulfilling of that most excellent promise, to which I now direct you.

III. What is that, then, in the third place, WHICH IS SPOKEN in the text to those that mourn? I would draw particular attention to the words here, "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes." Come, mourning souls, who mourn in the way described, come ye gladly hither: there is comfort appointed for you, and there is also comfort given to you. It is the prerogative of King Jesus both to appoint and to give. How cheering is the thought that as our griefs are appointed, so also are our consolations. God has allotted a portion to every one of his mourners, even as Joseph allotted a mess to each of his brethren at the feast. You shall have your due share at the table of grace, and if you are a little one, and have double sorrows, you shall have a double portion of comfort. "To appoint unto them." This is a word full of strong consolation; for if God appoints me a portion, who can deprive me of it? If he appoints my comfort, who dare stand in the way? If he appoints it, it

is mine by right. But then, to make the appointment secure, he adds the word "To give." The Holy One of Israel in the midst of Zion gives as well as appoints. The rich comforts of the gospel are conferred by the Holy Spirit, at the command of Jesus Christ, upon every true mourner in the time when he needs them; they are given to each spiritual mourner in the time when he would faint for lack of them. He can effectually give the comfort appointed for each particular case. All I can do is to speak of the comfort for God's mourners. I can neither allot it, nor yet distribute it; but our Lord can do both. My prayer is that he may do so at this moment; that every holy mourner may have a time of sweet rejoicing while sitting at the Master's feet in a waiting posture. Did you never feel, while cast down, on a sudden lifted up, when some precious promise has come home to your soul? This is the happy experience of all the saints.

"Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings:
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in his wings.
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again,
A season of clear shining
To cheer it, after rain."

Our ever gracious and almighty Lord knows how to comfort his children, and be assured he will not leave them comfortless. He who bids his ministers again and again attend to this duty, and says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," will not himself neglect to give them consolation. If you are very heavy, there is the more room for the display of his grace in you, by making you very joyful in his ways. Do not despair; do not say, "I have fallen too low, my harp has been so long upon the willows that it has forgotten Zion's joyful tunes." Oh, no, you shall lay your fingers amongst the old accustomed strings, and the art of making melody shall come back to you, and your heart shall once more be glad. He appoints and he gives—the two words put together afford double hope to us—he appoints and he gives comfort to his mourners.

Observe, in the text, the change Christ promises to work for his

mourners. First, here is beauty given for ashes. In the Hebrew there is a ring in the words which cannot be conveyed in the English. The ashes that men put upon their head in the East in the time of sorrow made a grim tiara for the brow of the mourner; the Lord promises to put all these ashes away, and to substitute for them a glorious head dress—a diadem of beauty. Or, if we run away from the word, and take the inner sense, we may look at it thus:—mourning makes the face wan and emaciated, and so takes away the beauty; but Jesus promises that he will so come and reveal joy to the sorrowing soul, that the face shall fill up again: the eyes that were dull and cloudy shall sparkle again, and the countenance, yea, and the whole person shall be once more radiant with the beauty which sorrow had so grievously marred. I thank God I have sometimes seen this change take place in precious saints who have been cast down in soul. There has even seemed to be a visible beauty put upon them when they have found peace in Jesus Christ, and this beauty is far more lovely and striking, because it is evidently a beauty of the mind, a spiritual lustre, far superior to the surface comeliness of the flesh. When the Lord shines full upon his servants' faces, he makes them fair as the moon, when at her full she reflects the light of the sun. A gracious and unchanging God sheds on his people a gracious and unfading loveliness. O mourning soul, thou hast made thine eyes red with weeping, and thy cheeks are marred with furrows, down which the scalding tears have burned their way; but the Lord that healeth thee, the Lord Almighty who wipeth all tears from human eyes, shall visit thee yet; and, if thou now believes "in Jesus, he shall visit thee now, and chase these cloudy griefs away, and thy face shall be bright and clear again, fair as the morning, and sparkling as the dew. Thou shalt rejoice in the God of thy salvation, even in God, thy exceeding joy. Is not this a dainty promise for mourning souls?

Then, it is added, "He will give the oil of joy for mourning." Here we have first beauty, and then unction. The Orientals used rich perfumed oils on their persons—used them largely and lavishly in times of great joy. Now, the Holy Spirit comes upon those who believe in Jesus, and gives them an anointing of perfume, most precious, more sweet and costly than the herd of Araby. An unction, such as royalty has never received, sheds its costly moisture over all the redeemed when the Spirit of the Lord rests upon them. "We have an unction from the Holy One," saith the apostle. "Thou

anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over." Oh, how favored are those who have the Spirit of God upon them! You remember that the oil which was poured on Aaron's head went down to the skirts of his garment, so that the same oil was on his skirts that had been on his head. It is the same Spirit that rests on the believer as that which rests on Jesus Christ, and he that is joined unto Christ is one Spirit. What favor is here! instead of mourning, the Christian shall receive the Holy Spirit, the Comforter who shall take of the things of Christ, and reveal them unto him, and make him not merely glad, but honored and esteemed.

Then, it is added, to give still greater fullness to the cheering promise, that the Lord will give "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." The man is first made beautiful, next he has the anointing, then afterwards he is arrayed in robes of splendor. What garments these are! Surely Solomon in all his glory wore not such right royal apparel. "The garment of praise." what a dress is this! Speak of wrought gold, or fine linen, or needlework of divers colors, or taffeta, or damasks, or gorgeous silks most rich and rare which come from far off lands—where is anything compared with "the garment of praise?" When a man wraps himself about, as it were, with psalmody, and lives for ever a chorister, singing not with equal voice, but with the same earnest heart as they do who day and night keep up the never ending hymn before the throne of the infinite! As, what a life is his, what a man is he! O mourner, this is to be your portion; take it now; Jesus Christ will cover you, even at this hour, with the garment of praise; so grateful shall you be for sins forgiven, for infirmity overcome, for watchfulness bestowed, for the church revived, for sinners saved, that you shall undergo the greatest conceivable change, and the sordid garments of your woe shall be put aside for the brilliant array of delight. It shall not be the spirit of praise for the spirit of heaviness, though that were a fair exchange, but as your heaviness you tried to keep to yourself, so your praise you shall not keep to yourself, it shall be a garment to you, external and visible, as well as inward and profound. Wherever you are it shall be displayed to others, and they shall see and take knowledge of you that God has done great things for you whereof you are glad. I wish I had power to speak fitly on such a theme as this; but, surely, it needs him upon whom the Spirit rested without measure to proclaim this joyful promise to the mourners in Zion.

We must close, by noticing what will be the result of this appointment, and text concludes, by saying, "That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." We learn, here, that those mourning souls who are cast down, and have put ashes on their heads, shall, when Jesus Christ in infinite mercy comes to them, be made like trees—like "oaks;" the original is, like "oaks of righteousness," that is, they shall become strong, firmly rooted, covered with verdure; they shall be like a well-watered tree for pleasantness and delight. Thou sayest, "I am a dry tree, a sere branch, I am a cast off, fruitless bough; Oh that I were visited of God and saved! I mourn because I cannot be what I would." Mourner, thou shalt be all thou wouldst be, and much more if Jesus visits thee. Breathe the prayer to him now; look to him, trust him. He can change thee from a withered tree that seems twice dead into a tree standing by the rivers of water, whose leaf is unwithering, and whose fruit ripens in its season. Only have confidence in an anointed Savior, rely upon him who came not here to destroy but to bless, and thou shalt yet through faith become a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

But, the very pith of the text lies in a little word to which you must look. "Ye shall be called trees of righteousness." Now, there are many mourning saints who are trees of righteousness, but nobody calls them so, they are so desponding that they give a doubtful idea to others. Observers ask, "Is this a Christian?" And those who watch and observe them are not at all struck with their Christian character. Indeed, I may be speaking to some here who are true believers in Jesus, but they are all their lifetime subject to bondage; they hardly know themselves whether they are saved, and, therefore, they cannot expect that others should be very much impressed by their godly character and fruitful conversation. But, O mourners! if Jesus visits you, and gives you the oil of joy, men shall call you "trees of righteousness," they shall see grace in you, they shall not be able to help owning it, it shall be so distinct in the happiness of your life, that they shall be compelled to see it. I know some Christian people who, wherever they go, are attractive advertisements of the gospel. Nobody could be with them for a half an hour without saying, "Whence do they gain this calm, this peace, this tranquility, this holy delight and

joy?" Many have been attracted to the cross of Christ by the holy pleasantness and cheerful conversation of those whom Christ has visited with the abundance of his love. I wish we were all such. I would not discourage a mourner; no, but encourage him to seek after the garments of praise; nevertheless, I must say that it is a very wretched thing for so many professors to go about the world grumbling at what they have and at what they have not, murmuring at the dispensations of providence, and at the labors of their brethren. They are more like wild crab-trees than the Lords fruit-trees. Well may people say, "If these are Christians, God save us from such Christianity." But, when a man is contented—more than that, when he is happy under all circumstances, when "his spirit doth rejoice in God his Savior" in deep distress, when he can sing in the fires of affliction, when he can rejoice on the bed of sickness, when his shout of triumph grows louder as his conflict waxes more and more severe, and when he can utter the sweetest song of victory in his departing moments, then all who see such people call them trees of righteousness, they confess that they are the people of God.

Note, still, the result of all this goes further, "They shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord," that is to say, where there is joy imparted, and unction given from the Holy Spirit, instead of despondency, men will say, "It is God's work, it is a tree that God has planted, it could not grow like that if anybody else had planted it; this man is a man of God's making, his joy is a joy of God's giving." I feel sure that in the case of some of us we were under such sadness of heart before conversion, through a sense of sin, that when we did find peace, everybody noticed the change there was in us, and they said one to another, "Who has made this man so happy, for he was just now most heady and depressed?" And, when we told them where we lost our burden, they said, "Ah, there is something, in religion after all." "Then said they among the heathen the Lord hath done great things for them." Remember poor Christian in Pilgrim's Progress. Mark what heavy sighs he heaved, what tears fell from his eyes, what a wretched man he was when he wrung his hands, and said, "The city wherein I dwell is to be burned up with fire from heaven, and I shall be consumed in it, and, besides, I am myself undone by reason of a burden that lieth hard upon me. Oh that I could get rid of it!" Do you remember John Bunyan's

description of how he got rid of the burden? He stood at the foot of the cross, and there was a sepulcher hard by, and as he stood and looked, and saw one hanging on the tree, suddenly the bands that bound his burden cracked, and the load rolled right away into the sepulcher, and when he looked for it, it could not be found. And what did he do? Why, he gave three great leaps for joy, and sang,

"Bless'd cross! bless'd sepulcher! bless'd rather
be the man that there was put to shame for me."

If those who knew the pilgrim in his wretchedness had met him on the other side of that never-to-be-forgotten sepulcher, they would have said, "Are you the same man?" If Christiana had met him that day, she would have said, "My husband, are you the same? What a change has come over you;" and, when she and the children marked the father's cheerful conversation, they could have been compelled to say, "It is the Lord's doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes." Oh live such a happy life that you may compel the most wicked man to ask where you learned the art of living. Let the stream of your life be so clear, so limpid, so cool, so sparkling, so like the river of the water of life above, that men may say, "Whence came this crystal rivulet? We will trace it to its source," and so may they be led to the foot of that dear cross where all your hopes began.

Another word remains, and when we have considered it, we will conclude. That other word is this, "The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." That is the end of it all, that is the great result we drive at, and that is the object even of God himself, "that he might be glorified." For when men see the cheerful Christian, and perceive that this is God's work, then they own the power of God; not always, perhaps, with their hearts as they should, but still they are obliged to confess "this is the finger of God." Meanwhile, the saints, comforted by your example, praise and bless God, and all the church lifts up a song to the Most High. Come, my brethren and sisters, are any of you down; are you almost beneath the enemy's foot? Here is a word for you, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, though I fall yet shall I rise again." Are any of you in deep trouble—very deep trouble? Another word then for you; "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall

not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Are you pressed with labors and afflictions? "As thy days so shall thy strength be," "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." Are you persecuted? Here is a note of encouragement for you: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Whatever your circumstances are, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." Think what Jesus has given you, your sins are pardoned for his name sake, your heaven is made secure to you, and all that is wanted to bring you there; you have grace in your hearts, and glory awaits you; you have already grace within you, and greater grace shall be granted you; you are renewed by the Spirit of Christ in your inner man the good work is begun, and God will never leave it till he has finished it; your names are in his book, nay, graven on the palms of his hands; his love never changes, his power never diminishes, his grace never fails, his truth is firm as the hills, and his faithfulness is like the great mountains. Lean on the love of his heart, on the might of his arm, on the merit of his blood, on the power of his plea, and the indwelling of his Spirit. Take such promises as these for your consolation, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not." "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and

he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, destroy them." "I am God, I fail not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." One might continue for ever quoting these precious passages, but may the Lord apply one or other of them to every mourner's soul; and, especially if there be a mourning sinner here, may he get a grip of that choice word, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" or, that other grand sentence, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" or, that other, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin:" or, that equally encouraging word, "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson they shall be as snow." The Lord bring us all into comfort and joy by the way of the cross.

Peradventure, I speak to some for whom the promises of God have no charm; let me, then, remind them that his threatenings are as sure as his promises. He can bless, but he can also curse. He appoints mourning for those who laugh now with sinful merriment; he will give to his enemies vengeance for all their rebellions. He has himself said, "And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty." Beware, then, ye that forget God, lest he overthrow you in his hot displeasure. Seek ye the Savior now, lest the acceptable year of the Lord be closed with a long winter of utter despair.

"Ye who spurn his righteous sway,
Yet, oh yet, he spares your breath;
Yet his hand, averse to slay,
Balances the bolt of death.
Ere that dreadful bolt descends,
Haste before his feet to fall,
Kiss the scepter he extends,
And adore him, 'Lord of all.'"

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Job's Resignation

"Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."—Job 1:20-22.

Job was very much troubled, and he did not try to hide the outward signs of his sorrow. A man of God is not expected to be a stoic. The grace of God takes away the heart of stone out of his flesh, but it does not turn his heart into a stone. The Lord's children are the subjects of tender feelings; when they have to endure the rod, they feel the smart of its strokes; and Job felt the blows that fell upon him. Do not blame yourself if you are conscious of pain and grief, and do not ask to be made hard and callous. That is not the method by which grace works; it makes us strong to bear trial, but we have to bear it; it gives us patience and submission, not stoicism. We feel, and we benefit by the feeling, and there is no sin in the feeling, for in our text we are expressly told of the patriarch's mourning, "In all this Job sinned not." Though he was the great mourner—I think I might truly call him the chief mourner—of Scripture, yet there was no sin in his mourning. Some there are who say that, when we are heavy of heart, we are necessarily in a wrong spirit, but it is not so. The apostle Peter saith, "If need be ye are in heaviness through manifold trials," but he does not imply that the heaviness is wrong. There are some who will not cry when God chastiseth them, and some who will not yield when God smiteth them. We do not wish to be like them; we are quite content to have the suffering heart that Job had, and to feel the bitterness of spirit, the anguish of soul which racked that blessed patriarch.

Furthermore, Job made use of very manifest signs of mourning. He not only felt sorrow within his heart, but he indicated it by rending his mantle, by shaving off the hair of his head, and by casting himself prone upon the ground, as if he sought to return to the womb of mother-earth as he said that he should; and I do not think we are to judge those of our brethren and sisters who feel it right to wear the common tokens of

mourning. If they give them any kind of solace in their sorrow, let them have them. I believe that, at times, some go to excess in this respect, but I dare not pass sentence upon them because I read here, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." If the crepe should be worn for a very long while, and if the sorrow should be nursed unduly, as others judge, yet we cannot set up a standard of what is right for others, each one must answer for his conduct to his own Lord. I remember the gentleness of Jesus towards mourners rather than his severity in dealing with them; he hath much pity for our weakness, and I wish that some of his servants had more of the same spirit. If you who are sorrowing could be strong, if the weeds of mourning could be laid aside, it might indicate a greater acquiescence in the divine will; but if you do not feel that it should be so with you, God forbid that we should rebuke you while we have such a text as this before us, "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground;" and "in all this Job sinned not."

I want you, however, to notice that mourning should always be sanctified with devotion. It is very pleasant to observe that, when Job had rent his mantle after the Oriental custom, and shaved his head (in a manner which, in his day, was not forbidden, but which under the Mosaic law was prohibited, for they might not cut their hair by way of mourning as the heathen did), and, after the patriarch had fallen down upon the ground, he "worshipped." Not, he grumbled; not, he lamented; much less that he began to imprecate and use language unjustifiable and improper; but he "fell down upon the ground, and worshipped." O dear friend, when thy grief presses thee to the very dust, worship there! If that spot has come to be thy Gethsemane, then present there thy "strong crying and tears" unto thy God. Remember David's words, "Ye people, pour out your hearts,"- but do not stop there, finish the quotation,— "Ye people, pour out your hearts before him." Turn the vessel upside down; it is a good thing to empty it, for this grief may ferment into something more sour. Turn the vessel upside down, and let every drop run out; but let it be before the Lord. "Ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us." When you are bowed down beneath a heavy burden of sorrow, then take to worshipping the Lord, and especially to that kind of worshipping which lies in adoring God, and in making a full surrender of yourself to the divine will, so that you can say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will

I trust in him." That kind of worshipping which lies in the subduing of the will, the arousing of the affections, the bestirring of the whole mind and heart, and the presentation of oneself unto God over again in solemn consecration, must tend to sweeten sorrow, and to take the sting out of it.

It will also greatly alleviate our sorrow if we then fall into serious contemplations, and begin to argue a little, and to bring facts to bear upon our mind. Evidently Job did so, for the verses of my text are full of proofs of his thoughtfulness. The patriarch brings to his own mind at least four subjects for earnest consideration, out of which he drew great comfort. In like manner, you will do well, not merely to sit still and say, "I shall be comforted," but you must look about you for themes upon which to think and meditate to profit. Your poor mind is apt to be driven to and fro by stress of your sorrow; if you can get anchor-hold of some great clearly-ascertained truths, about which you can have no possible doubt, you may begin to derive consolation from them. "While I was musing," said David, "the fire burned," and it comforted and warmed him. Remember how he talked to himself as to another self, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." There are two Davids, you see, talking to one another, and cheering one another! A man ought always to be good company for himself, and he ought also to be able to catechise himself; he who is not fit to be his own schoolmaster is not fit to be schoolmaster to other people. If you cannot catechise your own heart, and drill a truth into your own soul, you do not know how to teach other people. I believe that the best preaching in the world is that which is done at home. When a sorrowing spirit shall have comforted itself, it will have learned the art of consoling other people. Job is an instance of this kind of personal instruction; he has three or four subjects which he brings before his own mind, and these tend to comfort him.

I. The first is, to my mind, THE EXTREME BREVITY OF LIFE.

Observe what Job says, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." He came forth, and he expected to go back to mother-earth, and there to lie. That is Job's idea of life, and a very true

one it is, "I come forth, and I go back again." One asked a man of God, one day, "Will you tell me what life is?" The man of God stopped just a moment, and then deliberately walked away. When his friend met him, the following day, he said to him, "Yesterday, I asked you a question, and you did not answer it." "But I did answer it," said the godly man. "No," rejoined the other "you were there, and you were gone." "Well, you asked me what life was, and that was my answer. Could I have answered your question better?" He answered and acted wisely, for that is a complete summary of our life here below,—We come, and we go. We appear for a brief moment, and then we vanish away. I often, in my own mind, compare life to a procession. I see you, dear friends, going by me one by one, and vanishing, and others come on behind; but the point that I am apt to forget—and you do the same,—is that I am in the procession, and you are in it, too. We all count all men mortal but ourselves, yet all are marching towards that country from whose bourn no traveler returns.

Well now, because life is so short, do you not see where the comfort comes? Job says to himself, "I came, and I shall return; then why should I worry myself about what I have lost? I am going to be here only a little while, then what need have I of all those camels and sheep?" So, brethren, what God has given us, is so much spending-money on our journey, to pay our own fares, and to help our fellow-travelers; but we do not, any of us, need as much substance as Job had. He had seven thousand sheep. Dear me! what a task it must have been to drive and to feed such a large flock! "And three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen!" That is, a thousand oxen. "And five hundred she asses, and a very great household." Our proverb says, "The more servants, the more plagues;" and I am sure it is true that the more camels, the more horses, the more cows, the more of such things that a man has, the more there is to look after, and to cause him trouble. So Job seems to say to himself, "I am here for such a little time, why should I be carried away, as with a flood, even when these things are taken from me? I come and I go; let me be satisfied if other things come and go. If my earthly stores vanish, well, I shall vanish, too. They are like myself; they take to themselves wings, and fly away; and by-and-by I too shall take to myself wings, and I shall be gone." I have heard of one who called life, "the long disease of life"; and it was so to him, for, though he did a great work for his Master, he was always

sickly. Well, who wants a long disease? "There's the respect that makes calamity of so long life." We want rather to feel that it is not long, that it is short, and to set small store by all things here below, and to regard them as things which, like ourselves, appear but for a time, and soon shall be gone.

Further, Job seems especially to dwell with comfort upon the thought, "I shall return to the earth, from which all the Particles of my body originally came; I shall return thither." "Ah!" said one, when he had seen the spacious and beautiful gardens of a wealthy man, "these are the things that make it hard to die." You recollect how the tribe of Gad and the tribe of Reuben went to Moses, and said, "If we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan." Of course, they did not want to cross the Jordan if they could get all their possessions on the other side. But Job had not anything this side Jordan, he was cleaned right out, so he was willing to go. And, really, the losses that a man has, which make him "desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better," are real gains. What is the use of all that clogs us here? A man of large possessions reminds me of my experience when I have gone to see a friend in the country, and he has taken me across a ploughed field, and I have had two heavy burdens of earth, one on each foot, as I have plodded on. The earth has clung to me, and made it hard walking. It is just so with this world, its good things hamper us, clog us, cling to us, like thick clay; but when we get these hampering things removed, we take comfort in the thought, "We shall soon return to the earth whence we came." We know that it is not mere returning to earth, for we possess a life that is immortal, we are looking forward to spending it in the true land that floweth with milk and honey, where, like Daniel we shall stand in our lot at the end of the days; therefore, we feel not only resigned to return to the womb of mother-earth, but sometimes we even long for the time of our return to come. A dear servant of God, whom you would all recognize if I mentioned his name, was talking with me concerning our dear departed brother, Hugh Stowell Brown, and he said, "All the brethren of my age and yours seem to be going home; they are passing away, the fathers and the leaders are going, and I could almost wish," he added, "that our Heavenly Father would put my name down as the next to go." I said that I hoped the Lord

would not do so, but that our brother might be spared to labor a while longer here; but that, if I might put in another name, I would plead for my own to go in there instead of his. Happily, we have nothing to do with the date of our home-going, it is out of our hands; yet we are glad to feel that, when the time of our departure shall arrive, it will be no calamity, but a distinct advancement, for the Master to bid us to return to the dust whence we came. "Return, ye children of men," he will say, and we will joyfully answer, "Yes, Father, here we are, glad to stretch our wings, and fly straight to yonder world of joy, expecting that even our poor bodies, by-and-by, at the trump of the archangel, shall come back to thee, and we shall be like thine only-begotten Son, when we shall see him as he is."

II. Secondly, Job seems to comfort himself by noticing THE TENURE OF HIS EARTHLY POSSESSIONS. "Naked," says he, "came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither."

He feels himself to be very poor, everything is gone, he is stripped; yet he seems to say, "I am not poorer now than I was when I was born." I had nothing then, not even a garment to my back but what the love of my mother provided for me. I was helpless then; I could not do anything for myself whatever." One said to me, the other day, "all is gone, sir, all is gone, except health and strength." Yes, but we had not as much as that when we were born. We had no strength, we were too weak to perform the least though most necessary offices for our poor tender frame. David often very sweetly dwells upon his childhood, and still more upon his infancy; and we shall do well to imitate him. Old men sometimes arrive at a second childhood. Do not be afraid, brother, if that is your case; you have gone through one period already that was more infantile than your second one can be, you will not be weaker then than you were at first. Suppose that you and I should be brought to extreme weakness and poverty, we shall neither be weaker nor poorer than we were then. "But I had a mother," says one. Well, there are some children who lose their mother in their very birth; but if you had a mother to care for you then, you have a Father to care for you now; and, as a child of God, you surely feel that your mother was but the secondary agent to watch over you in your weakness; and God who gave that love to her, and moved her to care for you, will be sure to find that same love which flowed out of him into

her still stored up in his own bosom, and he will see you through. Do not be afraid, my brother, my sister, the Lord will see you through. It is wonderful that, after God has been gracious to us for fifty years, we cannot trust him for the rest of our lives; and as for you who are sixty, seventy, or eighty years of age, what! has he brought you thus far to put you to shame? Did he bear you through that very weakest part of your life, and do you think he will now forsake you? David said, "I was cast upon thee from the womb," as if then he had none but God to help him; and will not he who took care of us then take care of us even to the end? Ay, that he will; wherefore, let us be of good courage, and let the poverty and weakness of our infancy, as we think of it, cheer us if we are weak and poor now.

Then Job adds, "However poor I may be, I am not as poor as I shall be, for naked shall I return to mother-earth. If I have but little now, I shall soon have still less." We have heard of a rustic who, when dying, put a crown-piece into his mouth, because he said that he would not be without money in another world; but then he was a clown, and everyone knew how foolish was his attempt thus to provide for the future. There have been stories told of persons who have had their gold sewn up in their shrouds, but they took not a penny with them for all their pains. Nothing can be taken with us; we must go back to the earth, the richest as poor as the poorest, and the poorest no poorer, really, than the richest. The dust of great Caesar may help to stop a hole through which the blast blows, and the dust of his slave cannot be put to more ignoble uses. No, poor and weak as we may be, we are not as poor and weak as we shall be by-and-by; so let us just solace ourselves with this reflection. The two ends of our life are nakedness; if the middle of it should not always be scarlet and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, let us not wonder; and if it should seem to be all of a piece, let us not be impatient or complaining.

I want you to notice, also, what I think really was in Job's mind, that, notwithstanding that he was but dust at the beginning, and would be dust at the end, yet, still, there was a Job who existed all the while. "I was naked, but I was; naked shall I return thither, but I shall be there." Some men never find themselves till they have lost their goods. They, themselves, are hidden away, like Saul, among the stuff; their true

manhood is not to be seen, because they are dressed so finely that people seem to respect them, when it is their clothes that are—respected. They appear to be somebodies, but they are nobodies, notwithstanding all that they possess. The Lord brought his servant Job to feel, "Yes, when I had those camels, when I had those she asses, when I had those sheep, when I had those men-servants, they were not myself; and now that they are gone, I am the same Job that ever I was. The sheep were not a part of myself, the camels were not a part of myself; I, Job, am here still, lying in my wholeness and integrity before God, as much a servant of Jehovah, in my nakedness, as I was when I wrapped myself in ermine." O sirs, it is a grand thing when God helps us to live above what we have, and above what we have not! Then it is that he brings us to know ourselves as we are, in our God, not dependent upon externals, but maintained and strengthened by food of which the world knoweth nothing, which cometh not from milk of kine. Then are we robed in a garment that cometh not from fleece of sheep, and we possess a life that dependeth not on the swift dromedary, a true existence that is neither in flocks, nor herds, nor pastures, nor fields, but delights itself in God, and stays itself on the Most High. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither," says Job, but "still it is I, the blessed of God, his same devoted servant, who will trust him to the end." That was good talk for Job's heart, was it not? Though it may not all have been said in words, I doubt not that something like it, or something much better, passed through the patriarch's mind, and thus he solaced himself in the hour of his sorrows and losses.

III. But now, thirdly, and perhaps the most blessed thing, is what Job said concerning THE HAND OF GOD IN ALL THINGS: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

I am so pleased to think that Job recognized the hand of God everywhere giving. He said, "The Lord gave." He did not say, "I earned it all." He did not say, "There are all my hard-earned savings gone." "Ah, me!" he might have said, "all the care for those sheep, and the dreadful expense of those camels, and the trouble that I have been at with those oxen; and now they are all gone, it does seem hard." He does not put it so, but he says, "The Lord gave them to me; they were a gift, and though they are gone, they

were a gift from him who had a right to take them back, for all he gives is only lent. 'A loan should go laughing home;' and if God lent me these things, and now has called them back, I will bless his name for having let me have them so long."

What a sweet thing it is, dear brothers and sisters, if you can feel that all you have in this world is God's gift to you! You cannot feel that, you know, if you came by it dishonestly. No, it is not God's gift then, and it brings no blessing with it; but that which is honestly the result and fruit of your cheerful industry, you may consider has come from God; and if, in addition, you have really sanctified your substance, and have given your fair proportion to help the poor and the needy, as Job did, if you can say that you have caused the widow's heart to sing for joy when you relieved her wants, then all that you have is God's gift. God's providence is man's inheritance, and your inheritance has come to you from God's providence. Look at it all as God's gift; it will sweeten even that little loaf of bread and that tiny pat of butter,—which is all you will have to eat to-day or to-morrow,—if you regard it as God's gift. It will soften that hard bed upon which you lie, wishing that you were somewhat better covered from the cold, if you think of it as God's gift. A slender income will give us much content if we can see that it is God's gift.

Let us not only regard our money and our goods as God's gifts; but also our wife, our children, our friends. What precious gifts they often are! A man is truly rich who has a good help-meet; he is really rich who has godly children about him. Even though they may cost him much care, he is abundantly repaid by their affection; and if they grow up in the fear of the Lord, what a choice gift they are! Let us look at them all as God's gifts; let us not see them or anything else about the house without feeling, "My Father gave me this." Surely it will tend to draw the teeth of every sharp affliction if, while you have enjoyed the possession of your good things, you have seen God's hand in giving them to you.

Alas! some of you do not know anything about God. What you have, is not counted by you as God's gift. You miss the very sweetness and joy of life by missing this recognition of the divine hand in giving us all good things richly to enjoy.

But then, Job equally saw God's hand in taking them away. If he had not been a believer in Jehovah, he would have said, "Oh, those detestable Sabeans! Somebody ought to go and cut to pieces those Chaldeans." That is often our style, is it not?—finding fault with the secondary agents. Job has nothing to say about the Sabeans or the Chaldeans, or the wind, or the lightning. "The Lord," said he, "the Lord hath taken away." I believe that Satan intended to make Job feel that it was God who was at work when his messenger said, "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep." "Ah!" said Satan, "he will see that God is against him." The devil did not succeed as he thought he had done, for Job could see that it was God's hand, and that took away the sting of the stroke. "The Lord hath taken away." Aaron held his peace when he knew that the Lord had done it, and the psalmist said, "I was dumb with silence, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;" and Job felt just that. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Never mind the secondary agents, do not spend your strength in kicking against this bad man or that; he is responsible to God for all the evil he has done, but at the back of these free agents there is a divine predestination, there if an overruling hand, and even that which in men is evil may, nevertheless, in another light, be traced up distinctly to the hand of the Most High. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away."

Will you recollect that with regard to your children? If Job had lost his eldest son alone, he might have needed much grace to say, "The Lord gave him, and the Lord hath taken him away." Job had lost his eldest son, but he had lost six more sons, and he had lost his three daughters as well. I have known a mother say, "My two dear boys sickened and died within a week; I am the most tried woman who ever lived." Not quite, not quite, dear friend; there have been others who have excelled you in this respect. Job lost his ten children at a stroke. O Death, what an insatiable archer thou wast that day, when ten must fall at once! Yet Job says, "The Lord hath taken away." That is all he has to say about it: "The Lord hath taken away." I need not repeat to you the story of the gardener who missed a choice rose, but who could not complain because the master had plucked it. Do you feel that it is just so with all that you have, if he takes it? Oh, yes! why should he not take it? If I were to go about my house, and take

down an ornament or anything from the walls, would anybody say a word to me? Suppose my dear wife should say to the servant, "Where has that picture gone?" and the maid replied, "Oh, the master took it!" Would she find fault? Oh, no! If it had been a servant who took it down, or a stranger who removed it, she might have said something; but not when I took it, for it is mine. And surely we will let God be Master in his own house; where we are only the children, he shall take whatever he pleases of all he has lent us for a while. It is easy to stand here and say this; but, brothers and sisters, let us try to say it if it should ever come to us as a matter of fact that the Lord who gave should also take away. I think Job did well to call attention to this blessed truth, that the hand of God is everywhere at work, whether in giving or in taking away; I do not know anything that tends more to reconcile us to our present sorrows, and losses, and crosses, than to feel, "God has done it all. Wicked men were the agents, but still God himself has done it. There is a great mystery about it which I cannot clear up, and I do not want to clear it up. God has done it, and that is enough for me. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.'"

IV. Job's last comfort lay in this truth, that GOD IS WORTHY TO BE BLESSED IN THINGS: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Dear friends, let us never rob God of his praise, however dark the day is. It is a funeral day, perhaps; but should not God be praised, when there is a funeral, as well as when there is a wedding? "Oh, but I have lost everything!" And is this one of the days when there is no praise due to God? Most of you know that the Queen's taxes must be paid; and our great's revenue has the first claim upon us. Let us not rob our King of the revenue of his praise. "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised." "Oh, but I have lost a child!" Yes, but God is to be praised. "But I have lost my mother." Yes, but God is to be praised "I have a bad headache." Yes, but God is to be praised. One said to me, one evening, "We should have family prayer, my dear sir, but it is rather late; do you feel too tired to conduct it?" "No," I said, "I never was too tired yet to pray with my brethren, and I hope I never shall be." If it is the middle of the night, let us not go to bed without prayer and praise, for we must not rob God of his glory. "There is a mob in the street," but we must not rob God of his glory. "Our goods are getting

cheaper and cheaper, and we shall be ruined in the market," but let us not rob God of his glory. "There is going to be, I do not know what, happening by-and-by." Yes, but we must not rob God of his glory.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job means that the Lord is to be blessed both for giving and taking. "The Lord gave," blessed be his name. "The Lord hath taken away," blessed be his name. Surely it has not come to this among God's people, that he must do as we like, or else we will not praise him. If he does not please us every day, and give way to our whims, and gratify our tastes, then we will not praise him. "Oh, but I do not understand his dealings," says one. And are you really such a stranger to God, and is God such a stranger to you, that, unless he enters into explanations, you are afraid that he is not dealing fairly with you? O sir, have you known the Lord for twenty years, and cannot you praise him for everything? Brethren, some of us have known him forty years now, perhaps some of you have known the Lord for fifty years; are you always wanting to have chapter, and verse, and explanations from him before you will praise him? No, no, I hope we have gone far beyond that stage.

God is, however, specially to be praised by us whenever we are moved by the devil! to curse. Satan had said to the Lord concerning Job, "Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hash, and he will curse thee to thy face;" and it seemed as if God had hinted to his servant that this was what the devil was aiming at. "Then," said Job, "I will bless him." His wife suggested afterwards that he should curse God, but he would do no such thing, he would bless him. It is usually a wise thing to do the very opposite to what the evil one suggests to you. If he says, "Curse," do you bless. Remember the story of a man who was going to give a pound to some charitable institution. The devil said, "No, you cannot afford it." "Then," said the man, "I will give two pounds; I will not be dictated to in this way." Satan exclaimed, "You are a fanatic." The man replied, "I will give four pounds." "Ah!" said Satan, "what will your wife say when you go home, and tell her that you have given away four pounds?" "Well," said the man, "I will give eight pounds now; and if you do not mind what you are at, you will tempt me to give sixteen." So the devil was obliged to stop, because the more he tempted him, the more he went the other way. So let it be with us. If the devil would drive us to curse God, let us bless him all

the more, and Satan will be wise enough to leave off tempting when he finds that, the more he attempts to drive us, the more we go in the opposite direction.

This is all meant to be sweet, cheery talk to suffering saints; how I wish that everybody here had an interest in it! What will some of you do, what are some of you doing, now that you have lost all,—wife dead, children dead, and you are growing old, yet you are without God? O you poor rich people, who have no interest in God, your money must burn your souls! But you poor, poor, poor people, who have not anything here, and have no hope hereafter, how sad is your case! May God of his rich mercy, give you even a little common-sense, for, surely, common-sense would drive you to him! Sometimes, in distributing temporal relief, we meet with persons who have been out of work, and full of trouble, and have not had bread to eat, and we say to them, "Did you ever cry to God for help?" "No, sir, we never prayed in all our life." What are you at? Here is a child, crawling about a house, shivering for want of bread and clothes. "Did you never ask your father for anything?" "No, never." Come, friend, did God make you, or did you grow without him? Did God create you? If he made you, he will have respect unto the work of his hands. Go and try him, even on that low ground. Go and seek his face even as his creature, and see whether he does not help you. O unbelief, to what madness dost thou go, that even when men are driven to starvation, they will not turn to God! O Spirit of God bless the sons of men! Even through their fears, and sorrows, and losses, bless them, and bring them in penitence to the Savior's feet, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

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Jonah's Object-Lessons

"And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live."—Jonah 4:6-8.

I want to lay the stress especially upon these three sentences in my text,—

"God prepared a gourd."

"God prepared a worm."

"God prepared a vehement east wind."

The life of Jonah cannot be written without God; take God out of the prophet's history, and there is no history to write. This is equally true of each one of us. Apart from God, there is no life, nor thought, nor act, nor career of any man, however lowly or however high, Leave out God, and you cannot write the story of anyone's career. If you attempt it, it will be so ill-written that it shall be clearly perceived that you have tried to make bricks without straw, and that you have sought to fashion a potter's vessel without clay. I believe that, in a man's life, the great secret of strength, and holiness, and righteousness, is the acknowledgment of God. When a man has no fear of God before his eyes, there is no wonder that he should run to an excess of meanness, and even to an excess of riot. In proportion as the thought of God dominates the mind, we may expect to find a life that shall be true and really worth living; but in proportion as we forget God, we shall play the fool. It is the fool who says in his heart, "No God," and it is the fool who lives and acts as if there were no God.

In Jonah's life, we meet with God continually. The Lord bade the prophet go to Nineveh, but instead of going there, he took ship to go to Tarshish. Quick as thought, at the back of that announcement, we read, "But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." God hurled out the wind as if he had been throwing a thunderbolt after his servant who was seeking to escape from him, and there was such a terrible storm that the shipmen were compelled to cast Jonah overboard. Then we read, in the 17th verse of the first chapter, "The Lord had prepared a great fish to

swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." God began by preparing a storm, but he went on to prepare a fish. We do not know what fish it was, and it does not matter; it was one that God made on purpose, and it answered so well that Jonah lived in the fish's belly for three days and three nights, and then he was landed safely, a better man than when he went into the sea, though none too good even then.

You may have found, dear friend, that God has prepared a storm in your life. There was a tempest which checked you in your career of sin. You had determined to go to destruction, and you had "paid the fare thereof;" but there came a great trial, something or other that stopped your ship, and threatened utterly to swallow it up. After that, there came delivering mercy; you who were cast into the sea were, nevertheless, not lost, but saved. What you judged to be your destruction turned out to be for your salvation, for God had from of old prepared the means of saving you; and he sent you such a deliverance that you were compelled to say with Jonah, "Salvation is of the Lord." Since that time, I should not wonder if you have seen the hand of God in many very singular ways, possibly in much the same form as Jonah did, not literally, but spiritually. Especially if you have erred as Jonah did, if you have fallen into ill-humours as he did, you have probably had to bear the same kind of discipline and chastisement.

Let it never be forgotten that Jonah was a man of God. I often hear great fault found with him, and he richly deserves the condemnation; he was not at all an amiable person; but, for all that, he was a man of God. When he was in the very depths of the sea, when he appeared to be cut off from all hope, he prayed as none but a man of God could pray: "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." It takes a real saint to cry out of such a place as Jonah was in,—the living tomb of the belly of the fish. He was also a man of faith, else had he not been a man of prayer. But he did still believe in his God; it was even as the result of a mistake that was made by his faith, rather than by his unbelief, that he tried to run away. He had such regard for God's honor that he could not bear to exercise a ministry which he feared would raise a question about the truthfulness of God, and represent him to be changeable. So far as his idea of God went,

he was faithful to it; his fault mainly lay in that imperfect idea of God which had taken possession of his mind.

Jonah was a man of faith and a man of prayer, and God honored him exceedingly by making his word to turn the whole city upside down. For my part, I hardly know of any other man who ever had so high an honor put upon him as this man had. It is just possible that, if you or I had made a king on his throne to come down from it, and robe himself in sackcloth, and if we had seen a whole city—men, women, and children,—all crying out for mercy as the result of one sermon from us, we might have been as greatly foolish, through the intoxication of pride, as this man was foolish through a vehement zeal for God, which happened to take a harsh shape, instead of being tempered, and softened, and sweetened by a recognition of the great love and kindness of God, and by a sweet delight in those gracious attributes of his character. Jonah was grandly stern amid a wicked generation; he was one of God's "Ironsides." He was the man for a fierce fight, and he would not hold back his hand from the use of the sword, or do the work of the Lord half-heartedly; he was one who wished to make thorough work of anything he undertook, and to go to the very end of it. We want more of such men nowadays; he was not lacking in backbone, yet he was lacking in heart; in that respect we would not be like him. He was singularly strong where so many in these days are grievously weak; perhaps he is all the more criticized and condemned because that virtue which he possessed is so rare to-day. The faults he had were on that side on which most modern professors do not err; and therefore, Pharisee-like, they are content to condemn the man for that which they do not themselves commit, Because they are not brave enough and strong enough to fall into such a fault.

In my text, we have God very conspicuous in the life of his servant Jonah; and I want to bring out this truth very prominently, that we may also see God in our lives in similar points to those in which he manifested himself to Jonah. So, we will notice, first, that God is in our comforts: "God prepared a gourd." Secondly, God is in our bereavements and losses; "God prepared a worm." Thirdly, God is in our heaviest trials: "God prepared a vehement east wind." Then, fourthly, what is not in the text in words, but is of the very essence of it, God prepared Jonah: and these

three things—the gourd, the worm, and the east wind, were a part of his preparation, the means of making him a fitter and a better man for his Lord's service. He learned by the gourd, and he learned by the worm, and he learned by the vehement east wind; they were a sort of kindergarten school to which the childlike spirit of Jonah had to go. He needed to be taught as children in their infancy are taught by object-lessons, and things that they can see; so Jonah went to God's kindergarten, to learn from the gourd, and the worm, and the east wind, the lessons that he would not learn in any other way.

I. So, first, I remind you that GOD IS IN OUR COMFORTS: "God prepared a gourd." Everything of good that we enjoy, however little it may be, comes from God.

"'Tis God that Hits our comforts high,
Or sinks them in the grave;
He gives, and blessed be his name!
He takes but what he gave."

Let me call your attention to Jonah's comfort, that is, the gourd which God prepared. It was sent to him when he was in a very wrong spirit, angry with God, and angry with his fellow-men. He had hidden away from everybody in that bit of a shanty which he had put up for himself outside the city, as if he was a real Timon the man-hater. Sick of everybody, and sick even of himself, he gets away into this little booth, and there, in discontent and discomfort, he sits watching to see the fate of the city lying below the hill. Yet God comforted him by preparing a gourd to be "a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief." You know that we are very apt to say of some people, "Well, really, they are of such a trying disposition, they fret about nothing at all, and they worry themselves when they have no cause for it; we have no patience with them." That is what you say, but that is not how God acts. He does have pity upon such people, and he has had patience with many of you when you have been of the number of such people. Why, I do not believe that any man here would have proposed to make a gourd grow up to cover the head of the angry prophet; we should much more likely have called a committee meeting, and we should have agreed that, if the discontented

brother liked to go and live in a booth, he had better work the experiment out; it would probably be for his good, and make him come back and live in the city properly, like other people! Though he was left to feel the cold by night, and the heat by day, it was entirely his own choice; and if a person chooses such a residence, it is not for us to interfere! That is how men talk, and men are so exceedingly wise, you know; but that is not how God talks, and he is infinitely wiser than any of his creatures. His wisdom is sweetly loving, but ours sometimes curdles into hardness. What think ye, brothers and sisters, has not God sent us many comforts when we did not deserve them; when, on the contrary, we had made a rod for our own back, and might well have reckoned upon being made to smart? Yet God has sent us comforts which have relieved us of the sorrow which we foolishly brought upon ourselves, and made us stay the fretfulness which was our own voluntary choice. God has been wonderfully tender with us, even as a mother is with her sick child. Have you not found it so, brothers and sisters? Well, now, look back upon your past life, and think that all the comforts which came to you when you deserved to be left without them, came from God, and for them all let his name be blessed.

Further, notice, that the comfort which came to Jonah was exactly what he wanted. It was a gourd, a broad-leaved plant, very probably the castor-oil plant, which botanists call *Palma Christi*, because of its resemblance to the human hand. In its native country, it grows very rapidly, so that it would speedily afford a welcome shade from the heat; whatever kind of gourd it was, God prepared the plant, and it was exactly the kind to shield Jonah from the burning heat of the sun. The Lord always knows how to send us just the very comfort that we most require. There is many a mother who has had only one of her children spared to her, but what a comfort that one child has been! I have heard one good woman say, "My dear daughter is such a joy to me, she is everything I could wish." Or it may be that God has sent to you some other form of earthly comfort, which has been altogether invaluable to you; it has been a screen from the great heat of your trouble, "a shelter in the time of storm." Whenever you get such an invaluable blessing, praise God for it. Do not let your gourd become your god, but let your gourd lead you to your God. When our comforts become our idols, they work our ruin; but when they make us bless God for them, then they become messengers from God, which help

toward our growth in grace.

Note, next, that God sent this comfort to Jonah at the right time. It came just when he needed it; when he was most distressed, then it was that the gourd came up in a night. The punctuality of God is very notable.

"He never is before his time,
He never is too late."

Just when we need a mercy, and when the mercy is all the more a mercy because it is so timely, then it comes. If it had come later, it might have been too late; or, at any rate, it would not have been so seasonable, and therefore not so sweet. Who can know when is the right time like that God who sees all things at a single glance? He knows when to give, and when to take. In every godly life there is a set time for each event; and there is no need for us to ask, "Why is the white here and the black there; why this gleam of sunlight and that roar of tempest; why here a marriage and there a funeral; why sometimes a harp and at other times a sackbut?" God knows, and it is a great blessing for us when we can leave it all in his hands. Let the gourd spring up in a night, it will be the right night; and let the gourd die in the morning, it will be the right morning. All is well if it be in God's hands. Let us, therefore, distinctly recognize God in our comforts, in their coming to us when we are unworthy of them, in their coming in the form in which we most require them, and in their coming at the time when we are most in need of them.

This gourd, like all our comforts, was sent to Jonah with an exceedingly kind design, and God made it to come up, "that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief." One would not have thought of a gourd delivering a man like that from his grief. It is an unmanly thing for a prophet of Jehovah to have a grief from which a gourd can deliver him; but God knew his servant, and in his condescension he sent this singular form of comfort with this motive, "to deliver him from his grief." I think that Jonah, when he wrote this verse, must have smiled to himself, and thought, "All through the ages, what a feel they will think I was! "yet he went on, and honestly put it down. So, often, when you and I have been comforted by some mere trifle, and we have been very grateful for it; yet, looking back upon it, we have thought to ourselves, "What poor creatures

we were to have been comforted by so small a thing! How foolish it seems for us first to have been put out by so little a matter, and then to have been comforted by something equally little!" Let us see here God's wonderful kindness, his microscopical kindness in thus looking, as it were, to our animalculae of grief, and somehow dealing with them after their own shape and form, so as to deliver us from the grief they have caused us.

Yet, further, it seems that this design of God was fully answered, for "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." God has often sent us mercies that have made us exceeding glad, and we have been delivered from the pressure of heavy grief. But here is the sad note in the history of Jonah, as it has often been with us also, although he was exceeding glad, he does not appear to have been exceeding grateful. It is one thing to be glad of a mercy, it is another matter to be grateful for that mercy. Sometimes a man spends all his time in rejoicing over the comfort, which then becomes idolatry, whereas he ought to have expended it in blessing God for the comfort, and then it would have shown that he was in a right state of heart. I do not read that Jonah thanked God for this gourd; possibly, no worm would have devoured it if he had done so. Our comforts are always safest when they are enveloped in gratitude. Let us overlay the wood of our comfort with the gold plate of our gratitude; so shall it be preserved. An ordinary comfort protected with a sheet of gratitude shall become to us a double means of grace.

This, then, is the first point at which I am aiming. I want every child of God—and I would that every man and woman and child here would do the same,—just to think of every comfort as having come from God. Even though it be a poor fading thing, like a gourd, yet it is valuable to you for the present; therefore, think of it as having come to you from God, even as "the Lord God prepared a gourd" to deliver his servant Jonah from his grief. So, the Lord has prepared your comforts, prepared your prosperity, prepared your wife, prepared your children, prepared your friends; wherefore, bow your heads in gratitude to him, and bless the name of the Lord whose mercy endureth for ever.

II. Now we turn to our second point, where we shall need even more faith

than in the first part of our subject. The prophet next says that "God prepared a worm," which teaches us that **GOD IS IN OUR BEREAVEMENTS AND LOSSES.**

Jonah's great comfort was destroyed by a very little thing. It was only a worm, but that was enough to destroy the gourd. Oh! how soon may our earthly comforts be taken away from us! There is a little fluctuation in the markets, and the prosperous merchant becomes a bankrupt. A little red spot appears in the cheek of your fair child, and in a few weeks she is taken away by decline or consumption. A very little thing may soon destroy all your comforts, and make them to be like the withered leaves of Jonah's gourd.

It was also, probably, an unseen thing that wrought this havoc. Very likely Jonah did not see that worm. God prepared it, but the prophet did not discern it, until he saw the destruction it had caused. And, my dear friends, some little unseen thing may yet come to you, and turn into grief all your present joy.

Besides, it was a very foul thing, a worm, a maggot, at the root of this gourd; and through this foul thing it withered and died. It is sometimes the sharpest bitterness of our grief when we have our joy spoiled by somebody else's sin. The venomous whisper of a wicked gossip, a foul drop from the black tongue of slander, has poisoned the very well-spring of domestic bliss. In Jonah's case, the Lord prepared the worm; and although no evil thing can be charged against the good God, yet at the back of man's free will there is the great truth of divine predestination, which, without taking any evil upon itself, yet overrules even the waywardness of man for the Lord's own glory. People often think that there is no worm which can eat into their comfort; but God can prepare one, as he did in the case of the prophet. He as much prepared the worm as he prepared the gourd, he as much destroyed the comfort as he first of all gave it to his sorrowing servant.

This worm, which God had prepared, did its work very speedily. The gourd was destroyed in a night; when Jonah fell asleep, there it was over his head, guarding him from the bright beams of the moon; but when he

woke in the morning, it hung shrivelled and worn out, affording no protection whatever from the fierce rays of the sun. Oh, how soon can God take away every atom of comfort that we have! I am never at a wedding but the thought of a funeral crosses my mind; I cannot help it. Neither do I hear the sound of joyous music, but I reflect how soon it will all be over, and the trumpet of the great day of judgment will subdue all hearts with fear. It is well, when you are glad, to rejoice as though you rejoiced not, for then you will learn, when you are sorrowful, to mourn as though you sorrowed not. Recollecting the vanity and frailty of all things here below, have yourself well in hand; create your circumstances, rather than be the creature of them; overrule them by faith, instead of bowing before them in terror.

Further, when God prepared the worm to destroy Jonah's gourd, the result of its work was very sad. It left the poor man without that which had made him exceeding glad, and he was as angry and distressed as before he had been rejoicing. I want you, dear friends, just to pause here to learn this lesson. It is God who sends your trials; do not get into your head the notion that your sickness or anything else that grieves you is from the devil. He may have a finger in it, but he is himself always under the supremacy of God. When Job is vexed and plagued by Satan, the arch-enemy cannot touch him anywhere till God gives permission. God stands evermore at the back of all that happens; therefore, do not begin kicking at the secondary agent. You know that, if you strike a dog with a stick, he bites at the stick; if he were a sensible dog, he would try to bite you. If you quarrel with anything that happens, your quarrel is virtually with God himself. It is no use to quarrel with the Lord's agent; for it is God, after all, who sends you the affliction, and "he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Say, as old Eli did, when he heard the evil tidings concerning his household, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." Let it be with you as it was with Aaron when, as he could not speak joyfully, he did not speak at all: "Aaron held his peace." It is sometimes a great thing to be able not to say anything. Silence is golden when it is the silence of a complete submission to the will of the Lord. God prepares the worm; therefore, be not angry with the poor worm, but just let the gourd go. It was God who made it to grow, and he had a perfect right to take it away when he pleased.

III. Now, thirdly, "God prepared a vehement east wind," which teaches us that GOD IS IN OUR HEAVIEST TRIALS.

Jonah could not escape the fury of the wind, especially when his gourd was withered. This wind came from the east, which, according to our old proverb, is "neither good for man nor beast." But it came from the east most vehemently, and, at the same time, after the protecting gourd was gone, the fierce rays of the sun beat upon Jonah's head, where he seems to have been weakest, though he probably thought himself to be strongest just there.

So, dear friends, God may send you troubles on the back of one another. The gourd is gone; now the east wind comes. Troubles seldom come alone, they usually fly in flocks, like martins; and it will often happen that one will come upon the back of another, and you will say to yourself, "Why does this trial come just now when I am least able to bear it?"

Sometimes, also, troubles come very fiercely. It was "a vehement east wind." It came like the rush of scorching heat out of the open door of an oven; it was like the Sirocco, a sultry wind burning up everything in its track. This wind came with all its might upon poor Jonah; and just so may fierce and fiery trials come at any time upon the dearest servants of God.

And, once more, trouble may come when we think ourselves secure. When Jonah went away out of the city, he seemed to say, "There, I will get away from men; I will not have anything more to do with them, they have always worried and troubled me. I will get quite alone; there I shall sit and enjoy myself, for I cannot enjoy anybody else." But the troubles came even there; indeed, Jonah had built his booth "on the east side of the city," just where he would be likely to feel the full force of the wind blowing from that quarter. In going there, he had not gone out of the realm of withered gourds, and he had not gone beyond the reach of the vehement east wind. Neither have you, dear friend, though you say, "I thought, when I left my last trying situation, I should get into a comfortable place." Yes, I will tell you when you will get into a comfortable place, if you are a Christian, and that is, when you pass out of

this world altogether. But you will not find it anywhere else; go where you may on this globe, there are no islands upon which the sea does not sometimes beat roughly. There is no atmosphere so calm but the east wind will disturb it sooner or later; you may go and sit in your booth if you like, but there shall come to you even in that booth the chequers of comfort and of loss, of gourds which spring up in a night and which also wither in a night.

Yes, fierce troubles will come to us, and they may bring us no benefit in themselves. It is a popular notion that trials sanctify those who have to endure them; but by themselves they do not. It is a sanctified trial that sanctifies the tried one; but trial itself, alone and by itself, might make men even worse than they are. Here, for instance, is Jonah; his gourd is gone, and the sun's fierce heat beats upon him, and makes him faint; and even to the Lord himself he says that he does well to be angry, even unto death. The trial was not sanctified to him while he was in it; and it often happens that "nevertheless afterward" is the time in which trials benefit us: "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." You may have ten thousand trials, and yet be none the better for them unless you cry to God to sanctify every twig of the rod, and to make the fury of the east wind or the burning rays of the sun to be a blessing to you.

It seems that, at the time, this trial only revealed Jonah's folly, for it appeared to make him pray very foolishly, and talk very foolishly. His trials were like the tossing of the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. This vehement east wind threw up great masses of black seaweed upon the shore of Jonah's character, and made the great sea of his heart roll up the foul mass of corruption that else might have been hidden and still. Brethren and sisters, unless the Spirit of God comes upon us in power, we shall not grow holy through our trials. Though we were washed in a sea of fire, we should not lose an atom of our sin by suffering. Nay, the very flames of hell shall never purify a soul, or purge away a single sin; he that is filthy shall even there be filthy still. There is nothing in suffering, any more than there is in joy, in and of itself, to make a man holy. That is the work of God, and of God alone; yet God

overrules both our joy and our grief to accomplish his own divine purpose by his Spirit. It is God who sends the wind; so, once again, I want you to pause, and bow your heads before him who sends all your trouble. Do not be angry with God for what he does to you; but feel that it must be right even though it should tear everything away from you, though it should leave you a widow and houseless, though it should strip you, and though it should even slay you. God is God still; and the deeper your trouble, the greater are your possibilities of adoration; for, when you are brought to the very lowest, it is that, in extremis, you can raise the song in excelsis, out of the deepest depths you can praise the Lord to the very highest. When we glorify God out of the fires of fiercest tribulation, there is probably more true adoration of him in that melody than in the loftiest songs of cherubim and seraphim when they enjoy God, and sing out his praises in his presence above.

IV. Now, lastly, I said that it was not in the text verbally, but it was there in spirit, that **IN ALL THIS GOD WAS PREPARING HIS SERVANT.**

Do you not see that God was teaching Jonah by the eye and by experience? Unless the Lord had put Jonah through this process, he could not so well have argued with his servant. So the gourd must go, and the wind must come, and the sun must beat upon the fainting prophet, and Jonah in his angry temper must get to feel great grief over his poor gourd which had met with such an untimely death, and then God comes to him, and says, "Art thou troubled about thy gourd? Hast thou pity upon a gourd, and should not I have pity upon a great city with more than a hundred and twenty thousand helpless children within its walls, and all those thousands of unsinning cattle? Should not I spare these, when thou wouldst have spared this tender plant, which sprang up in a night, and withered in a night?" Sometimes, God puts us through an unusual experience in order that we may the better understand him; and sometimes that we may the better know ourselves. Men who are of a hard nature must have hard usage, diamond must cut diamond, that at last the purpose of the great Owner of the jewels may be accomplished.

Then, dear heart, with thy sore afflictions, God is preparing thee to be a comforter to others. Thou distressed and troubled one, God is training

thee that thou mayest be a very Barnabas, the son of consolation, to the sons and daughters of affliction in times to come. I would suggest to some of you here who have to bear double trouble that God may be preparing you for double usefulness, or he may be working out of you some unusual form of evil which might not be driven out of you unless his Holy Spirit had used these mysterious methods with you to teach you more fully his mind.

I am probably speaking to some who are not yet converted to God. You have not yet believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet you have a world of troubles. You think that God is so angry with you that he means to destroy you, for ever since you have begun to think of divine things you have had nothing but trouble. You have lost one dear friend after another, you have yourself been very ill, and you often feel very low-spirited and sad, and you say to yourself, "Ah, I am doomed to perish!" Now, I do not come to that conclusion at all. On the contrary, I thank God for your trouble, for I think that, as God dealt with Jonah to teach him a lesson, he is dealing with you to bring you to himself. It was a good thing for Jonah when he had finished that quarrel with his God, for no good ever comes that way. What a blessed thing it would be for you also to finish your quarrel with God! Finish it soon, I beg you. How can you be reconciled to him? Only by the death of Jesus, for God has given his Son to die for sinners. That ought to end your quarrel with God. Remember that blessed verse, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Turn to him, then. Let the God of love end your discussions, and end your questionings; may his blessed Spirit come and sanctify your troubles, and bring you to himself!

God bless you all, dear friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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Between the Two Appearings

"Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."—Hebrews 9:26-28.

The two great links between earth and heaven are the two advents of our Lord: or, rather, he is the great bond of union, by these two appearings. When the world had revolted, and God had been defied by his own creatures, a great gulf was opened between God and man. The first coming of Christ was like a bridge which crossed the chasm and made a way of access from God to man, and then from man to God. Our Lord's second advent will make that bridge far broader, until heaven shall come down to earth, and ultimately earth shall go up to heaven. At these two points a sinful world is drawn into closest contact with a gracious God. Jesus herein is seen as opening the door which none can shut, by means of which the Lord is beheld as truly Emmanuel, God with us.

Here, too, is the place for us to build a grand suspension bridge, by which, through faith, we ourselves may cross from this side to the other of the stormy river of time. The cross, at whose feet we stand, is the massive column which supports the structure on this side; and as we look forward to the glory, the second advent of our Lord is the solid support on the other side of the deep gulf of time. By faith we first look to Jesus, and then for Jesus; and herein is the life of our spirits. Christ on the cross of shame, and Christ on the throne of glory, we dwell between these two boundaries: these are our Dan and Beersheba, and all between is holy ground. As for our Lord's first coming, there lies our rest: the once-offered Sacrifice hath put away our sin, and made our peace with God. As for his second coming, there lies our hope, our joy; for we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. The glories of his sacred royalty shall be repeated in all the saints; for he hath made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. At his first advent we adore him with gratitude

rejoicing in "God with us", as making himself to be our near kinsman. We gather with grateful boldness around the infant in the manger, and behold our God. But in the second advent we are struck with a solemn reverence, a trembling awe. We are not less grateful, but we are more prostrate as we bow before the majesty of the triumphant Christ. Jesus in his glory is an overpowering vision. John, the beloved disciple, writes, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." We could have kissed his feet till he quitted us on Olivet; but at the sight of the returning Lord, when heaven and earth shall flee away, we bow in lowliest adoration. His first appearing has given us that life and holy confidence with which we press forward to his glorious appearing, which is the crown of all.

I want, at this time, to bring before you those two appearings of our Lord. The text says, "He hath appeared"; and again, "He shall appear." The twenty-sixth verse speaks of his unique manifestation already accomplished, and the twenty-eighth verse promises the glorious second outshining, as it promises, "He shall appear." Between these two lights—"he hath appeared" and "he shall appear"—we shall sail safely, if the Holy Spirit will direct our way.

My first head is this, once, and no second; and my other division of discourse will make a kind of paradox, but not a contradiction—yet a second.

I. Our first theme is, ONCE, AND NO SECOND. Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." This he has done once, and he will never repeat it. Let us dwell on the subject in detail.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has once appeared, and though he will appear again, it will not be for the same purpose. On his first appearing fix your thoughts; for the like of it will never be seen again. In the bosom of the Father he lay concealed as God; as the second person of the divine Trinity in Unity he could not be seen, for "no man hath seen God at any time." It is true that "without him was not anything made that was made"; and thus his hand was seen in his works; but as to himself, he was still hidden; revealed in type and prophecy, but yet in fact concealed. Jesus

was not manifest to the sons of men, until one midnight an angel hastened from the skies, and bade the shepherds know that unto them was born in Bethlehem a Savior, that is Christ the Lord. Then the rest of the angelic host, discovering that one of their number had gone before them on so wonderful an errand, were swift to overtake him; and in one mass of glittering glory they filled the midnight skies with heavenly harmony as they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Well might they sing; for the Son of God now appeared. In the manger he might be seen with the eyes, and looked upon, and handled; for there the Word was made flesh, and God was incarnate. He whom the ages could not contain, the glorious One who dwelt with the Father for ever unseen, now appeared within the bounds of time and space, and humble shepherds saw him, and adored. By Gentiles he was seen; for wise men from the East beheld and worshipped him whose star had led them. As he grew up, the children of Nazareth beheld him as a child obedient to his parents; and by-and-by he was made manifest to men by the witness of John and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him at his baptism. God bore him witness as he went up and down the hills of Palestine preaching the kingdom and proclaiming salvation to the sons of men. Men saw him; for he spake among them openly, and walked in their midst. His was not the seclusion of dignity, but the manifestation of sympathy. "He went about doing good." He was seen of angels, for they came and ministered unto him; and he was seen of devils, for they trembled at his word. He dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory: he was the revelation of God to men, so that he could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He was made still more manifest by his death; for in his crucifixion he was lifted up from the earth, that all might behold him. He was exalted upon the cross, even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, on purpose that whosoever looked to him might live. There and then he opened those four conspicuous fountains of cleansing blood which were made to flow by the nails. See how it flows from hands and feet! There, too, he laid bare his side, and set his heart abroad for dying men, and forthwith there flowed forth blood and water. Thus we may look into his inmost heart. High on the cross the Savior hung, without veil or curtain to conceal him. "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared." I know of no appearance that could have been more complete, more unreserved. He moved in the midst

of crowds, he spake to men and women one by one. He was on the mountain, and by the sea; he was in the desert, and by the river; he was both in house and in temple; he was everywhere accessible; in the fullest sense "once in the end of the world hath he appeared." Oh, the glory of this gracious epiphany! This is the greatest event in history: the invisible God has appeared in human form.

The text tells us very precisely that in this first coming of our Lord he appeared to put away sin. Notice that fact. By his coming and sacrifice he accomplished many things; but his first end and object was "to put away sin." You know what the modern babblers say: they declare that he appeared to reveal to us the goodness and love of God. This is true; but it is only the fringe of the whole truth. The fact is, that he revealed God's love in the provision of a sacrifice to put away sin. Then, they say that he appeared to exhibit perfect manhood, and to let us see what our nature ought to be. Here also is a truth; but it is only part of the sacred design. He appeared, say they, to manifest self-sacrifice, and to set us an example of love to others. By his self-denial he trampled on the selfish passions of man. We deny none of these things; and yet we are indignant at the way in which the less is made to hide the greater. To put the secondary ends into the place of the grand object is to turn the truth of God into a lie. It is easy to distort truth, by exaggerating one portion of it and diminishing another; just as the drawing of the most beautiful face may soon be made a caricature rather than a portrait by neglect of proportion. You must observe proportion if you would take a truthful view of things; and in reference to the appearing of our Lord, his first and chiefest purpose is "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The great object of our Lord's coming here was not to live, but to die. He hath appeared, not so much to subdue sin by his teaching, as to put it away by the sacrifice of himself. The master purpose which dominated all that our Lord did, was not to manifest goodness, nor to perfect an example, but to put away sin by sacrifice. That which the moderns would thrust into the background, our Lord placed in the forefront. He came to take away our sins, even as the scapegoat typically carried away the sin of Israel into the wilderness that the people might be clean before the living God. The Lord Jesus has come hither as a priest to remove sin from his people: "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins." Do not let us think of Jesus without

remembering the design of his coming. I pray you, brethren, know not Christ without his cross, as some pretend to know him. We preach Christ; so do a great many more: but, "we preach Christ crucified"; so do not so many more. We preach concerning our Lord, his cross, his blood, his death; and upon the blood of his cross we lay great stress, extolling much "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." We know no past appearing of God in human flesh except that appearing which ended with a sacrifice to put away sin. For this our Savior came, even to save sinners by putting away their sin. We will not deny, nor conceal, nor depreciate his master purpose, lest we be found guilty of trampling upon his blood, and treating it as an unholy thing. The putting away of sin was a Godlike purpose; and it is a wellspring of hope to us, that for this reason Jesus appeared among men.

Let us go a step further with our text: once only does the Lord appear for purpose of putting away sin. He came once to do it, and he has done it so well that there is no need for him to offer any further sacrifice. "This man, after that he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down." He will never appear a second time for the putting away of sin. It was his purpose once; but he has so fulfilled it that it will never be his purpose again. The high priest, as you know, came every year with blood for the putting away of sin. He has slain the victim this year, but next year he must come in the same manner, and the next, and the next, and the next; because the sacrifice had not really removed the guilt; but our Lord has come once for this divine purpose; and he has so achieved that purpose that he could truly cry, "It is finished"; for the work is done once for all. He has so perfectly put away sin by the sacrifice of himself that he will never need to offer a second sacrifice. That our Lord should ever come a second time as he came the first time is inconceivable by those who love him. He will come a second time, but in a very different style, and for a very different purpose; not as a sacrifice for sins, but as King and Judge.

And here learn yet further, that once only is sin put away. Jesus died to finish transgression and make an end of sin. Our Lord made atonement for sin when he died the just for the unjust: he made peace for us when the chastisement of our peace was upon him. When the Lord had laid upon him the iniquity of us all, divine wrath fell upon him on account of

our sins, until he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." Then sin was put away. There, but never anywhere else, was full atonement presented, and iniquity was blotted out. There is no other place of expiation for sin but the place of our Lord's sacrifice of himself. Believing in him that died on the cross, our sins are put away; but without faith in him there is no remission of sin. Beyond our Lord's, other sacrifice there is none; other sacrifice there will never be. If any of you here are entertaining some "larger hope", I would say to you—Hope what you please; but remember, that hope without truth at the bottom of it, is an anchor without a holdfast. A groundless hope is a mere delusion. Wish what you will; but wishes without promises from God to back them, are vain imaginings. Why should you imagine or wish for another method of salvation? Rest you assured that the Lord God thinks so highly of the one sacrifice for sin, that for you to desire another is evil in his sight. If you reject the one sacrifice of the Son of God, there remains no hope for you; nor ought there to be. Our Lord's way of putting away sin is so just to God, so honoring to the law, and so safe for you, that if you reject it your blood must be on your own head. By once offering up himself to God, our Lord has done what myriads of years of repentance and suffering could never have done. Blessed be the name of the Lord, the sin of the world, which kept God from dealing with men at all, was put away by our Lord's death! John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." God has been able to deal with the world of sinners in a way of grace, because Jesus died. I thank our Lord even more, because the actual sins of his own chosen—even of all those who believe on him in every age—have been put away. These sins were laid on him; and in him God visited man for them. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree"; and so put them away for ever, and they are cast into the depths of the sea. The putting away of my guilt as a believer was really, effectually, and eternally accomplished by the death of thy great Substitute upon the bloody tree. This is the ground of our everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. Jesus did it alone; he did not only seem to do it, but he actually achieved the putting away of sin. He blotted out the handwriting that was against us. He finished transgression and made an end of sin; and brought in everlasting righteousness when once for all he died upon the cross.

Beloved, there is a further note here: observe that once only hath he made a sacrifice of himself. "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The very best way to describe the death of our Lord is to call it "the sacrifice of himself." It may be well rightly to divide the sacrifice, as the priest cut up the bullock or the ram. You may speak of our Lord's bodily sufferings, his mental griefs, and his spiritual anguish; but for the most part we are not able to go far in this detailed appreciation of the wondrous sacrifice. We are such poor folk in spiritual things, that instead of bringing a bullock which could be anatomized and its vital organs all laid bare, we are content to bring a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons; and these were not carefully divided asunder, but burned upon the altar. The most of us have to take our Lord Jesus Christ as a whole; since, from want of understanding, we cannot go into detail. What did he offer to God? He made a sacrifice of himself. Truly he sacrificed his crown, his rest, his honor, his reputation, and his life; but the essence of the sacrifice was himself: Himself took our iniquity, and bare our sorrows. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Thy sacrifice, O Christ, is not to be measured unless we could compute the infinity of thy Godhead. It was not only thy labor, thy pain, thy shame, thy death; thy sacrifice was thyself; what more couldst even thou offer? There, on the altar, the Son of God did place himself, and there he bled and died that he might be the victim of punitive justice, the substitute for guilty men. There was he unto God a sweet-smelling savor, because he vindicated the law, and made it possible for the Lawgiver to be justly merciful. This, according to our text, was done once, and only once, and it never will be repeated; so that the whole business of our Lord's appearing to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, is confined to one appearing and one offering. I want that word "ONE" to ring in your ears. "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." I would have the adverb "once" go through every ear, and abide in every heart. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Peter says, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins."

Once it is, and not oftener. To suppose the contrary would be, first, to break away from the analogy of human things. Read the twenty-seventh verse: "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the

judgment." A man dies once, and after that everything is fixed and settled, and he answers for his doings at the judgment. One life, one death—then everything is weighed, and the result declared: "after this the judgment." So Christ comes, and dies once; and after this, for him also the result of what he has done, namely, the salvation of those who look for him. He dies once, and then reaps the fixed result, according to the analogy of the human race, of which he became a member and representative. Men come not back here to die twice; men die once, and then the matter is decided, and there comes the judgment. So Christ dies: he does not come back here to die again; but he receives the result of his death—that is, the salvation of his own people. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." The Christ is so completely man that he follows the analogies of manhood, as the apostle here observes, and we must not break away from them.

To suppose a second death for our Lord would be to forget what he came to do. The punishment of sin was, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." One death was the sentence. It is true that we have to speak of that one death as divided into the first and the second death; but it is judicially one sentence of death which is pronounced on man. When Christ comes, therefore, he bears the one sentence of death. He laid down his life for us. The penalty due to sin was death: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"; Christ, therefore, must die, and die he did; "By the grace of God he tasted death for every man." But it was not said, "Thou shalt twice die." No; and Christ does not die twice. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." He has borne the full sentence which was pronounced on sin, and thus he hath put away the sin which involved us under the penalty.

To suppose that our Lord should be made a sacrifice again is a supposition full of horror. When you study deeply the death of your Lord, unless your heart is like an adamant stone, you must be bowed down with grief. The visage of him who was heaven's glory was more marred than that of any man, and his form more than the sons of men. He whose brow

was from the beginning surrounded with majesty, had his forehead and temples torn with a coronet of thorns. Those blessed cheeks that are as beds of spices were distained with spittle from the lips of menials. His face, which is the joy of heaven, was buffeted and bruised by mockers. His blessed shoulders, which upbear the world, they scourged with knotted whips until the blood ran down in crimson rivers as the ploughers made deep furrows. How could they flout him so? Was it possible that my Beloved should be scorned and slandered, spit upon and condemned as a felon? Did they lay the shameful cross upon his blessed back, and lead him through the streets amid the ribald mob? He who knew no sin was numbered with the transgressors. Found guilty of nothing save excess of love to man, he was led away to be crucified. They hurried him off to die at the common place of the gibbet. The rough soldiers nailed him to the cross, and lifted up the rough tree for all to gaze thereon. I wonder the angels bore it. It seems extraordinary that they should look on while men were taking their Lord and Master, and driving bolts through his hands and feet, and lifting his sacred body upon the cruel tree. But they did bear it; and the Christ hung on the tree of doom in a burning heat, through the fierce sun, and the inflammation of his wounds, and inward fever. He was so parched that his tongue was dried up like a potsherd, and was made to cleave to the roof of his mouth. There he hung amid derision, his bones all dislocated, and his very flesh dissolved with faintness as though it were turning back to its native dust. Meanwhile his soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"; and the Father's face which has sustained thousands of martyrs was turned away from him until he cried, "Lame sabachthani." And is there heart so brutal as to suggest a repetition of this divine agony? Repeat this! Repeat this! O sirs, we rise at once, as one man, in mutiny against an idea so revolting. One Calvary is glorious, for it has accomplished the grand deed of our redemption; but two Calvaries would mean double shame, and no glory. Shall the Son of God, after all that he has done, come down on earth to be a second time "despised and rejected of men"? Shall he a second time be dragged through mire and blood? It must not, cannot be. God forbid! He has trodden the winepress once for all. No more shall he stain his garments with his own blood.

To suppose a repetition of the sacrifice is to cast suspicion upon the work and efficacy of the great offering of himself. Was not that sacrifice infinite

in value? It must have been, for it was the sacrifice of God himself. Why, then, present it again? Unless the first was altogether or measurably a failure, why repeat it? The repetition of the cross would destroy the cross. O man, thou hast taken away from the death of the Lord all its virtue if thou wouldest dream: of his dying yet again. As to that invention of the Church of Rome—the continual offering of the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass—it is a dead thing, for the "blood is the life thereof"; and it is as gross an insult to the one great sacrifice as could well have been devised by his cruellest enemies. He has for ever put away the sin of his people by his one offering, and now there remains no more sacrifice for sin.

My brethren, the idea that our Lord Jesus did not effectually perform the work of taking away sin removes the foundation of our faith. If by one offering he did not put away sin, shall it be repeated? Suppose for a moment that he died twice: why not three times? Why not four times? Why not fifty times? Why not for ever the rehearsal of Calvary, for ever the doleful cry, for ever the tomb of Joseph, and the dead body wrapped in linen? And yet, even after a thousand repetitions, how could we know that we were saved? How could we be sure that the sacrifice sufficed, and that sin was really put away? If the one offering of himself did not satisfy justice, what would or could do it? Then are we without hope, and of all men most miserable; for a golden dream of the putting away of sin has come to us, and, lo! it has melted away. Once yonder tree, once yonder tomb; once the broken seal and the frightened watch: on that one sacrifice and justification we rest securely, and we want no repetition of the work. It was enough, for Jesus said, "It is finished." It was enough, for God has raised him from the dead.

I do not need, I hope, to linger here to warn you that it is of no use to expect that God will put away sin in any other way than that which at so great a cost he has provided. If sin could have been removed in any other way than by the death of his dear Son, Jesus would not have died. If there had been within the range of supposition any method of pardon except by the sacrifice of himself, depend upon it Jesus would never have bowed his head to death. The great Father would never have inflicted death upon the perfect One if it had been possible that the cup should pass from him. He could never have inflicted upon his Beloved a superfluous pain. His

death was needful; but, blessed be God, having been once endured, it has once for all put away sin, and hence it will never be endured again.

II. We come now to look at the rest of the text. Once, and no second; AND YET A SECOND. He shall appear a second time." Yes, Christ Jesus shall appear a second time; but not a second time for the same purpose as before.

He will appear. The appearing will be of the most open character. He will not be visible in some quiet place where two or three are met, but he will appear as the lightning is seen in the heavens. At his first appearing he was truly seen: wherever he went he could be looked at and gazed upon, and touched and handled. He will appear quite as plainly by-and-by, among the sons of men. The observation of him will be far more general than at his first advent; for "every eye shall see him." Every eye did not see him here when he came the first time, for he did not travel out of Palestine, save only when, as an infant all unknown, he was carried down into Egypt. But when he comes a second time all the nations of the world shall behold him. They that are dead shall rise to see him, both saints and sinners; and they that are alive and remain when he shall come shall be absorbed in this greatest of spectacles. Then Balaam shall find it true, "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh." Though they cry, "Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne," they shall cry in vain; for before his judgment-seat they must all appear.

His second appearing will be without sin. That is to say, he will bring no sin-offering with him, and will not himself be a sacrifice for sin. What need that it should be so? We have seen that he once offered himself without spot to God, and therefore, when he comes a second time, his relation to human guilt will finally cease. He will then have nothing further to do with that sin which was laid upon him. Our sin, which he took to himself by imputation, he has borne and discharged. Not only is the sinner free, but the sinner's Surety is free also; for he has paid our debt to the utmost farthing. Jesus is no longer under obligation on our account. When he comes a second time, he will have no connection of any sort with the sin which once he bare. He will come, moreover, without those sicknesses and infirmities which arise out of sin. At his first advent

he came in suffering flesh, and then he came to hunger and to thirst, to be without a place whereon to lay his head; he came to have his heart broken with reproach, and his soul grieved with the hardness of men's hearts. He was compassed with infirmity; he came unto his God with strong crying and tears; he agonized even unto bloody sweat; and so he journeyed on with all the insignia of sin hanging about him. But when he comes a second time it will be without the weakness, pain, poverty, and shame which accompany sin. There will then be no marred visage nor bleeding brow. He will have re-assumed his ancient glory. It will be his glorious appearing.

When our Lord comes to the full in his glory there will remain no sin upon his people. He will present his bride unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The day of his appearing will be the manifestation of a perfect body as well as a perfect Head. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun when their Lord's countenance is as the sun shining in his strength. As he will be "without sin," so will they be "without sin." Oh, what a glorious appearing is this! A true appearing, and yet the very opposite of the first. Then the text adds: "He shall appear without sin unto salvation." What does that mean? It means that he will then display the perfect salvation of all those who put their trust in him. He will come to celebrate the great victory of mercy over sin. At his coming he will set his foot upon the dragon's head, and bruise Satan under our feet. He will come to have all his enemies put under his feet. To-day we fight, and he fights in us; we groan and he groans in us, for the dread conflict is raging. When he comes again the battle will be ended: he shall divide the spoil of vanquished evil and celebrate the victory of righteousness.

But the resurrection is the salvation principally intended here. Alas, what evil sin hath done! How many of our best beloved lie rotting beneath the clay! The worms are feeding on those whose voices were the music of our lives. The scythe of death has cut them down like grass; they lie together in rows in yonder cemetery. Who slew all these? The sting of death is sin. But when our Lord cometh, who is the resurrection and the life, from beds of dust and silent clay our dead men shall rise; they shall leap up into immortality. "Thy brother shall rise again." Thy children shall come

again from the land of their captivity. Not a bone, nor a piece of a bone, of a saint shall be left as a trophy in the hand of the enemy. When our Lord brought forth Peter from the prison, he did not let him leave his old shoes behind him, but the angel said, "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals, and follow me"; and when the Lord Jesus shall come and open wide the door of the sepulcher, he will bid us come forth in the entirety of our nature, and leave nothing behind. Salvation shall mean to us the perfection of our manhood in the likeness of our Lord. No aching hands and weary brows then; but we shall be raised in power. Our vile body shall be changed, and made like unto his glorious body. Though sown in corruption, our body shall be raised in incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. What a glorious prospect lies before us in connection with the day of his appearing a second time unto salvation!

Now notice that this appearing and this salvation will chiefly belong to those who look for him. Will you bear with me patiently a minute or two here? I wonder how many there are in the Tabernacle who are looking for him. The text says, "Unto them that look for him shall he appear a second time without sin unto salvation." Beloved, I will put the question again: How many here are looking for our Lord's second coming? I am afraid if conscience hath her perfect work many will have to say, "I am afraid I am not among the number." I will tell you what it is to look for that second appearing. It is to love the Lord Jesus, to love him so that you long for him as a bride longeth for her husband. Why are his chariots so long in coming? Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Strong love hates separation, it pines for union. It cries, "Come, Lord! Come, Lord!" Longing follows on the heels of loving. To look for his coming is to prepare for him. If I were asked to visit you to-morrow evening, I am sure you would make some preparations for my call—even for one so common-place as myself. You would prepare, because you would welcome me. If you expected the Queen to call, how excited you would be! What preparation good housewives would make for a royal visitor! When we expect our Lord to come, we shall be concerned to have everything ready for him. I sometimes see the great gates open in front of the larger houses in the suburbs; and it means that they are expecting company. Keep the great gates of your soul always open, expecting your Lord to come. It is idle to talk about looking for his coming if we never set our house in order, and

never put ourselves in readiness for his reception. Looking for him means that you stand in a waiting attitude, as a servant who expects his master to be at the door presently. Do not say, "The Lord will not yet come, and therefore I shall make my plans irrespective of him for the next twenty or thirty years." You may not be here in the next twenty or thirty minutes, or, if you are, your Lord may be here also. He cometh; he is on the road; he started long ago, and he sent on a herald before him to cry, "Behold, I come quickly." He has been coming quickly over the mountains of division ever since; and he must be here soon. If you look for his appearing you will be found in an attitude of one who waits and watches, that when his Lord cometh he may meet him with joy. Christ is coming, I must not sin: Christ is coming, I must not be rooted to the world. Are you thus expecting him? I am afraid I shall only be speaking the truth, if I say that very few Christians are in the highest sense waiting for the appearing of the Lord. My friend Mr. Govett, in his Commentary on my text, reminds us of the story of Moses, when God told him to take seventy men up the hill with him. We read of these honored men, that "they saw God, and did eat and drink." What a privilege! They were all the Lord's guests. As Moses went up to God into the thick darkness, he said to them, "Tarry ye here until we come again unto you." Moses was gone for forty days, and how many waited for him? I do not know when they began to slip down from the hill, or whether they went one by one, or in groups; but when Moses returned not a soul of them was left, save Joshua, whom Moses had taken up with him to still higher ground. The seventy had gone down among the people, and probably spread that unbelief among them which led to the making of the golden calf. None can do so much mischief as those who have been with God, but cannot wait for the glorious appearing. You tell me Moses was gone a long time—well-nigh six: weeks. Yes, and that is why many cannot wait for the Lord now, because the delay is so long: it is nearly nineteen hundred years since he went away. True, four thousand years rolled away before he came the first time, but two thousand quite wear out the watchers for his second coming. Men cannot wait, and therefore go down to the world and help to fashion its idols. Only here and there do we see a Joshua who will abide in his place till his leader appears.

As to watching, this is rarer than waiting. The fact is, even the better sort

of believers who wait for his coming, as all the ten virgins did, nevertheless do not watch. Even the best sort of the waiters slumbered and slept. You are waiting, but you are sleeping! This is a mournful business. A man who is asleep cannot be said to look; and yet it is "unto them that look for him" that the Lord comes with salvation. We must be wide-awake to look. We ought to go up to the watch-tower every morning, and look toward the sun-rising, to see whether he is coming. Surely our last act at night should be to look out for his star, and say, "Is he coming?" It ought to be a daily disappointment when our Lord does not come; instead of being, as I fear it is, a kind of foregone conclusion that he will not come just yet. How pleased we are if some daring fellow will tell us when he will come, for then we can get ready near the time, and need not perpetually watch! We would not go to a gipsy in a red cloak, and let her tell our own fortune; but we will let a man in a black coat tell us the fortune of our Lord. What folly! Of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, nor even the angels of God. This time of the advent is a secret; and purposely so, that we may always be on tip-toe of expectation, always looking out, because our Lord is surely coming; but we are not sure when he cometh. "And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Many professing Christians forget Christ's second coming altogether; others drop a smile when we speak about it, as though it belonged only to fanatics and dreamers. But ye, beloved, I trust are not of that kind. As ye believe really in the first coming and the one great sacrifice, so believe really in the second coming without a sin-offering unto the climax of your salvation. Standing between the cross and the crown, between the cloud that received him out of our sight, and the clouds with which he will come with ten thousands of his saints to judge the quick and the dead, let us live as men who are not of this world, strangers in this age which darkly lies between two bright appearings, happy beings saved by a mystery accomplished, and soon to be glorified by another mystery which is hasting on. Let us, like her in the Revelation, have the moon under our feet, keeping all sublunary things in their proper place. May we even now be made to sit together with Christ in the heavenlies!

Now all this must be strange talk to some of you. I wish it would alarm those of you who once made a profession of true religion, and have gone

back to the world's falsehood. How will you face him, you backsliders, in that day when he shall appear, and all else shall vanish in the blaze of his light, as stars when the sun shines out? What will you do when your treachery shall be made clear to your consciences by his appearing? What will you do, who have sold your Master, and given up your Lord, who was and is your only hope for the putting away of your sins? Oh! I pray you, as you love yourselves, go to him as he appears in his first coming; and then, washed in his blood, go forward to meet him in his second coming for salvation. God bless you, and by his Son and Spirit make you ready for that great day which cometh on apace!

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Sad Fasts Changed to Glad Feasts

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. - Zechariah 8:19

My time for discourse upon this subject will be limited, as we shall gather around the communion-table immediately afterwards. So in the former part of my sermon I shall give you an outline of what might be said upon the text if we had time to examine it fully. It will be just a crayon sketch without much light and shade. You will be able to think over the subject at your leisure, and fill up the picture for yourselves!

We have, in the chapters we have read, a blessed message of peace to God's people in the day of their trouble. In the land of their captivity the Jews were in great perplexity. Their sad lament is on record; "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." But their trouble led many of them to seek the Lord and he was found of them. Welcome is such misery which leads to such mercy. In the seventh chapter we are told that, when they sent unto the house of God, to pray before the Lord, and to say, "Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? Then came the word of the Lord." Jehovah has put their tears into his bottle, and in answer to their sighing sent them a message of hope. That message has in it much that is very practical. It is a letter full of mercy, but it is directed to certain characters. God does not send indiscriminate mercy. If men go on in their sin, he sends them words of judgment; but when they turn from their wickedness, and are renewed by his grace in the spirit of their minds, then it is that words of comfort are spoken to them.

Reviewing the whole message which Zechariah was commissioned to

deliver, and which is summed up in our text, there are three things which stand out in clear prominence. The first is, that God calls for transformation of character in the people he is going to bless. The second is, that he promises translation of condition to those whose characters are thus changed and beautiful. And, lastly, he ordains transfiguration of ordinances as the result of the new character and condition. The whole subject is exceedingly suggestive, and well worthy of careful study when you reach your homes.

We must not lose sight of the fact that, primarily, this message is for Israel according to the flesh, and contains a prophesy of their latter-day glory. God hath not cast off his people whom he did foreknow, and there are majestic words here which still await their fulfillment when the set time shall have come. The Lord "will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem", and make the place of his feet glorious in that day. But as "no prophesy of Scripture is of any private interpretation," so the message to the Jews also bears a message for us. Let us seek to learn its lessons well.

I. My text reminds me—and the chapter before us emphasizes the fact—that, when God means to bless his people, HE CALLS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER. The promise of the abiding presence of the Lord God Almighty is ever proceeded by the call to separation and holiness. "The words which the Lord had cried by the former prophets" made it very clear that only with the righteous nation would God dwell; and Zechariah delivers a similar message.

Very remarkable will be the transformation of character which God shall work. According to the text, love of truth is to be one of the main effects of the change. These people certainly did not set much value on the truth before; they were in love with every lie, with every false god, and with every false prophet. But God would have them taste of his covenant blessings, and be set free from every false way. It is the only truth that can set men free; yet many there are even to-day who delight to be in bondage to error. How is it with you? Do you love the truth, or can you put up with that which is not true, if it is only pleasant? Say, dear heart, are you anxious after truth—truth in your head, truth in your heart, truth on your tongue, truth in your life? If you are false, and love falsehood, you are

taken with a sore disease; and unless you are healed of the plague, you can never enter heaven. You must be transformed and made true, and only the Spirit of truth can effect the mighty change.

Another sign must follow: love of peace. The text also says: "Therefore love peace." In some men it is a plain proof of conversion when they desire peace. Some are naturally very hot-tempered, and soon boil over. These are the men of great force of character, or else of great shallowness: it is the small pot which is soon hot. Some are malicious; they can take enmity quietly, and keep it in the refrigerator of their cold hearts, even for years. Such love is not peace; they are at war with all who have in any degree disappointed or displeased them. When the grace of God takes away an angry, passionate, malicious disposition, it achieves a great wonder. But then grace itself is a great wonder; and unless this change is wrought in you who need it, you shall not see God, for you cannot enter heaven to go into a passion there. Depend upon it, unless you lose your bad temper, you will never be amongst the ranks of the glorified. It must be conquered and removed, if you are to join the happy hosts on high. "They are without fault before the throne of God;" and so must you be if you are to be numbered amongst that company.

Moreover, those whom God blesses have undergone a transformation as to their conduct with each other. Righteous dealing is another effect of the change. Notice the ninth verse of the seventh chapter: "Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Execute true judgment." This is at all times a necessary admonition, but never more necessary than new, when so many never dream of justice and goodness: in business and in private life many seem to have no care for righteousness. If the thing will pay, they will rob right and left; and they will only be honest because there is an old saw that saith, "Honesty is the best policy." But he that is honest out of policy is the most dishonest man in the world. May God grant us grace to do what is right at all costs! Christian men, when the grace of God reigns in their souls, would rather be the poorest of the poor than get rich by a single act contrary to uprightness. O beloved members of this church, be upright in all your transactions, clear and straight in your dealings; for how shall you call yourselves the children of the righteous God if you make gain by unholy transactions?

Another point of transformation lies in the exercise of compassion. This comes out in that same ninth verse of the seventh chapter: "Shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother." A great mark of a changed heart is when we become tender, pitiful, and kind. Some men have very little of the milk of human kindness about them. You may lay a case before them, and they will wonder why you should come to them; and when you see how little they do, you yourself wonder why you ever came to them. Many there are whose hearts are locked up in an iron safe, and we cannot find the key! They have hidden the key themselves; there is no getting at their hearts. One such said to a minister who preached a sermon, after which there was to be a collection, "You should preach to our hearts, and then you would get some money." The minister replied, "Yes, I think that is very likely, for that is where you keep your money." The answer was a very good one. That is just where a great many persons carry their treasure; but when the grace of God comes, and renews the miser's heart, he begins to be generous, he has pity upon the poor, and compassion for the fallen: he loves to bless those who are round about him, and make them happy. It is a mark of wonderful transformation in the character of some men, when their heart begins to go a little outside their own ribs, and they can feel for the sorrows of other men.

Notice, next, in the tenth verse of that same seventh chapter, that another mark of God's people is consideration for others: "Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor." How can he be a child of the all-bountiful Father who would make men work for wages that scarcely keep body and soul together? How can he be a son of the God of love, who will defraud the poor woman whose fingers must go stitch, stitch, half through the night, before she can even get enough to give her even relief from her hunger? God's children will have nothing to do with this kind of thing. Those who take delight in oppressing the poor, and who make their gain thereby, will be themselves pinched in eternal poverty; they are little likely to enter the golden gates of paradise. There is many a child of God who has lived here in the depths of poverty; and when he gets to heaven, away from all the struggle and bitterness, is he to see the man who was his oppressor here below, coming into glory to sit side by side with him? I trow not.

Once more, where there is a work of grace, it leads men to brotherliness of character. "And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart," saith the Lord in the tenth verse of this seventh chapter; and the same thing is repeated in the seventeenth verse of the eighth chapter. I should be sure that some women were converted if they left off imagining evil against others in their hearts. For there are some women—and there are some men, too, I am sorry to say—who cannot think of anybody without thinking evil of them. There are such dreadful persons about, and sometimes we come across them to our dismay. They paint the very saints of God black, and there is no getting away from their slander; nay, let a man live the life of Enoch, yet would some of these people report evil against him. Slander is no sign of a saint; it is the brand of one who is under the dominion of the devil. "For all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord." God save us from them all!

Thus I have given you a brief outline of the transformation of grace. They are great changes because God works them. When men come to him, and yield themselves up to his divine power, he takes away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh. He turns their nature to the very reverse of what it was before; then they follow after truth and peace, they love righteousness, and learn kindness, through his good Spirit.

II. The second point to which I would draw your attention, with reference to the methods of God with his people, is that HE PROMISES TRANSMUTATIONS OF CONDITION to those men in whom are found the transformation of character. I have already read the eighth chapter through to you; let us go through it again, and pick out just a note or two of the joy and gladness which are here written in full score.

First, jealousy is a tunnel into communing love. God represents himself, in the second verse, as being very jealous about his people; because he loved them so much, he was jealous for them with great fury. The people set up false gods in his own city, even in his own temple, and God was angry with them, and would not dwell with them; but when they repented, and he had cleansed them by his mercy, he says, "I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." What a change! God

waits not until, by long obedience, his people win him back. He does not say that he will return when they merit his presence. No, the word comes to us full of surprise and power, "I am returned." Instantly on the repentance, God comes back. A jealous God fights against me. I fly to Christ. He is content. He comes and dwells with me, no longer full of fury, but full of tenderness and love. If any of you have had God fighting against you, in holy jealousy chasing out your sin, happy will you be if you yield yourselves to Christ at once; if you do so, God will come quickly, and make your hearts to be his abode. May many get that transformation at this good hour!

Next, desolation is turned into population. On account of sin, Jerusalem became desolate. "I scattered them with a whirlwind," saith the Lord, "among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate." Zion sat like a widow, nobody came up to her solemn feasts; but God returned to her and he says, in the fourth verse, "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." So that when God comes to bless his people, where there was nobody, there seems to be everybody. When churches and congregations sin, God often minishes them, and brings them low; but when they return to their God, the old saints are seen there again, and there are new-born believers in plenty. God can soon change the estate of his people. It is the same with individual souls who have gone away from God, but afterwards repent and return to him. Then the desolation of heart is forgotten in the joy of the multitude of sweet and holy thoughts and interests, that crowd the heart and life. Old experiences revive, and new life and joy are born, where God comes near to us in grace and power. What a wonderful change this is! May we all taste its bliss!

Another change of condition follows: scattering is turned into gathering. God goes on to say that, as he scattered his people, so he will bring them together again from the east and from the west. This, as I have already said, has a first reference to the scattered Israel, but how true it also is of us! When the Lord leaves us, we are scattered like sheep without a

shepherd in a cloudy and dark day; but when we turn to him, his word is sure. "I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." May we know, in our new experience, the truth of that promise, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee," and may it be to us according to his word!

The next change is, that poverty is turned into plenty. Whereas they become poor, and were half-starved with famine, God tells them that the city shall be prosperous: "The vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew." God often changes men's circumstances when he changes their hearts. When he has been beating and bruising, if men will but yield to him, he turns to them in love and plenty. May the Lord do this with any of us who have grieved him, and brought his rod upon us! There is no truer word in the Book of God than this, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." With the covenant blessings of grace, God often bestows the common blessings of this life, even as it is written in the chapter before us, "I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things."

Farther on in the chapter we are told of another change: ill-will is turned into good-will. Before the Lord graciously visited them, no man loved his neighbor. So we read in the tenth verse. But when God's grace came, and changed their character, then one city went to another, and said, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also;" and they went up to the house of the Lord together. Oh, where the grace of God comes, it makes men friends! Enemies they may have been before, but then they go and seek one another out, and they say, "Come, old friend, let us end all this; give me your hand, and let bygones be bygones." There is nothing like love and unity among the people until the grace of God comes and conquers the natural ill-will which else would have had dominion. May such a transmutation take place between any here who may be at variance, and may all bitterness and hatred, if such things exist, be put away!

Did you not notice also, in the reading of this chapter, how these people

had been a curse, and how by the presence of God the curse is turned into a blessing? "And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong." When a believer dishonours God, one of the worst results of it is, that he becomes a snare to the people round about him. The very heathen look upon him as a curse. Inconsistent professors are the greatest stumbling blocks to the spread of the cause of Christ. But when their character is changed by the abounding grace of God, they become like overflowing springs, sending streams of blessing far and wide.

Moreover, in the day of blessing, their reproach is turned into honour. The nation had been despised; nobody would honour a Jew; but when they honoured God, then God would honour them, and ten men would take hold of the skirts of a man that was a Jew, saying, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." A man of God would then become more precious than the gold of Ophir. Well, my friends, when we return to God, God very soon has ways of making us honourable, so that we are of value among men. He makes use of us, and men begin to perceive that we are not to be despised if God is with us, and his blessing rests upon us.

Thus have I hurried over these two points, because I want to dwell a little longer on the text itself; it was necessary, however, to introduce it in this way.

III. Now we come to this fact, which always accompanies God's presence. HE ORDAINS TRANSFIGURATIONS OF ORDINANCES. Four fasts, which had been kept by the Jews, were to be turned into feasts, when the character of the men who observed them had changed, and God had dealt graciously with them. Before this, their feasts had been farces, occasions of self-glorification, and all manner of pride. Now, these days were to be festivals of gladness, and times of drawing near to God, rejoicing in his good gift. In like manner, when a man becomes a believer in Christ, and is renewed, this principle operates; many a fast is turned into a feast, and many a sorrow and sadness into joy and gladness.

When the communion-table shall be uncovered, you will see before you, in the emblems of the death of our Lord, what might have been the memory of a fast. The Lord of life and glory was nailed to the accursed tree. He died by the act of guilty men. We, by our sins, crucified the Son of God. We might have expected that, in remembrance of his death, we should have been called to a long, sad, rigorous fast. Do not many men think so even to-day? See how they observe Good Friday, a sad, sad day to many; yet our Lord has never enjoined our keeping such a day, or bidden us to look back upon his death under such a melancholy aspect. Instead of that, having passed out from under the old covenant into the new, and resting in our risen Lord, who once was slain, we commemorate his death by a festival most joyous. It came over the passover, which was a feast of the Jews; but unlike that feast, which was kept by unleavened bread, this feast is brimful of joy and gladness. It is composed of bread and of wine, without a trace of bitter herbs, or anything that suggests sorrow and grief. The bread and the cup most fitly set forth the death of our Lord and Saviour, and the mode of that death, even by the shedding of his blood; but as they stand before us now, they evoke no tears, they suggest no sighs. The memorial of Christ's death is a festival, not a funeral; and we are to come to the table with gladsome hearts, ay, and go away from it with praises, for "after supper they sang a hymn." At both ends it was psalm-singing. The great Hallel of the Jews commenced it, and another psalm, full of joy and gladness out of the hallelujahs of the psalms finished it. Oh, what hath God wrought! We crucified the Christ of God; but in that crucifixion we have found our ransom. With wicked hands he was slain by us; but his blessed sacrifice hath put all our sin away for ever. Our hymn rightly asks—

"It is finished;' shall we raise
Songs of sorrow, or of praise?
Mourn to see the Saviour die,
Or proclaim his victory?"

But it justly answers—

"Lamb of God! Thy death hath given
Pardon peace, and hope of heaven:

'It is finish'd;' let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise!"

As the Lord's Supper leads the way in that direction, I may say that every other fast of the Christian has been transfigured in the same manner. The Sabbath is to many people a very dreary day; but to many of us it is a fast which has been turned into a feast. I am often amused when I read the accounts that are given by some people of an English Sabbath-day. In all soberness it is set forth what we Puritans do on this first day of the week. We wake up in the morning, and say to ourselves, "Another dreadfully miserable day come around," and then we go off to our places of worship, where we sit with frightfully long faces, and listen to terribly dismal sermons; we do not sing, or even smile; but we howl out some ugly psalm, and make ourselves as unhappy as ever we can be. When we come home, we draw down the blinds to keep the sun out. We never go into the garden to admire the flowers. Well, you know the rest of the story. I think we are descendants of the people who killed the cat on Monday because it cause mice on Sunday—at least, so I have heard. But if I had not read all this, I should not have known it. Often, when I see in the paper some description of myself, I say, "Well, people somehow seem to know me better than I know myself; I never thought anything of the kind; it has never entered my head. Yet here is it in black and white." O beloved friends! Our idea of the Lord's-day is altogether different from this hideous caricature of it. If I had to describe our Sabbaths, I should say that they are full of brightness, and joy, and delight. I should tell of our singing, with full hearts, of the happy prospect before us in that land—

"Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end."

I am sure we should not be likely to go to that heavenly country if our Sabbaths here were as dreary as some say they are. Why, here in this house, we have had our merriest times! Of old, when the prodigal came back, "they began to be merry," and I have never heard that they have left off; at any rate, I do not think that we have. We have rejoiced with the joy of harvest as we have heard of sinners saved, and have known that we are saved ourselves. I grant you that, before we knew the Lord, it did

sometimes seem to our young minds rather a dull thing to read the Bible, and hear sermons, and to keep the Sabbaths; but now that we have come to Christ, and he has saved us, now that we are his; the first day of the week, which was a fast, has become a feast, and we look with eager delight for the Sundays to come round one after another. In fact, these Lord's-days are the beds of flowers in our gardens. The week-days are only the gravel paths that yield us little but weariness as we walk along them. Happy Sabbath! We hail thy coming with delight, and sing—

"Welcome sweet day of rest,
That saw the Lord arise;
Welcome to this reviving breast,
And these rejoicing eyes!

"The King himself comes near,
And feasts his saints to-day;
He we may sit, and see him here,
And love, and praise, and pray."

So, you see, this is a second instance in which what might have been a fast is turned into a feast.

There is another thing that is to some of us now a great feast, though formerly it was as full of weariness as a fast. It is the hearing of the doctrine of grace. I know some brethren who always sit very uneasily when I begin to preach the doctrines of grace. I am sorry that it is so, and I hope that they will grow wiser. Still, all of us did not always like to hear about God's electing love and absolute sovereignty; about the special redemption of Christ for his people; and about the union to Christ being an everlasting union, never to be broken. There was a time when we did not join very heartily in the lines—

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from his love can sever."

But, oh, when your heart gets into full fellowship with God, if it is with you as it is with me, you will be glad to get on that string! Is there

anything that gives us greater joy than to know our calling and election, and to make it sure; to know that the Father loved us as he loved Christ from before the foundation of the world, and that he loves us with such a love that can never end, and can never change, but will continue when the sun burns black as a coal? It was because they heard these grand doctrines that such crowds used to gather in the Desert in France to hear the old Calvinistic preachers. It was the hold these truths of grace had upon the minds and hearts of men that explains how it was that, under the gospel oaks in England, vast numbers used to come hear plain, and often illiterate men, preach the gospel. They preached a gospel that had something in it; and the people soon discover the real article when it is set before them. There is much that goes for gospel now, and if you could have a mile of it, you would not get an inch of consolation out of it, for there is nothing in it. But when your soul is heavy, and when your heart is sad, there is nothing like the old faith to put cheer and life into you. How often have I read Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty through and through when I have been ill! When the heart begins to sink, if one gets a grip of the sovereignty of God, and the way of his grace, whereby he saveth the unworthy, and getteth unto himself glory by his faithfulness to his promises, what had been a fast becomes to the child of God a feast of fat things, and royal cheer of a goodly sort.

You will all go with me in the next point. Sometimes the day of affliction becomes as a fast which has been turned into a feast. It is a trying thing to lose one's health, and to be near to death; to lose one's wealth, and to wonder how the children will be fed; to have heavy tidings of disaster come to you day after day in doleful succession. But if you can grasp the promise, and know that "All things work together for good to them that love God;" if you can see a covenant God in all, then the fast turns into a feast, and you say, "God is going to favour me again. He is only pruning the vine to make it bring forth better grapes. He is going to deal with me again after his own wise, loving, and fatherly way of discipline." You then hear the Lord saying to you—

"Then trust me, and fear not: thy life is secure;
My wisdom is perfect, supreme is my power;
In love I correct thee, thy soul to refine,

To make thee at length in my likeness to shine."

I have met with some saints who have been happier in their sickness and in their poverty than ever they were in health and in wealth. I remember how one, who had been long afflicted, and had got well, but had lost some of the brightness of the Lord's presence, which he had enjoyed during his sickness, said, "Take me back to my bed again. Let me be ill again, for I was well when I was ill. I am afraid that I am getting ill now that I am well." It is often worth while being afflicted in order to experience the great lovingkindness of God, which he bestows so abundantly on us in the hour of trouble and perplexity. Yes, God turns our fasts into feasts, and we are glad in the midst of our sorrow; we can praise and bless his name for all that he does.

Once more: the solemn truth of the coming of the Lord is a feast to us, though at first it was a fast. With very great delight we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will shortly come. He is even now in the act of coming. The passage that we read, "Surely, I come quickly," would be better translated, "Surely, I am coming quickly." He is on the road, and will certainly appear, to the joy of his people, and for the emancipation of the world. There are certain writers who say they know when he is coming; do not you be plagued with them; they know no more about it than you do. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only;" said the Lord Jesus. Perhaps the Lord may come sooner than any of us expect; before this "diet of worship" shall break up, he may be here. On the other hand, he may not come for a thousand years, or twice ten thousand years. The times and the seasons are with him, and it is not for us to pry behind the curtain. Those of our number who are unsaved may well dread his coming, for he will come to destroy them that obey not the gospel. "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness, and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." That day will be terror, and not light to you. When he cometh, he shall judge the earth in righteousness, and woe unto his adversaries; for "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken into shivers." You have grave need to keep the fast of the Second Advent, for to you it is dies irae, day of wrath and day of vengeance, day of dread

and day of woe. But if you become a believer, and by grace are transformed, as I described in the earlier part of this discourse, then it shall be a feast to you. Then you will look out for his appearing as the day of your hope, and will gladly say, "Ay, let him come! Come Lord, nor let thy chariots wait! Come, Lord! Thy church entreats thee to tarry no longer! Come, thou absent love, thou dear unknown, thou fairest of ten thousand! Come to thy church, and make her glad!" To us the thought of the glorious Advent of Christ is no fast; it is a blessed feast. Our songs never rise higher than when we get on this strain. With what fervor we lift up our voices, and sing—

"Brothers, this Lord Jesus
Shall return again,
With his Father's glory,
With his angel train;
For all wreaths of empire
Meet upon his brow,
And our hearts confess him
King of glory now"!

Last of all, to come still more closely home, the approach of death is to most men a dreadful fast. Not the Mohammedan Ramadan can be more full of piteous grief than some men when they are obliged to think of death. If some of you were put into a room to-morrow and were compelled to stay there all day, and to think of death, it would certainly be a very gloomy time to you. You will die, however, perhaps suddenly, perhaps by slow degrees. There will come a time when people will walk very gently round your bed, when they will wipe the death-sweat from your brow, when they will bow over you to see whether you still breathe, or whether you have gone. Out of the six thousand persons here to-night, there are some, certainly, who will never see New Year's Day. Usually this is some one who does not see even another Sabbath-day. Almost every week we get an intimation that a hearer of the previous week has died before the next Lord's-day.

Who among us will first be gone? Dare you think of it? O beloved, when once you have peace with God, and you know that you are going to behold

his face, whom though you have not seen, yet you love, then you can think of death without trembling. I think that there is nothing more delightful to the man who has the full assurance of faith, than to be familiar with the grace, and with the resurrection morning, and with the white robe, and with the harp of gold, and with the palm, and with the endless song. The thought of death is more a feast to us than a fast; for as Watts sings—

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

"Well, I shall soon be home," says one old saint; and she spoke of it as she used to speak, when a girl, of the holidays, and of her going away from school. "I shall soon behold the King in his beauty," says another; he speaks of it as he might have spoken, when a young man, of his marriage-day. Children of God can not only read Young's Night Thoughts without feeling any chill of solemnities there written out; but they can write in their diaries notes of expectation, at the thought of being with Christ, and almost notes of regret that they have not passed away to the glory, but are lingering here in the land of shadows. "What?" said one, who had been long lying senseless, when he came back again to consciousness, "And am I here still? I had half hoped to have been in my heavenly Father's home and palace above, long before this; and I am still here." Truly, beloved, the fast is turned into a feast, when we reach this experience. We will not hesitate to say, "Come, Lord, take us to thyself." Oh for a sight of the King in his beauty!

"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of thine abode;
I'd leave thy earthly courts, and flee
Up to thy seat, my God."

I knew right well a beloved brother in Christ with whom I was very familiar, who stood up one Sabbath morning, and announced just that verse. I thought of him when I repeated it, and I wondered whether it was quite as true to me as it was to him. He gave it out, and said—

"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of thine abode;
I'd leave thy earthly courts, and flee
Up to thy seat, my God!"

Then he stopped, there was a silence; and at last, one of the congregation ventured upstairs into the pulpit, and found that the preacher was gone. His prayer was heard. He was gone to the place of God" abode. Oh, happy they who die thus! The Lord grant that we may never pray against a sudden death! We may almost pray for it when once our soul is right with God. I can join John Newton, and instead of dreading the change, say—

"Rather, my spirit would rejoice,
And long, and wish, to hear thy voice;
Glad when it bids me earth resign,
Secure of heaven, if thou art mine."

But is Christ yours? Has the fast been changed into a feast for you, by faith in the crucified Saviour? God help you to answer that question with a glad, hearty "Yes"! Then may he make all your life "joy and gladness", changing your fearful fasts into "cheerful feasts", until at length all of us, who believe in Christ, and who love his appearing, shall sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb! Amen.

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The Feast of the Lord (1 Corinthians)

For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.- 1 Corinthians 11:26

I think we cannot too often explain the meaning of the two great Christian ordinances—baptism and the Supper of the Lord; for it is essential to our profiting by them that we understand them. If we do not know what they mean, they certainly cannot convey to us any blessing whatever. They are not mere channels of grace in themselves, apart from our understanding being exercised, and our hearts being moved by them. Very soon the best ordinance in the world will become a mere form, and will even degenerate into superstitious practice, unless it be understood; and we must not always take it for granted that the meaning of the simplest emblem is understood. Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little, must still be the motto of the Christian minister. We must explain, explain, and explain again, or else men will satisfy themselves with the outward form, and not reach to the teaching which the forms were intended to convey. Our text deals with the supper of our Lord, and we will read it again. "As often as eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

The first point of the text is what we do—we "show." Then, what do we show, and how? And then, who show it—"ye do show the Lord's death." And then, when?—"as often"—"till he come." First, then, when we come to the Lord's table:—

I. WHAT WE DO.

We "show." That word has two or three meanings. They all melt into one, but we shall get at it better by dividing it. It is meant here by showing Christ's death that we declare it. When the emblems are placed upon the table—bread and wine and we gather around it, we declare our firm belief that Jesus, the Son of God, descended into this world and died as a sacrifice for sin upon the arose. It has been found that if a great event is to be kept in mind in succeeding ages, there must be some memorial of it. Men by degrees forget it, and even come to be dubious as to whether such an event did occur. Sometimes a stone has been set up—a monument—

but this has not always been most effective. God, when he would have the children of Israel remember that he brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, did not bid them set up a monument, but he ordained a ceremony which was to be practiced on a certain day. It was called "The Passover," and the slaughter of the lamb and the eating of it became a yearly declaration by the people of Israel that they believed that God brought their fathers up out of the house of bondage. So effective has this been that men have often used the same device. When the Jewish people escaped from the plot which was laid by Haman, through the wisdom of Mordecai and Esther, they ordained the keeping of the feast of Purim, that they might have in perpetual memory the goodness of God towards his people.

And you know how, in our own English history and in the history of other countries, certain rites and ceremonies have been ordained in order that there might be a perpetual memorial, a declaration made that such and such a thing did occur. Now that more than eighteen hundred years ago Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, died upon Calvary by crucifixion, we do here protest and declare. We set forth again to a world that is skeptical and denies the fact which is its brightest hope—we set forth our confident belief that so it was; and as long as this ordinance shall be celebrated, there shall be a standing proof in the world that that was the case.

But to set forth means more than to declare. It signifies, in the next place to represent. There is in the Lord's Supper a representation of the death of Christ. Men, when they have found an event to be interesting and remarkable, have often devised ways of representing it to the people that they might understand it.

With regard to our Lord's death, there are some who hang up pictures on the wall; they think the use of the crucifix and so on to be proper. I find no teaching of that kind in the Word of God. I do find that too often such things lead to idolatry. And what shall we say of these miracle—plays which, even in these modern times, have been carried out, in which the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is travestied? They seem to be shocking to the Christian mind. But here, in a very simple manner, you have God's own appointed way of representing to ourselves and to onlookers the

death of our Lord. This is the Christian's "show"—we show the death of Christ here by a divine appointment. I shall, farther on, show how it is so, and that the breaking of bread and the pouring forth of wine—the use of those two emblems—is a most telling, most suggestive, most instructive method of representing the death of Christ. There are two other ways of representing it—the one the pencil of the evangelist which has drawn the death of Christ in the Word of God; the other is the preaching of the gospel. It is the preacher's business to set forth Christ crucified—evidently crucified among you. The three ways that God has ordained of representing the death of Christ are the Word read, the Word preached, and this blessed ordinance of the Supper of the Lord.

To "show." This means to declare, to testify; and it means also to represent. But it has a third meaning: it means also to hold forth, to make manifest, to publish, to call attention to. Now it has been a matter of fact that when the Jesuit missionaries went to China and converted a great many to what they called the Christian faith, they never mentioned the fact that Christ died. For years they concealed it, lest the people should be shocked. Now we, on the other hand, put that first and foremost. We have no other Christianity than this, that Christ died and rose again, and we cannot come to the Lord's table without showing it. The Jesuit could, because it would puzzle the wisest man to see the death of Christ in the Mass. He might sit and look at a hundred Masses before he knew what it meant. But the moment we gather around this table and break bread, and pour out wine, whoever asks us, "What mean ye by this ordinance?" the answer is prompt—the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err in this—"We set forth to you that Jesus died." "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are not ashamed of a crucified Saviour. We have heard of some in these days who are always preaching a glorified Christ. We wish them such success as their ministry is likely to bring; but for us we preach a crucified Christ—"Christ and him crucified"; for it is here, after all, that the salvation of the sinner lies. Christ glorified is precious enough—oh! how unspeakably precious to a soul that is saved!—but first and foremost to a dying world it is Christ upon the cross that we have to declare. And, therefore, when we come to the Communion table we do three things. We assert the fact that Jesus died; we represent that fact in emblem, and then we thus press it upon

the attention of men. We desire them to observe it; we ask them to mark it; we tell them that this is the sum and substance of all the gospel that we were sent to preach, "God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins."

Thus I have opened up the meaning of the word to "show." This is what we do. Now the second point is, my brethren:—

II. WHAT WE SHOW, AND HOW

It is said in the text, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death." How do we show it? What do we show? Well, first of all, we show that God has set forth Christ for men. The table is spread; there is bread on it; there is the cup upon it. What for? Not for beasts. Here is the food of men. It is set there for men. It is intended that the bread should be eaten, that the wine should be drunk. Everybody who sees a table spread knows at once that there are preparations for a meal or a festival. Now God has set forth Christ for men. There is in Christ what man wants. As bread meets his hunger, as the cup meets his thirst, so Christ meets all the spiritual wants of mankind. And the soul that would live, and the soul that would rejoice, must come to God's provision for his living and his rejoicing, and that provision is to be found in Jesus Christ crucified. God set forth Christ of old. Even in the garden, he set him forth in the first promise. He continued to set him forth by all the prophets, and in this last day every veil has been taken away by an open Bible inviting all comers. God has set forth the bread of life to the sons of men. And you to-night will show that fact. When you see that table uncovered, you have a representation. God has made a feast of fat things for the sons of men in the person of Jesus Christ. The feast consists of bread and wine. Now in this we represent Christ's human person, Christ's humanity. That he is no myth, but real flesh, is taught by the bread being on the table—that he was no phantom, but that real blood coursed through his veins as through ours—that the Lord of life and glory was, like ourselves, a real man, in humanity in all respects like to ourselves, sin alone excepted. There shall be no phantom feast upon the table, and the materialism that is there is meant to show that he was a man, a real man

"Who once on Calvary died,
When streams of blood and water ran
Down from his wounded side."

But the next thing we show forth is his death. We have his person; then we have his death—observe how. Recording to the Romish Church, the most of the people are only to participate in the bread—the wafer. Now such persons never show Christ's death at all, for the text says, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye show Christ's death." It is only by the two that you show his death at all. The bread represents the body, but the cup must represent the blood, or else you have no token of his suffering—no emblem of his death. Cannot the two be mixed together? No, for if the blood and flesh be together, you have the living man. It is when the blood flows—when the lifeblood ebbs from the body, and the body is bloodless, that then you have the wine as a token of death; and the separation of the two—the use of the two emblems—is absolutely needful to set forth death. The more you think this the more you see in it. The emblem is the simplest in the world, but yet the most instructive. Take either one of the elements—the bread, how it typifies Christ's suffering! Here was the corn bruised beneath the thresher's flail; then was it cast into the ground. It sprung up and ripened, and had to be cut down with the sickle; then it had to be threshed; then ground in the mill; then was it baked in the oven. A whole series of sufferings, if I may use the term, it had to pass through before it became proper food for us. And so must our Saviour pass through sufferings innumerable before he could become food for our souls, and redeemer of our spirits. As for that which is in the cup, it was trodden beneath the foot in the wine-press—its juice was pressed forth. So in the wine-press of Jehovah's wrath was Christ pressed before he could become the wine that maketh glad both God and man. Both emblems represent suffering, each one separately, but put together they bring forth the idea of death, "and as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death."

But more than this; we show that God set forth Christ; we show his person as a real man; we show his sufferings and his death; but next we show our participation in the same, for it is not "as often as ye look at this bread," or "as ye gaze upon this cup," but "as often as ye eat this bread

and drink this cup." Christ saves us not until we do receive him by an act of faith. The bread satisfies no hunger while it rests upon the table, and a draught from the cup quenches no thirst until it really is drunk. So the precious blood of Jesus Christ our Saviour must be received by our faith. We must believe in him to the saving of our souls. Now how simple a matter is eating! It matters not, unless a man be dead—he wants little teaching to know how to eat. It is as simple as a natural act—he puts food into his mouth. It is just so here. There is the Saviour, and I take him—that is all. It seems to me to be even a more complex act to eat than simply to trust in Jesus, yet is it a very simple thing. The idiot can eat. No matter how guilty a man, he can eat; no matter how dark and despairing his fears, he can eat; and O poor soul, whoever thou mayest be, there shall be no want of wit or merit that shall keep thee back from Christ. If thou art willing to have him, thou mayest have him. The act of trusting Christ makes Christ as much thy own as the eating of the bread. Suppose some difficulty were raised about whether a piece of bread was mine. Well, the legal question would take a long time to decide. I cannot produce the document, nor find the witnesses to prove it is mine. But there is one little fact, I think, which will settle it—I have eaten it. So if the devil himself were to say that Christ is not mine, I have believed on him; and if I have believed on him, he is mine just as surely as when I have eaten a piece of bread there can be no question about its being mine. Now we set forth to-night, by eating bread and drinking of the cup, the fact that Jesus Christ is our Saviour, and we take him by simple faith to be our all in all.

But there is more teaching still. The bread and wine, are being eaten and drunk, are assimilated into the system; they minister strength to bone, sinew, muscle; they build up the man. And herein is teaching. Christ believed in is one with us—"Christ in us the hope of glory. "We have heard persons talk of believers falling from grace and losing Christ. No, sir, a man has eaten bread—he ate it yesterday. Will you separate that bread from the man? Will you trace the drops that came from the cup, and fetch them out of the man's system? You shall more easily do that than you shall take Christ away from the soul that has once fed upon him. "Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" He is in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life. See

then how large a letter Christ has written to us with these pens—how in this bread and this wine, eaten and drunk, he has taught us wondrous mysteries—in fact, the whole Christian faith is, in brief, summed up here upon this table.

And now we must remark upon what it is we show forth, and how we do it. We do this very simply. Certain churches must go about this business in a very mysterious manner—a great deal of machinery is wanted—a plate becomes a paten, and a cup becomes a chalice, and a table, ah! that has vanished and turned into an altar. The whole thing is turned topsy-turvy until it is very questionable in the Church of Rome whether there is any supper at all; for if you introduce the altar, you have put away the table and done away with the whole thing. It is another ordinance, and not the ordinance which Christ established. One would suppose that when the Apostles first went out to preach, if the religion of the Romish Church be that of the Scripture, they would have needed, each of them, a wagon to carry with them the various paraphernalia necessary for the celebration of their services. But here, wherever there is a piece of bread, and wherever there is a cup, we have the plain, but instructive emblems which our Saviour bade us use. "He took bread and break it. "He did drink of the cup, and passed it to his disciples, and said, "Drink ye all of it."

Let us keep this ordinance in its pure simplicity. Let us never add anything to it by our own devising by way of fancying that we are honouring God by garnishing his table. Let us plainly show Christ's death, and as we do it plainly we should also do it festively. Is it not delightful to reflect that our Lord has not ordained a mournful ceremony in which to celebrate his death: it is a feast. You would suppose by the way that some come that it is a funeral, but it is a feast, and joy becomes a feast; and when, according to the example of Christ, we recline at our ease in the nearest approach to the posture in which the Oriental lay along at the table, and when we come with joyful heart, blessing the Lord Jesus that though our sins put him to death, yet his death has put to death our sins, then it is that we celebrate his death as he would have us celebrate it—not as an awful tragedy, in which we try to provoke our indignation against the Romans or the Jews, but as a hallowed festival, in which the King

himself comes to the table, and his spikenard gives forth a sweet smell, and our spirit is refreshed.

And once more, this way of showing Christ's death is one of communion. Now one person cannot do it; many must come together. Ye must eat and drink together to celebrate this, your Lord's death. And is not this delightful, for in this cup we have fellowship with him and with one another? We, being many, have one bread; we, being many, have one cup—one family at one table with one common head, the Lord Jesus, who is all in all to us. Oh! I bless his name that whereas he might have ordained a way of our showing his death which would have been mournful, or a way which would have been solitary, he has selected that which is joyful, and that which is full of good fellowship, so that saints below and himself can meet together in the festival of love and show his death until he come, in the breaking of bread and the pouring forth of wine. Thus I have tried to show what it is we show, and how we show it. Now thirdly:—

III. WHO ARE TO SHOW IT?

Who show it? "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death." The "ye," then includes all the saints of God—all who come to the table, who eat this bread and drink this cup; and truly a very pleasing thought arises from this. Here is a way of showing Christ's death in which all who love Christ have a share. You cannot all show it from the pulpit; gifts are not equally distributed; but you all alike share in this showing of his death—in this special way, which he himself celebrated for our example, and which he delivered to his servant Paul, expressly that it might stand on record. Now if Paul himself were here, he could not show Christ's death alone at the Lord's Supper. He must ask some of his poorer brethren to come with him. If the minister of a church should be full of the Holy Ghost, yet could he not show forth Christ's death here in this peculiar way. He must say to his brethren, "Come, brethren and sisters; it says 'ye,' as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup." Here we are to-night, as we sit here, all brought into a blessed equality in the act of using the same outward sign, and of performing the Master's will in the same way.

"But," says ones "doth every man who comes to the table, and eats and drinks, show Christ's death? Notice how the verse which follows my text puts a bar to that. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread." It must be taken for granted that the man has examined himself—that he comes there as a true believer in Jesus—that he comes there with the full intent to show Christ's death; and if he does that, such a man is showing Christ's death. I am very earnest, dear brethren and sisters, as it has been a long time since I have met with you—having been kept away so long by sickness, though I have been with my brethren below stairs—I am anxious that we should indeed show Christ's death to-night. Let us do it to ourselves. I find that the text may either be read in the indicative or in the imperative mood. It is either "ye show Christ's death," as our version has it, or it may be "show ye Christ's death"—it is an exhortation. Oh! let us take care that we show it to ourselves. "Show it to ourselves?" says one. Yes, it is meant for you. This is a primary meaning of the text. When you take that bread, don't think of the bread, and stay there, but say to your own soul, "My soul, think thou of Jesus. My heart, go away now to Gethsemane. Come, ye stray thoughts; Come, ye passing vanities, begone! I must away to where my Saviour bled and died.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing
Which, before his cross, I spend."

I have come here to show his death; let me see him. I will ask him to permit me in spirit to put my finger into the print of the nails, and to put my hand into his side. Oh! go not from this table satisfied with the outward emblem; press into the inner court—pray the Master to manifest himself to you as he does not unto the world. For here is the main business—show his death to your own heart till your heart bleeds for sin; show it to your own faith till your faith feels it is all sufficient—show it to others. You will be sure to show it to others if you show it to yourself for as others look on and mark your reverent behaviour; if they cannot enter into your joy, they will be reminded of what they have so long forgotten. Oh! brethren and sisters, let me urge each one of you that no one should be content without sharing this honour. I feel we all have an honour to participate in showing forth the death of Christ. Let us not, in sharing the honour, bring condemnation on ourselves. But I must hasten on. The

fourth point is:—

IV. WHEN ARE WE TO DO IT?

The text says "often"—"as often as ye eat this bread." The Holy Spirit might have used the words "when ye eat," but he did not. He teaches us by implication that we ought to do it often. I do not think there is any positive law about it, but it looks to me as if the first Christians broke bread almost every day—"breaking bread from house to house." I am not sure that that refers to Communion, but in all probability it does. This much is certain, that in the early Church the custom was to break bread in memory of Christ's passion on the first day of every week, and it was always a part of the Sabbath's service when they came together to remember their Lord in this way. How it can be thought right to leave the celebrating of this ordinance to once a year or once a quarter I cannot understand, and it seems to me that if brethren knew the great joy there is in often setting forth Christ's death they would not be content with even once a month. But I leave that.

The other mark of time in the text is "till he come." Then this service is to end. There will be no more Lord's Suppers when Christ appears, because they will be needless. Put out the candle—the sun has risen. Put away the emblem—here comes Christ himself. But until he does come, this will always be a most fitting ordinance. I pleased myself with a thought I met with the other day. Our Lord Jesus Christ sat at the table and ate with his disciples, and he took the cup and he sipped it, and he passed it round. It is being passed round still. It has not got round the table yet, it is being passed on. For 1,800 years it has been passed from hand to hand. They have not all drunk yet; and you remember he, said, "Drink ye all of it"—all of you. Did he speak to all his elect that were to be born—to all the countless companies yet to come? I think he did, and it is going round: and by-and-bye, when all the people of God have participated in Christ, it will cease. The cup will never be emptied till then.

"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God

Be saved, to sin no more."

When the last has drunk of it, what then? It will come back into the Master's hands, and then will be fulfilled that word of his, "I say unto you I will not henceforth drink of the juice of the vine till I drink it new in my heavenly Father's kingdom." And it is going round, brethren—that cup of glorious Christian fellowship of love to Christ, the cup that is filled with Jesus' blood—it is passing round, and when it has reached his hand then we shall need no more the outward ordinance. But until then it is clear from the text that it is to be kept up. And I have a little dispute with some of you here present. You love the Lord, but you have never been baptized; you love Jesus, but you have never come to his table. Now let me say you are in opposition to Christ. He says, "Do this till I come", you don't do it. "Oh! but I am only one," say you. To your measure of ability you have helped to make the lord's Supper obsolete. Can you see that? If you have a right to neglect it, so have I—if I, so have all my brethren. Then there is an end to it. My dear brother, you are doing the best you can to make Christ forgotten in the world. I pray you by his own dying example and his express command, "This do ye in remembrance of me"—if ye have believed him, keep this, his commandment. If ye have not believed in him, then far hence! Ye have no right to take it. But if you have believed, I beseech you stand not back for shame or fear, but eat and drink at his table till he come.

Time has gone too fast for me, and I must close. There is one lesson, however, that I cannot leave out. Until Christ come. We are taught our interim employment—what is to occupy us until Jesus comes. Beloved brethren, until Jesus comes we have nothing left but to think of him. Till Jesus comes the main thing we have to do is to think of and set him forth a crucified Saviour. There is no food for the Church but Jesus; there is no testimony to the world but Jesus crucified. They have sometimes told us that in this growing age we may expect to have developed a higher form of Christianity. Well, they shall have it that like it; but Christ himself has left us nothing but just this, "Show my death till I come." The preacher is to go on preaching a dying Saviour; the saint is to go on trusting that dying Saviour, feeding on him and letting his soul be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. There is nothing left us to occupy our thoughts, or to

be the subject of our joy, as our dear dying Lord. Oh! let us feed on him. Each one, personally, as a believer—let him feed on his Saviour. If he has come once, come again. Keep on coming till Christ himself shall appear. As long as the invitation stands let us not slight it, but constantly come to Christ himself and feed on him.

In conclusion, let every ungodly person here know that he has no part nor lot in this matter. Thy first business, sinner, is with Christ himself. Go thou and put thy trust in him. Oh! go this night. Thou mayest never have another night to go in. And then when thou best believed, then obey his command in baptism, and then also come to his table and show his death until he come. The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

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A Question for Communicants

"What mean ye by this service?"—Exodus 12:26.

In a spiritual religion, everything must be understood. That which is not spiritual, but ritualistic, contents itself with the outward form. Under the Jewish dispensation, there was a very strong tendency in that direction; but it was kept to some extent in check. Under the Christian faith, this tendency must not be tolerated at all. We must know the meaning of what we do; otherwise we are not profited. We do not believe in the faith of the man who was asked what he believed, and who replied that he believe what the church believed. "But what does the church believe?" "The church believes what I believe." "Well, but what do you and the church believe?" "We both believe the same thing." He could not be got to explain himself any further. We look upon such expressions as the talk of ignorance, and not the language of faith. Faith knows what she believes, and can give a reason for the hope that is in her meekness and fear.

Concerning the Passover, the young people among the Jews were encouraged to ask their parents this question, "What means ye by this

service?" Children should be encouraged now to ask such gracious questions. I am afraid they are not prompted to do so as they used to be in Puritan times. After the sermon always came the catechizing of the children when they were at home; and every father was bound to be attentive, because he had to ask the boys and girls in the evening what they had heard; and they were more attentive then than now, because they had to be prepared to answer any questions of their parents in return. Cultivate in your children a desire to understand everything connected with our holy faith.

In this chapter, from which I had culled my text, the parents are taught how to answer their children. If the parent be ignorant, a question from his child is inconvenient. He finds his ignorance exposed, and he perhaps is vexed with the child who has been the innocent means of unveiling him to himself. Be ready to tell your children what the ordinances of the gospel mean. Explain baptism to them, explain the Lord's supper to them; and above all, explain the gospel; and let them know as far as words can make it plain, what is that great mystery whereby we are saved, whereby sin is forgiven, and we are made the children of God.

I thought it would be profitable, if God gave me strength for the exercise, very briefly to answer the question supposed to be put by an intelligent youth, "What mean ye by this service?"—this service that is called by some people "Holy Communion"; which is sometimes called the "Eucharist"; and among us is called "the Lord's supper", or "the breaking of bread." What does it mean?

It means many things; but chiefly five, of which I will speak now.

I. This supper is, first of all, A MEMORIAL.

If you want to keep something in mind from generation to generation, you may attempt it in many ways. You may erect a bronze column, or you may engrave a record of it upon brass in the church. The column will get sold for old bronze, and somebody will steal the brasses from the church; and the memorial will disappear. You may write it upon marble if you please; but in our climate, at any rate, the inscription is very apt to be obliterated; and the old stones, though they last long, may after a time be as dumb as the treasures of Nineveh and Egypt were for centuries. These monuments did preserve the records, but they were hidden under the sand, or buried beneath the ruins of cities; and though they have a tongue now, and are speaking forcibly, yet whatever had been entrusted to them

would have been forgotten while they were lying under the sand of the desert, or in the débris of the palaces of Koyunjik. There are other ways of preserving memorials, such as writing in books; but books can be lost. Many valuable works of the ancients have entirely ceased, and no copies of them can be found. Some of the books mentioned in the Old Testament, which were not inspired books, but still were books which we should greatly value now, have quite passed out of existence.

It is found that, upon the whole, one of the best ways of remembering a fact is to have some ceremony connected with it, which shall be frequently performed, so as to keep the fact in memory. I suppose that Absalom will never be forgotten. He built himself a pillar in the king's dale; he knew his own infamous history, and he thought it might be forgotten. No one would care to remember it so he built himself a monument; and there it stands, or what is reputed to be that monument, to this day, and every Arab who passes by the spot throws a stone at it. Absalom will better be remembered by the ceremony of throwing stones at his tomb than by any record in marble.

To turn your thoughts to something infinitely higher, I cannot conceive of a surer and better method of keeping the death of Christ in mind than of meeting together, as we shall do to-night, for the breaking of bread, and the pouring out of the juice of the vine in memory of his death. Other facts may be forgotten; this one never can be. To-night, and every first day of the week, in ten thousand places of worship, believers meet together for the breaking of bread in remembrance of Christ's cross and passion, his precious death and burial. Those great facts can never pass out of mind. Jesus said to his disciples, "This do in remembrance of me." In obeying his command you are doing what if most effectual in keeping your Lord in remembrance. As I preach to-night, having no sort of reliance upon my own words, I want you to practise them as I go along; then you will be like the woman who said that, when she heard a sermon about light weights and short measures, thought she forgot what the preacher said, when she got home, she recollected to burn her bushel, which was short. So, if you can just practice the sermon as you hear it, it will be well.

Recollect, then, that you come to this table to-night to remember an absent Friend. Jesus has gone away. He who loved us better than any other ever loved us, has left us for a while. We sometimes take little

parting gifts from friends, and they say to us—

"When this you see,
Remember me."

Probably, almost everybody here has, at some time or other, had certain tokens of remembrance by which they might be reminded of some dear one who is far away across the seas; out of sight, but not out of mind. You come to the communion-table, then, to remember your absent Friend.

You come, also, chiefly to remember his great deed of love. This supper is a memorial of what Jesus did for you when he was on the earth. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He laid down his life for you; remember that to-night. "He loved me, and gave himself for me;" dwell on that fact. Let these words wake the echoes in your hearts, "Gethsemane!" "Gabbatha!" "Golgotha!" Can you forget all that Jesus suffered there on your behalf? If you have let these things slip in any degree from your heart's affections, come and write them down again. Come to the table, and there celebrate the memorial of his love, and wounds, and agonies, and death for you.

"In memory of the Saviour's love,
We keep the sacred feast,
Where every humble contrite heart
Is made a welcome guest,
"By faith we take the bread of life,
With which our souls are fed;
And cup, in token of his blood
That was for sinners shed."

You are also called upon to remember a dear Friend who, although he has gone away, has gone about your business. It was expedient for you that he should go away. He is doing you more good where he has gone than he could have done if he stayed here. He is pressing on your suit to-night. Your business would miscarry were it not for him; but within the veil that hides him from you, he is pleading for you. His power, his dignity, his merit, are all freely being employed for you. He is pleading the causes of your soul. Can you, will you, forget him? Will you not now forget everything else, and indulge the sweet memory of your faithful Lover, your dear Husband, who is married to you in ties of everlasting wedlock? Come, I pray you, keep the memorial of this dear Friend.

And you have to remember a Friend who will return very soon. He only

tells you to do this till he comes. He is coming back to us. His own words are, "Behold, I come quickly!" That is not quite the meaning of what he said; it was, "Behold, I am coming quickly!" He is on his way, his chariot is hurrying towards us the axles of the wheels are hot with speed. He is coming as fast as he can. The long-suffering of God delays him, till sinners are brought in, till the full number of his elect shall be accomplished; but he is not delaying; he is not lingering; he is not slack, as some men count slackness; he is coming quickly. Will you not remember him? Soon will his hand be on the door; soon for you, at any rate, he may cry, "Arise, my love, my dove, my fair one, and come away;" and soon he may be here among us, and then we shall reign with him for ever and ever.

I charge my own heart to remember my dear Lord to-night; and I pray you, brothers and sisters, let not the feebleness of my reminder deprive you now of the happiness of thinking much of Christ your Lord. Sit you still, and let all other thoughts be gone, and think only of him who loved you and died for you. Let your thoughts go back to Calvary, as you sing, in mournful accents,—

"O sacred head once wounded,
With grief and pain weigh'd down,
How scornfully surrounded
With thorns, thine only crown!
How pale art thou with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish,
Which once was bright as morn!"

Oh, eyes full of tears! Oh, shoulders once beaten with the gory lash! Oh, hands once nailed to the cruel tree! Oh, feet once fastened to the bitter cross! Soon shall we behold the Christ who loved us, and died for us. Wherefore let us observe this sacred feast in remembrance of him.

II. But I must be briefer on my second point. The second meaning of the Lord's supper is that it is AN EXHIBITION.

"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." We are helped to remember it by the type, the emblem, the metaphor which is supplied to us by this supper. How is that? Is there any likeness to the death of Christ in this supper? I answer, there is a great likeness.

There is his broken body, represented by the bread which is broken, and intended for use. His dear body was broken, marred, sadly marred, given over to the hands of death, laid in the sepulchre, wrapped about with fine linen, left there, as his enemies thought, never to rise again. In that broken bread, broken that even believing children may eat their morsel, you see Christ's body given up for his people's sake.

But there stands a cup. It is full of the red juice of the grape. What means it? He himself shall explain it: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Now, the shedding of blood is the great token of death. One would not long talk of killing without speaking of blood-shedding; in fact, bloodshed usually means dying by a violent death; and so did he die. They pierced his hands and his feet; the soldier thrust his lance into his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. That stream of blood was the token that he really was dead. He hath poured out from his veins his precious life to purchase his redeemed. The broken bread, the cluster pressed into the cup, and leaving nothing but its blood-red juice, these two things symbolize Christ's death.

But, most of all, this is an exhibition of the two things separate, the bread and the cup. We have heard of some mixing the bread with the wine; that is not the Lord's supper. We have heard of others partaking of the wafer, as they call it, and leaving the cup; this is not taking the Lord's supper. They must be both there; the bread here, the wine-cup there; because the separation of the blood from the flesh is the surest token of death. "The blood is the life thereof;" and if the blood be drained away, there is death. Therefore the blood is represented by the cup, and the flesh is represented by the bread; these two separated are the great token and emblem of Christ's death.

We show, display, exhibit, symbolize, the death of our Lord at this table in this fashion; we partake of both symbols, eating of the bread, drinking of the cup, the whole ministering to the support of our life. At this table we say to all of you who do not know Christ, Christ's death is our life, and the remembrance of Christ's death is the food of our life. If any of you are spectators of the ordinance, this is the meaning of our little acted sermon, Christ has died. Christ's death is the support of our faith, the food of our souls; in token whereof we take this bread and this cup, and eat and drink. So this supper is a showing forth of Christ's death. How many here

can say that Christ's death is their life? How many of you can say that you feed upon him? Dear friends, you must not come to the table unless you can say it; but if you can, come and welcome; and if you cannot, oh! may the Lord teach you the lesson that is so needful, the lesson that is so blessed, when it is once learnt, that Christ on the cross is the one hope of eternal glory.

You have thus had two meanings of the Lord's supper; first, it is a memorial; and next, an exhibition.

III. The Lord's supper is, next, A COMMUNION.

We must have this brought out prominently, or we shall miss a great deal. We are at the Lord's table; we eat of his bread, we drink out of his cup. This betokens friendship. When, in the East, a man has eaten of an Arab's salt, he is henceforth under his protecting care; and he who has spiritually eaten of Christ's bread, has come under Christ's protection; Christ will take care of him. All feuds are ended; an eternal peace is established between the two. It was a tender parable in which Nathan spoke of a man who had a little ewe lamb, which did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom. This is your privilege, to lie in Christ's bosom, to drink out of his cup, and to eat of his bread. This is a very sweet fellowship; enjoy it to-night to the full.

We go further than that, for we not only eat of his bread, but symbolically we feast upon him. His flesh is meat indeed; and his blood is drink indeed. Can I really feed upon Christ? Really, yes. Carnally, no. There is no such thing as the carnal eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood; that were a horrible thing; that were to make a man a cannibal; but the spiritual feeding upon the Incarnate God, this is what we mean. He gives us his flesh to eat, and we thus enter into a fellowship of the most intense and mysterious kind; not merely eating with him, but eating him; not merely receiving from him, but receiving him himself to be the life of our hearts. May you get to that point to-night! I believe in the real presence of Christ; I do not believe in the carnal presence of the Romanist. I believe in the real presence of the believer; but that reality is none the less real because it is spiritual; and only spiritual men can discern it.

Now, beloved, if we really come in the right spirit to this table, when we have eaten the bread, it becomes part of us; when the wine is sipped, the juice of the grape enters into our constitution; we cannot separate it from ourselves. Such is our fellowship with Christ. He is one with us, and we

are one with him. "Quis separabit?" "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" We are one with Christ; partners with him; all that he has is ours; all that we have is his. He gives himself to us; we yield ourselves to him. It is Christ and Co., only the little "Co." drops its name to be swallowed up in him who is all in all. There is the meaning of the bread and the cup. We take Christ into ourselves, as he has taken us up into his greater self.

But communion also means that we are one with each other. I wish that you would catch that thought. I am afraid there are some members of the church here, who have never realized their union with all the rest of the members. "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren. There should be an intimate feeling of fellowship, a readiness to help and love one another. Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

I cannot shake off from myself the idea that this makes up a large part of the meaning of the Lord's supper, the communion of saints with each other as well as the communion of the saints with Christ. May we enjoy it to-night! For my part, I like to feel, when I come to the table, that I am going to have communion, not only with this church, large as it is, not merely with the members of one denomination (I wish there were no denominations), not merely with the company of one body of Christians—would to God, there were but one body of Christians throughout the world!—but freely inviting all who belong to any part of the visible church; I delight to think that at this table to-night I shall have fellowship with the brethren in the United States, of all names, and sorts, and ages, and ranks. There cannot be two churches of Christ. There is but one Church, one Head, and one body. Though there are some very naughty children in the Lord's family, they must not be kept without their supper; there is some other way of chastening them; and as long as there is true living communion between one Christian and another, where God has given the thing signified, I dare not keep back the sign. If he gives them to have fellowship with Christ, who am I that shall say, "Thou shalt have not fellowship with me"? I dare not say it.

The meaning of this supper, then, is communion.

IV. But a fourth meaning of the Lord's supper is A COVENANTING.

Our Lord said to his disciples, "This cup is the new testament, or

covenant, in my blood." We do well to sing,—

"Thy body broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be;
Thy testamental cup I take,
And thus remember thee."

When we come to the Lord's table, we must be careful that we there take Christ to be our God in covenant. We take the one living God for ever and ever. He gives himself to us, and we take him, and we declare, "This God is our God for ever and ever; he shall be our Guide even unto death." Do you understand that covenant relationship, every one of you? Do you know what you are doing when you take the piece of bread, and eat it, and take the cup and drink of it? If you are truly a believer in Christ, God is in covenant with you through the body and the blood of Christ, and you recognize that blessed truth, and take him to be your God.

Now, the covenant runs thus, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." When, therefore, we come to this covenanting table, we agree that we will be the Lord's people; henceforth, not the devil's, not the world's, not our own; but the Lord's. When the Lord's people are chastened, we expect to be chastened with them. When the Lord's people are persecuted, we expect to be persecuted with them. We must take them for better or worse, to have and to hold, and death itself must not part us from the Lord's people. That is the meaning of coming to this table, recognizing that, between you and God there is an agreement made that must not be broken, a covenant ordered in all things and sure, by which God becomes yours and you become his, so that you are for ever to be one of those that belong wholly to him.

Here, at the communion-table, God, the covenant God, seals his love to us. "Come hither, my child," saith the Lord, "I love thee, and I gave myself for thee, in token whereof put this bread into thy mouth, to remind thee of how I gave myself for thee. I love thee, so that thou art mine. I have called thee by my name, in token whereof I remind thee that I bought thee with my precious blood. Therefore, let that sip of the juice of the vine go into thy body, to remind thee that by my precious blood, which was shed for many, I have redeemed thee from going down into the pit." There are seals at that table, new seals of the covenant, new tokens, new love gifts from the Lord, to remind you of what he has done for you.

And you are to come here to-night to testify anew your love to God. Here

you say, "My Master, let me eat with thee." If any of you have lost your first love, and have grown spiritually cold, the Saviour stands at the door, and knocks, and he says, "Open to me," and he also says that if we open to him, he will come in, and sup with us, and we with him. He said that to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, the church which was neither cold nor hot, which he threatened to spew out of his mouth. If thou art only fit to make Christ sick, yet if thou wilt open the door to him, he will come and feast with thee to-night, and all shall be well with thee. He testifies his love to you. Come and testify yours to him to-night. That is the meaning of this bread and this cup. Your covenant with death is broken, your agreement with hell is disannulled; and now you are in covenant with God, and he is in covenant with you, even in an everlasting covenant, which shall never be broken.

V. Lastly, and very briefly, this supper signifies A THANKSGIVING.

It is often called, by friends who love hard words, the "Eucharist." We have some friends who always carry a gold pencil, on purpose to put down every word that nobody understands, that they may use it next Sunday in their sermon. Such people call the Lord's supper the "Eucharist", which signifies "the giving of thanks." This is the thanksgiving service of the Church of God. It ought to be celebrated every Lord's-day. Every Sabbath should be a thanksgiving Sunday, for Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and we ought to give thanks every time we celebrate his resurrection. Certainly we should do so when we celebrate his death. What are we going to do to-night by way of thanksgiving?

Well, we are coming to a festival, not a funeral. The choice festival of the Jewish faith was the Passover. The Lord's supper takes its place with higher joys; we come to this feast to testify our joy in Christ. There is bread, but there is also wine upon the table. This is to show that it is a festival for joy and delight, and you cannot praise Christ better, and give thanks to him better than by rejoicing in him. Praise him by your grateful joy. I think that we should always come to the Lord's table with a feeling of deep reverence; but that reverence should never tend to bondage. We want you not to come here quivering and shaking, as if you were slaves that came to eat a morsel of your master's bread, under fear of the lash. No, no; come, ye children; come, ye beloved ones of the Lord! Come, ye table companions of Christ, and sit at the festival he has prepared, and let

your joy be full of thanksgiving!

We come to the table, next, actually to praise the Lord for giving Christ to us. When our Lord broke the bread, he gave thanks; so shall we to-night. Come ye, beloved, thankfully to praise the Father for the gift of Christ; and as you take the bread into your mouth, say in your heart, "Bless the Lord!" and as you drink of the cup, say in your spirit, "Blessed be his holy name! Blessed be the Father, for his eternal love to us; blessed be Jesus, for his love which has saved us to know all these precious things!"

One way in which we show our thanks to Christ is that we receive with gratitude the emblems of his death. Each one who communes with us will receive the bread, and eat it, and take the cup, and drink it. We do not hold it up, and look at it; we do not kneel down, and pay it homage; we receive it. We have done so now these many years. How long is it since we began this holy feast? Well, with some of us, it is over forty years since our first communion, and we do not want any better food. We desire to keep in memory the same Christ, to feed upon the same doctrine of the incarnation and atoning sacrifice; and if we should be spared, beloved, another forty years, which is far from likely, we shall have a sweeter tooth for Christ even than we have now. He will be more dear to us, more precious, more delightful, even than he is to-night. So we come to the table to show our gratitude by receiving and receiving again.

Let me whisper in your ear, when this communion is over, and you shall leave this table, "Pray, beloved, that you may go away in the same spirit as your Lord and Master did, when after rising from supper, he went out to the garden, not there to have a sweet hour of lonely communion with God, but there to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. He went there to be arrested, to be hurried off to the bar of Annas, and Caiaphas, and Pilate, and Herod, and the rest of them. He went there, in fact to die; but he went away singing." So I want you to go away from this communion singing praises to God. As my dear brother said in prayer, you must have your Gethsemanes, your Golgothas; but I want you to go away from this table singing. Whatever comes, high or low, bright or dark, heaven or another age in this dark wilderness, brethren, let us sing. We often say, "Let us pray;" but to-night, at the table, I say, "Let us sing." Let us sing unto the Lord because of his great gift to us, which we to-night remember, and set forth, and commune with, and covenant with. Let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live; for

we can never sufficiently praise him for all that he has done for us.

"We'll praise our risen Lord,

While at his feet we sit,

His griefs a hallow'd theme afford

For sweetest music fit."

Thus I have explained all about the Lord's supper; do you know anything about it? Some of you are going away. You are going away! Yes, and the day shall come when you will not have anywhere to go! When the great marriage supper is spread, and the feast of the gracious shall be held, and the whole universe shall be gathered, oh! where will you go? You will not be allowed to linger at the door, neither will you go home to wait till others shall return from the festival. You must be driven from God's presence if you come not by faith in Christ to that great feast. The fiery swords of the angel-guards shall be unsheathed, and they shall pursue you through the blackness of eternal darkness, down to infinite despair! The Lord have mercy upon you to-night, that he may have mercy upon you in that day, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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The Remembrance of Christ

"This do in remembrance of me."—1 Corinthians 11:24.

It seems, then, that Christians may forget Christ. The text implies the possibility of forgetfulness concerning him whom gratitude and affection should constrain them to remember. There could be no need for this loving exhortation, if there were not a fearful supposition that our memories might prove treacherous, and our remembrance superficial in its character, or changing in its nature. Nor is this a bare supposition: it is, alas, too well confirmed in our experience, not as a possibility, but as a lamentable fact. It seems at first sight too gross a crime to lay at the door of converted men. It appears almost impossible that those who have been redeemed by the blood of the dying Lamb should ever forget their Ransomer; that those who have been loved with an everlasting love by the eternal Son of God, should ever forget that Son; but if startling to the ear,

it is alas, too apparent to the eye to allow us to deny the fact. Forget him who ne'er forgot us! Forget him who poured his blood forth for our sins! Forget him who loved us even to the death! Can it be possible? Yes it is not only possible, but conscience confesses that it is too sadly a fault of all of us, that we can remember anything except Christ. The object which we should make the monarch of our hearts, is the very thing we are most inclined to forget. Where one would think that memory would linger, and unmindfulness would be an unknown intruder, that is the spot which is desecrated by the feet of forgetfulness, and that the place where memory too seldom looks. I appeal to the conscience of every Christian here: Can you deny the truth of what I utter? Do you not find yourselves forgetful of Jesus? Some creature steals away your heart, and you are unmindful of him upon whom your affection ought to be set. Some earthly business engrosses your attention when you should have your eye steadily fixed upon the cross. It is the incessant round of world, world, world; the constant din of earth, earth, earth, that takes away the soul from Christ. Oh! my friends, is it not too sadly true that we can recollect anything but Christ, and forget nothing so easy as him whom we ought to remember? While memory will preserve a poisoned weed, it suffereth the Rose of Sharon to wither.

The cause of this is very apparent: it lies in one or two facts. We forget Christ, because regenerate persons as we really are, still corruption and death remain even in the regenerate. We forget him because we carry about with us the old Adam of sin and death. If we were purely new-born creatures, we should never forget the name of him whom we love. If we were entirely regenerated beings, we should sit down and meditate on all our Saviour did and suffered; all he is; all he has gloriously promised to perform; and never would our roving affections stray; but centered, nailed, fixed eternally to one object, we should continually contemplate the death and sufferings of our Lord. But alas! we have a worm in the heart, a pest-house, a charnel-house within, lusts, vile imaginations, and strong evil passions, which, like wells of poisonous water, send out continually streams of impurity. I have a heart, which God knoweth, I wish I could wring from my body and hurl to an infinite distance; a soul which is a cage of unclean birds, a den of loathsome creatures, where dragons haunt and owls do congregate, where ever evil beast of ill-omen dwells; a heart too vile to have a parallel—"deceitful above all things and

desperately wicked." This is the reason why I am forgetful of Christ. Nor is this the sole cause; I suspect it lies somewhere else too. We forget Christ because there are so many other things around us to attract our attention. "But," you say, "they ought not to do so, because though they are around us, they are nothing in comparison with Jesus Christ: though they are in dread proximity to our hearts, what are they compared with Christ?" But do you know, dear friends, that the nearness of an object has a very great effect upon its power? The sun is many, many times larger than the moon, but the moon has a greater influence upon the tides of the ocean than the sun, simply because it is nearer, and has a greater power of attraction. So I find that a little crawling worm of the earth has more effect upon my soul than the glorious Christ in heaven; a handful of golden earth, a puff of fame, a shout of applause, a thriving business, my house, my home, will affect me more than all the glories of the upper world; yea, than the beatific vision itself: simply because earth is near, and heaven is far away. Happy day, when I shall be borne aloft on angels' wings to dwell for ever near my Lord, to bask in the sunshine of his smile, and to be lost in the ineffable radiance of his lovely countenance. We see then the cause of forgetfulness; let us blush over it; let us be sad that we neglect our Lord so much, and now let us attend to his word, "This do in remembrance of me," hoping that its solemn sounds may charm away the demon of base ingratitude.

We shall speak, first of all, concerning the blessed object of memory; secondly, upon the advantages to be derived from remembering this Person; thirdly, the gracious help, to our memory—"This do in remembrance of me;" and fourthly, the gentle command, "This do in remembrance of me." May the Holy Ghost open my lips and your hearts, that we may receive blessings.

I. First of all, we shall speak of the glorious and precious object of memory—"This do in remembrance of me." Christians have many treasures to lock up in the cabinet of memory. They ought to remember their election—"Chosen of God ere time began." They ought to be mindful of their extraction, that they were taken out of the miry clay, hewn out of the horrible pit. They ought to recollect their effectual calling, for they were called of God, and rescued by the power of the Holy Ghost. They ought to remember their special deliverances—all that has been done for them, and all the mercies bestowed on them. But there is one whom they

should embalm in their souls with the most costly spices—one who, above all other gifts of God, deserves to be had in perpetual remembrance. One I said, for I mean not an act, I mean not a deed; but it is a Person whose portrait I would frame in gold, and hang up in the state-room of the soul. I would have you earnest students of all the deeds of the conquering Messiah. I would have you conversant with the life of our Beloved. But O forget not his person; for the text says, "This do in remembrance of me." It is Christ's glorious person which ought to be the object of our remembrance. It is his image which should be enshrined in every temple of the Holy Ghost.

But some will say, "How can we remember Christ's person, when we never saw it? We cannot tell what was the peculiar form of his visage; we believe his countenance to be fairer than that of any other man—although through grief and suffering more marred—but since we did not see it, we cannot remember it. We never saw his feet as they trod the journeys of his mercy; we never beheld his hands as he stretched them out full of lovingkindness; we cannot remember the wondrous intonation of his language, when in more than seraphic eloquence, he awed the multitude, and chained their ears to him; we cannot picture the sweet smile that ever hung on his lips, nor that awful frown with which he dealt out anathemas against the Pharisees; we cannot remember him in his sufferings and agonies, for we never saw him." Well, beloved, I suppose it is true that you cannot remember the visible appearance, for you were not then born; but do you not know that even the apostle said, though he had known Christ after the flesh, yet, thenceforth after the flesh he would know Christ no more. The natural appearance, the race, the descent, the poverty, the humble garb, were nothing in the apostle's estimation of his glorified Lord. And thus, though you do not know him after the flesh, you may know him after the spirit; in this manner you can remember Jesus as much now as Peter, or Paul, or John, or James, or any of those favoured ones who once trod in his footsteps, walked side by side with him, or laid their heads upon his bosom. Memory annihilates distance and overleapeth time, and can behold the Lord, though he be exalted in glory.

Ah! let us spend five minutes in remembering Jesus. Let us remember him in his baptism, when descending into the waters of Jordan, a voice was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Behold him coming up dripping from the stream! Surely the conscious

water must have blushed that it contained its God. He slept within its waves a moment, to consecrate the tomb of baptism, in which those who are dead with Christ are buried with him. Let us remember him in the wilderness, whither he went straight from his immersion. Oh! I have often thought of that scene in the desert, when Christ, weary and way-worn, sat him down, perhaps upon the gnarled roots of some old tree. Forty days that he fasted, he was an hungered, when in the extremity of his weakness there came the evil spirit. Perhaps he had veiled his demon royalty in the form of some aged pilgrim, and taking up a stone, said, "Way-worn pilgrim, if thou be the Son of God command this stone to be made bread." Methinks I see him, with his cunning smile, and his malicious leer, as he held the stone, and said, "If,"—blasphemous if,— "If thou be the Son of God, command that this stone shall become a meal for me and thee, for both of us are hungry, and it will be an act of mercy; thou canst do it easily; speak the word, and it shall be like the bread of heaven; we will feed upon it, and thou and I will be friends for ever." But Jesus said—and O how sweetly did he say it—"Man shall not live by bread alone." Oh! how wonderfully did Christ fight the tempter! Never was there such a battle as that. It was a duel foot to foot—a single-handed combat—when the champion lion of the pit, and the mighty lion of the tribe of Judah, fought together. Splendid sight! Angels stood around to gaze upon the spectacle, just as men of old did sit to see the tournament of noted warriors. There Satan gathered up his strength; here Apollyon concentrated all his satanic power, that in this giant wrestle he might overthrow the seed of the woman. But Jesus was more than a match for him; in the wrestling he gave him a deadly fall, and came off more than a conqueror. Lamb of God! I will remember thy desert strivings, when next I combat with Satan. When next I have a conflict with roaring Diabolus, I will look to him who conquered once for all, and broke the dragon's head with his mighty blows.

Further, I beseech you remember him in all his daily temptations and hourly trials, in that life-long struggle of his, through which he passed. Oh! what a mighty tragedy was the death of Christ! and his life too? Ushered in with a song, it closed with a shriek. "It is finished." It began in a manger, and ended on a cross; but oh, the sad interval between! Oh! the black pictures of persecution, when his friends abhorred him; when his foes frowned at him as he passed the streets; when he heard the hiss of

calumny, and was bitten by the foul tooth of envy; when slander said he had a devil and was mad: that he was a drunken man and a wine-bibber; and when his righteous soul was vexed with the ways of the wicked. Oh! Son of God, I must remember thee; I cannot help remembering thee, when I think of those years of toil and trouble which thou didst live for my sake. But you know my chosen theme—the place where I can always best remember Christ. It is a shady garden full of olives. O that spot! I would that I had eloquence, that I might take you there. Oh! if the Spirit would but take us, and set us down hard by the mountains of Jerusalem, I would say, see there runs the brook of Kedron, which the king himself did pass; and there you see the olive trees. Possibly, at the foot of that olive, lay the three disciples when they slept; and there, ah! there, I see drops of blood. Stand here, my soul, a moment; those drops of blood—dost thou behold them? Mark them; they are not the blood of wounds; they are the blood of a man whose body was then unwounded. O my soul picture him when he knelt down in agony and sweat,—sweat, because he wrestled with God,—sweat, because he agonized with his Father. "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." O Gethsemane! thy shades are deeply solemn to my soul. But ah! those drops of blood! Surely it is the climax of the height of misery; it is the last of the mighty acts of this wondrous sacrifice. Can love go deeper than that? Can it stoop to greater deeds of mercy? Oh! had I eloquence, I would bestow a tongue on every drop of blood that is there; that your hearts might rise in mutiny against your languor and coldness, and speak out with earnest burning remembrance of Jesus. And now, farewell, Gethsemane.

But I will take you somewhere else, where you shall still behold the "Man of Sorrows." I will lead you to Pilate's hall, and let you see him endure the mockeries of cruel soldiers: the smittings of mailed gloves; the blows of clenched fists; the shame; the spitting, the plucking of the hair: the cruel buffetings. Oh! can you not picture the King of Martyrs, stript of his garments; exposed to the gaze of fiend-like men? See you not the crown about his temples, each thorn acting as a lancet to pierce his head? Mark you not his lacerated shoulders, and the white bones starting out from the bleeding flesh? Oh, Son of Man! I see thee scourged and flagellated with rods and whips, how can I henceforward cease to remember thee? My memory would be more treacherous than Pilate, did it not every cry, Ecce Homo,— "Behold the man."

Now, finish the scene of woe by a view of Calvary. Think of the pierced hands and the bleeding side; think of the scorching sun, and then the entire darkness; remember the broiling fever and the dread thirst; think of the death shriek, "It is finished!" and of the groans which were its prelude. This is the object of memory. Let us never forget Christ. I beseech you, for the love of Jesus, let him have the chief place in your memories. Let not the pearl of great price be dropped from your careless hand into the dark ocean of oblivion.

I cannot, however, help saying one thing before I leave this head: and that is, there are some of you who can very well carry away what I have said, because you have read it often, and heard it before; but still you cannot spiritually remember anything about Christ, because you never had him manifested to you, and what we have never known, we cannot remember. Thanks be unto God, I speak not of you all, for in this place there is a goodly remnant according to the election of grace, and to them I turn. Perhaps I could tell you of some old barn, hedge-row, or cottage; or if you have lived in London, about some garret, or some dark lane or street, where first you met with Christ; or some chapel into which you strayed, and you might say, "Thank God, I can remember the seat where first he met with me, and spoke the whispers of love to my soul, and told me he had purchased me."

"Dost mind the place, the spot of ground,
Where Jesus did thee meet?"

Yes, and I would love to build a temple on the spot, and to raise some monument there, where Jehovah-Jesus first spoke to my soul, and manifested himself to me. But he has revealed himself to you more than once—has he not? And you can remember scores of places where the Lord hath appeared of old unto you, saying, "Behold I have loved you with an everlasting love." If you cannot all remember such things, there are some of you that can; and I am sure they will understand me when I say, come and do this in remembrance of Christ—in remembrance of all his loving visitations, of his sweet wooing words, of his winning smiles upon you, of all he has said and communicated to your souls. Remember all these things tonight, if it be possible for memory to gather up the mighty aggregate of grace. "Bless the Lord. O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

II. Having spoken upon the blessed object of our memory, we say,

secondly, a little upon the benefits to be derived from a loving remembrance of christ.

Love never says, "Cui bono?" Love never asks what benefit it will derive from love. Love from its very nature is a disinterested thing. It loves; for the creature's sake it loves, and for nothing else. The Christian needs no argument to make him love Christ; just as a mother needs no argument to make her love her child. She does it because it is her nature to do so. The new-born creature must love Christ, it cannot help it. Oh! who can resist the matchless charms of Jesus Christ?—the fairest of ten thousand fairs, the loveliest of ten thousand loves. Who can refuse to adore the prince of perfection, the mirror of beauty, the majestic Son of God? But yet it may be useful to us to observe the advantages of remembering Christ, for they are neither few nor small.

And first, remembrance of Jesus will tend to give you hope when you are under the burden of your sins. Notice a few characters here tonight. There comes in a poor creature. Look at him! He has neglected himself this last month; he looks as if he had hardly eaten his daily bread. What is the matter with you? "Oh!" says he, "I have been under a sense of guilt; I have been again and again lamenting, because I fear I can never be forgiven; once I thought I was good, but I have been reading the Bible, and I find that my heart is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;' I have tried to reform, but the more I try, the deeper I sink in the mire, there is certainly no hope for me. I feel that I deserve no mercy; it seems to me that God must destroy me, for he has declared, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die;' and die I must, be damned I must, for I know I have broken God's law." How will you comfort such a man? What soft words will you utter to give him peace? I know! I will tell thee that there is one, who for thee hath made a complete atonement; if thou only believest on him thou art safe for ever. Remember him, thou poor dying, hopeless creature, and thou shalt be made to sing for joy and gladness. See, the man believes, and in ecstasy exclaims, "Oh! come all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul."

"Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am out of hell."

Hallelujah! God hath blotted out my sins like a thick cloud! That is one benefit to be derived from remembering Christ. It gives us hope under a sense of sin, and tells us there is mercy yet.

Now, I must have another character. And what does he say? "I cannot stand it any longer; I have been persecuted and ill-treated, because I love Christ; I am mocked, and laughed at, and despised: I try to bear it, but I really cannot. A man will be a man; tread upon a worm and he will turn upon you; my patience altogether fails me; I am in such a peculiar position that it is of no use to advise me to have patience, for patience I cannot have; my enemies are slandering me, and I do not know what to do." What shall we say to that poor man? How shall we give him patience? What shall we preach to him? You have heard what he has to say about himself. How shall we comfort him under this great trial? If we suffered the same, what should we wish some friend to say to us? Shall we tell him that other persons have borne as much? He will say, "Miserable comforters are ye all!" No, I will tell him, "Brother, you are persecuted; but remember the words of Jesus Christ, how he spake unto us, and said, 'Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.' My brother! think of him, who, when he died, prayed for his murderers, and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." All you have to bear, is as nothing compared with his mighty sufferings. Take courage; face it again like a man; never say die. Let not your patience be gone; take up your cross daily, and follow Christ. Let him be your motto; set him before your eyes. And, now, receiving this, hear what the man will say. He tells you at once—"Hail, persecution; welcome shame. Disgrace for Jesus shall be my honor, and scorn shall be my highest glory.

"Now, for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain I count my loss,
I pour contempt on all my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross."

There is another effect, you see, to remembering Christ. It tends to give us patience under persecution. It is a girdle to brace up the loins, so that our faith may endure to the end.

Dear friends, I should occupy your time too much if I went into the several benefits; so I will only just run over one or two blessings to be received. It will give us strength in temptation. I believe that there are hours with every man, when he has a season of terrific temptation. There was never a vessel that lived upon the mighty deep but sometimes it had to do battle with a storm. There she is, the poor barque, rocked up and

down on the mad waves. See how they throw her from wave to wave, and toss her to mid heaven. The winds laugh her to scorn. Old Ocean takes the ship in his dripping fingers, and shakes it to and fro. How the mariners cry out for fear! Do you know how you can put oil upon the waters, and all shall be still? Yes. One potent word shall do it. Let Jesus come; let the poor heart remember Jesus, and steadily then the ship shall sail, for Christ has the helm. The winds shall blow no more, for Christ shall bid them shut their mighty mouths, and never again disturb his child. There is nothing which can give you strength in temptation, and help you to weather the storm, like the name of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. Then again, what comfort it will give you on a sick bed—the name of Christ! It will help you to be patient to those who wait upon you, and to endure the sufferings which you have to bear; yea, it shall be so with you, that you shall have more hope in sickness than in health, and shall find a blessed sweetness in the bitterness of gall. Instead of feeling vinegar in your mouth, through your trouble, you shall find honey for sweetness, in the midst of all the trial and trouble that God will put upon you, "For he giveth songs in the night."

But just to close up the advantages of remembering Christ, do you know where you will have the benefit most of all? Do you know the place where chiefly you will rejoice that you ever thought of him? I will take you to it. Hush! Silence! You are going up stairs into a lonely room. The curtains hang down. Some one stands there weeping. Children are around the bed, and friends are there. See that man lying? That is yourself. Look at him; his eyes are your eyes; his hands are your hands. That is yourself. You will be there soon. Man! that is yourself. Do you see it? It is a picture of yourself. Those are your eyes that soon will be closed in death—your hands, that will lie stiff and motionless—your lips that will be dry and parched, between which they will put drops of water. Those are your words that freeze in air, and drop so slowly from your dying lips. I wonder whether you will be able to remember Christ there. If you do not, I will picture you. Behold that man, straight up in the bed; see his eyes starting from their sockets. His friends are all alarmed; they ask him what he sees. He represses the emotion; he tells them he sees nothing. They know that there is something before his eyes. He starts again. Good God! what is that I see—I seem to see? What is it? Ah! one sigh! The soul is gone. The body is there. What did he see? He saw a flaming throne of

judgment; he saw God upon it, with his sceptre; he saw books opened; he beheld the throne of God, and saw a messenger, with a sword brandished in the air to smite him low. Man! that is thyself; there thou wilt be soon. That picture is thine own portrait. I have photographed thee to the life. Look at it. That is where thou shalt be within a few years—ay, within a few days. But if thou canst remember Christ, shall I tell thee what thou wilt do? Oh! thou wilt smile in the midst of trouble. Let me picture such a man. They put pillows behind him; he sits up in bed, and takes the hand of the loved one, and says, "Farewell! weep not for me; the kind God shall wipe away all tears from every eye." Those round about are addressed, "Prepare to meet your God, and follow me to the land of bliss." Now he has set his house in order. All is done. Behold him, like good old Jacob, leaning on his staff, about to die. See how his eyes sparkle; he claps his hands; they gather round to hear what he has to say; he whispers "Victory!" and summoning a little more strength, he cries, "Victory!" and at last, with his final gasp, "Victory, through him that loved us!" and he dies. This is one of the great benefits to be derived from remembering Christ—to be enabled to meet death with blessed composure.

III. We are now arrived at the third portion of our meditation, which is a SWEET AID TO MEMORY.

At schools we used certain books, called "Aids to Memory." I am sure they rather perplexed than assisted me. Their utility was equivalent to that of a bundle of staves under a traveller's arm: true he might use them one by one to walk with, but in the mean time he carried a host of others which he would never need. But our Saviour was wiser than all our teachers, and his remembrances are true and real aids to memory. His love tokens have an unmistakeable language, and they sweetly win our attention.

Behold the whole mystery of the sacred Eucharist. It is bread and wine which are lively emblems of the body and blood of Jesus. The power to excite remembrance consists in the appeal thus made to the senses. Here the eye, the hand, the mouth, find joyful work. The bread is tasted, and entering within, works upon the sense of taste, which is one of the most powerful. The wine is sipped—the act is palpable. We know that we are drinking, and thus the senses, which are usually clogs to the soul, become wings to lift the mind in contemplation. Again, much of the influence of this ordinance is found in its simplicity. How beautifully simple the ceremony is—bread broken and wine poured out. There is no calling that

thing a chalice, that thing a paten, and that a host. Here is nothing to burden the memory—here is the simple bread and wine. He must have no memory at all who cannot remember that he has eaten bread, and that he has been drinking wine. Note again, the mighty pregnancy of these signs—how full they are of meaning. Bread broken—so was your Saviour broken. Bread to be eaten—so his flesh is meat indeed. Wine poured out, the pressed juice of the grape—so was your Saviour crushed under the foot of divine justice: his blood is your sweetest wine. Wine to cheer your heart—so does the blood of Jesus. Wine to strengthen and invigorate you—so does the blood of the mighty sacrifice. Oh! make that bread and wine to your souls tonight a sweet and blessed help of remembrance of that dear Man who once on Calvary died. Like the little ewe lamb, you are now to eat your Master's bread and drink from his cup. Remember the hand which feeds you.

But before you can remember Christ well here, you must ask the assistance of the Holy Spirit. I believe there ought to be a preparation before the Lord's Supper. I do not believe in Mrs. Toogood's preparation, who spent a week in preparing, and then finding it was not the Ordinance Sunday, she said she had lost all the week. I do not believe in that kind of preparation, but I do believe in a holy preparation for the Lord's Supper: when we can on a Saturday if possible, spend an hour in quiet meditation on Christ, and the passion of Jesus; when, especially on the Sabbath afternoon, we can devoutly sit down and behold him, then these scenes become realities, and not mockeries, as they are to some. I fear greatly that there are some of you who will drink the wine, and not think of his blood: and vile hypocrites you will be while you do it. Take heed to yourselves, "He that eateth and drinketh" unworthily, eateth and drinketh—what?—"damnation to himself." This is a plain English word; mind what you are doing! Do not do it carelessly; for of all the sacred things on earth, it is the most solemn. We have heard of some men banded together by drawing blood from their arms and drinking it all round; that was most horrid, but at the same time most solemn. Here you are to drink blood from the veins of Christ, and sip the trickling stream which gushed from his own loving heart. Is not that a solemn thing? Ought anybody to trifle with it? To go to church and take it for sixpence? To come and join us for the sake of getting charities? Out upon it! It is an awful blasphemy against Almighty God; and amongst the damned in hell,

those shall be among the most accursed who dared thus to mock the holy ordinance of God. This is the remembrance of Christ. "This do in remembrance of me." If you cannot do it in remembrance of Christ, I beseech you, as you love your souls, do not do it at all. Oh! regenerate man or woman, enter not into the court of the priests, lest Israel's God resent the intrusion.

IV. And now to close up. Here is a sweet command: "This do in remembrance of me." To whom does this command apply? "This do ye." It is important to answer this question—"This do ye," Who are intended? Ye who put your trust in me. "This do ye in remembrance of me." Well, now, you should suppose Christ speaking to you tonight; and he says, "This do ye in remembrance of me." Christ watches you at the door. Some of you go home, and Christ says, "I thought I said, 'This do ye in remembrance of me.'" Some of you keep your seats as spectators. Christ sits with you, and he says, "I thought I said, 'This do ye in remembrance of me.'" "Lord, I know you did." "Do you love me then?" "Yes, I love thee; I love, Lord; thou knowest I do." "But, I say, go down there—eat that bread, drink that wine." "I do not like to, Lord; I should have to be baptized if I joined that church, and I am afraid I shall catch cold, or be looked at. I am afraid to go before the church, for I think they would ask some questions I could not answer." "What," says Christ, "is this all you love me? Is this all your affection to your Lord. Oh! how cold to me, your Saviour. If I had loved you no more than this, you would have been in hell: if that were the full extent of my affection, I should not have died for you. Great love bore great agonies; and is this all your gratitude to me?" Are not some of you ashamed, after this? Do you not say in your hearts, "it is really wrong?" Christ says, "Do this in remembrance of me," and are you not ashamed to stay away? I give a free invitation to every lover of Jesus to come to this table. I beseech you, deny not yourselves the privilege by refusing to unite with the church. If you still live in sinful neglect of this ordinance, let me remind you that Christ has said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me in this generation, of him will I be ashamed, when I come in the glory of my Father." Oh, soldier of the cross, act not the coward's part!

And not to lead you into any mistakes, I must just add one thing, and then I have done. When I speak of your taking the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, do not imagine that I wish you for one moment to suppose that

there is anything saving in it. Some say that the ordinance of baptism is non-essential, so is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, it is non-essential, if we look upon it in the light of salvation. Be saved by eating a piece of bread! Nonsense, confounded nonsense! Be saved by drinking a drop of wine! Why, it is too absurd for common sense to admit any discussion upon. You know it is the blood of Jesus Christ; it is the merit of his agonies; it is the purchase of his sufferings; it is what he did, that alone can save us. Venture on him; venture wholly, and then you are saved. Hearest thou, poor convinced sinner, the way of salvation? If I ever meet thee in the next world, thou mightest, perhaps, say to me, "I spent one evening, sir, in hearing you, and you never told me the way to heaven." Well, thou shalt hear it. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in his righteousness, and thou art saved beyond the vengeance of the law, or the power of hell. But trust in thine own works, and thou art lost as sure as thou art alive.

Now, O ever glorious Son of God, we approach thy table to feast on the viands of grace, permit each of us, in reliance upon thy Spirit, to exclaim in the words of one of thine own poets:

"Remember thee, and all thy pains,
And all thy love to me—
Yes, while a pulse or breath remains,
I will remember thee.
And when these failing lips grow dumb,
And thought and memory flee;
When thou shalt in thy kingdom come,
Jesus, remember me!"

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The Compassion of Jesus

He was moved with compassion. - Matthew 9:36

This is said of Christ Jesus several times in the New Testament. The original word is a very remarkable one. It is not found in classic Greek. It is not found in the Septuagint. The fact is, it was a word coined by the evangelists themselves. They did not find one in the whole Greek language that suited their purpose, and therefore they had to make one. It is expressive of the deepest emotion; a striving of the bowels—a yearning of the innermost nature with pity. As the dictionaries tell us— *Ex intimis visceribus misericordia commoveor*. I suppose that when our Saviour looked upon certain sights, those who watched him closely perceived that his internal agitation was very great, his emotions were very deep, and then his face betrayed it, his eyes gushed like founts with tears, and you saw that his big heart was ready to burst with pity for the sorrow upon which his eyes were gazing. He was moved with compassion. His whole nature was agitated with commiseration for the sufferers before him.

Now, although this word is not used many times even by the evangelists, yet it may be taken as a clue to the Saviour's whole life, and I intend thus to apply it to him. If you would sum up the whole character of Christ in reference to ourselves, it might be gathered into this one sentence, "He was moved with compassion." Upon this one point we shall try to insist now, and may God grant that good practical result may come of it. First, I shall lead your meditations to the great transactions of our Saviour's life; secondly, to the special instances in which this expression is used by the evangelists; thirdly, to the forethought which he took on our behalf; and fourthly to the personal testimony which one's own recollections can furnish. Let us take a rapid survey of:—

I. THE GREAT LIFE OF CHRIST, just touching, as with a swallow's wing, the evidence it bears from the beginning. Before ever the earth was framed; before the foundations of the everlasting hills were laid, when as yet the stars had not begun their shining, it was known to God that his creature man would sin; that the whole race would fall from its pure original state in the first Adam, the covenant head as well as the common parent of the entire human family; and that in consequence of that one man's disobedience every soul born of his lineage would become a sinner

too. Then, as the Creator knew that his creatures would rebel against him, he saw that it would become necessary, eventually, to avenge his injured law. Therefore, it was purposed, in the eternal plan, ere the stream of time had commenced its course, or ages had begun to accumulate their voluminous records, that there should be an interposer—one ordained to come and re-head the race, to be a second Adam, a federal Chief; to restore the breach, and repair the mischief of the first Adam; to be a Surety to answer for the sons of men on whom God's love did light; that their sins should be laid upon him, and that he should save them with an everlasting salvation. No angel could venture to intrude into those divine counsels and decrees, or to offer himself as the surety and sponsor for that new covenant. Yet there was one—and he none other than Jehovah's self—of whom he said, Let all the angels of God worship him, the Son, the well beloved of the Father, of whom it is written in the Word, "When he prepared the heavens I was there, when he set a compass upon the face of the depth, when he established the clouds above, when he strengthened the fountain of the deep"; then, "I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." He it is of whom the Apostle John speaks as the Word who was God, and was in the beginning with God. Was he not moved with compassion when he entered into a covenant with his father on our behalf, even on the behalf of all his chosen—a covenant in which he was to be the sufferer, and they the gainers—in which he was to bear the shame that he might bring them into his own glory? Yes, verily, he was even then moved with compassion, for his delights even then were with the sons of men. Nor did his compassion peer forth in the prospect of an emergency presently to diminish and disappear as the rebellion took a more active form, and the ruin assumed more palpable proportions. It was no transient feeling. He continued still to pity men. He saw the fall of man; he marked the subtle serpent's mortal sting; he watched the trail as the slime of the serpent passed over the fair glades of Eden; he observed man in his evil progress, adding sin to sin through generation after generation, fouling every page of history until God's patience had been tried to the uttermost; and then, according as it was written in the volume of the Book that he must appear, Jesus Christ came himself into this stricken world. Came how? O, be astonished, ye angels, that ye were

witnesses of it, and ye men that ye beheld it. The Infinite came down to earth in the form of an infant; he who spans the heavens and holds the ocean in the hollow of his hand, condescended to hang upon a woman's breast—the King eternal became a little child. Let Bethlehem tell that he had compassion. There was no way of saving us but by stooping to us. To bring earth up to heaven, he must bring heaven down to earth. Therefore, in the incarnation, he must bring heaven down to earth. Therefore, in the incarnation, he had compassion, for he took upon himself our infirmities, and was made like unto ourselves. Matchless pity, indeed, was this!

Then, while he tarried in the world, a man among men, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, he was constantly moved with compassion; for he felt all the griefs of mankind in himself. He took our sicknesses and carried our sorrows: he proved himself a true brother, with quick, human sensibilities. A tear brought a tear into his eye; a cry made him pause to ask what help he could render. So generous was his soul, that he gave all he had for the help of those that had not. The fox had its hole, and the bird its nest, but he had no dwelling-place. Stripped even of his garments, he hung upon the cross to die. Never one so indigent in death as he, without a friend, without even a tomb, except such as a loan could find him. He gave up all the comforts of life—he gave his life itself; he gave his very self to prove that he was moved with compassion. Most of all do we see how he was moved with compassion in his terrible death. Oft and oft again have I told this story, yet these lips shall be dumb ere they cease to reiterate the old, old tidings. God must punish sin, or else he would relinquish the government of the universe. He could not let iniquity go unchastened without compromising the purity of his administration. Therefore, the law must be honoured, justice must be vindicated, righteousness must be upheld, crime must be expiated by suffering. Who, then, shall endure the penance or make the reparation? Shall the dread sentence fall upon all mankind? How far shall vengeance proceed before equity is satisfied? After what manner shall the sword do homage to the sceptre? Must the elect of God be condemned for their sins? No; Jesus is moved with compassion. He steps in, he takes upon himself the uplifted lash, and his shoulders run with gore; he bares his bosom to the furbished sword, and it smites the Shepherd that the sheep may escape. "He looked, and there

was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore, his arm brought salvation." He trod the wine-press alone, and "bore, that we might never bear, his Father's righteous ire."

Are ye asked what means the crucifixion of a perfect man upon a felon's cross, ye may reply, "He was moved with compassion." "He saved others; himself he could not save." He was so moved with compassion, that compassion, as it were, did eat him up. He could save nothing from the general conflagration: he was utterly consumed with love, and died in the flame of ardent love towards the sons of men. And after he had died and slept a little while in the grave, he rose again. He has gone into his glory; he is living at the right hand of the Father; but this is just as true of him, "He is moved with compassion." Is proof wanted? Let faith pass within the veil, and let your spirits for a moment stand upon that sea of glass mingled with fire where stand the harpers tuning their never-ceasing melodies. What see you there conspicuous in the very midst of heaven but One who looks like a lamb that has been slain, and wears his priesthood still? What is his occupation there in heaven? He has no bloody sacrifice to offer, for he has perfected for ever those that were set apart. That work is done, but what is he doing now? He is pleading for his people; he is their perpetual Advocate, their continual Intercessor; he never rests until they come to their rest; he never holds his peace for them, but pleads the merit of his blood, and will do so till all whom the Father gave him shall be with him where he is. Well indeed does our hymn express it:—

"Now, though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well he remembers Calvary,
Nor will his saints forget."

His tender heart pities all the griefs of his dear people. There is not a pang they have but the head feels it, feels it for all the members. Still doth he look upon their imperfections and their infirmities, yet not with anger, not with loss of patience, but with gentleness and sympathy, "He is moved with compassion." Having thus briefly sketched the life of Christ, I want you to turn to:—

II. THOSE PASSAGES OF THE EVANGELISTS IN WHICH THEY TESTIFY THAT HE WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION.

You will find one case in Mat 20:31: "Two blind men sat by the wayside begging, and when they heard that Jesus passed by, they said, 'O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy on us.'" Jesus stood still, called them, questioned them, and they seem to have had full conviction that he both could and would restore their sight, so Jesus had compassion on them, touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight.

Yes, and what a lesson this is for any here present who have a like conviction. Do you believe that Christ can heal you? Do you believe that he is willing to heal you? Then let me assure you that a channel of communication is opened between him and you, for he is moved with compassion towards you, and already I hear him command you to come to him. He is ready to heal you now. The sad condition of a blind man should always move pity in the breast of the humane, but a glance at these two poor men—I do not know that there was anything strange or uncommon about their appearance—touched the Saviour's sensibility. And when he heard them say that they did believe he could heal them, he seemed to perceive that they had inward sight, and to account it a pity that they should not have outward sight too. So at once he put his fingers upon their eyes, and they received the power of seeing. O soul, if thou believest Christ can save thee, and if you wilt now trust in him to save thee, be of good cheer, thou art saved; that faith of thine hath saved thee. The very fact that thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, and doth rely upon him, may stand as evidence to thee that thou art forgiven, that thou art saved. There is no let or bar to thy full redemption. Go thy way and rejoice in thy Lord. He hath compassion on thee.

The next case I shall cite is that of the leper, Mar 1:41 This poor man was covered with a sad and foul disease, when he said to Jesus, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He had full faith in Christ's ability, but he had some doubts as to Christ's willingness. Our Saviour looked at him, and though he might very well have rebuked him that he should doubt his willingness, he merely said, "I will, be thou clean," and straightway he was made whole of that loathsome plague. If there is in this assembly one

grievously defiled or openly disgraced by sin, seest thou the leprosy upon thyself, and dost thou say, "I believe he could save me if he would"? Hast thou some lingering doubt about the Saviour's willingness? Yet I beseech you breathe this prayer, "Lord, I believe, I believe thy power. Help thou mine unbelief which lingers round thy willingness." Then little as thy faith is, it shall save thee. Jesus, full of compassion, will pity even thine unbelief, and accept what is faith, and forgive what is unbelief. There is a second instance.

The third I will give you is from Mar 5:19 It was the demoniac. There met Christ a man so possessed with a devil as to be mad, and instead of belief in Christ or asking for healing, this spirit within the man compelled him to say, "Wilt thou torment us before the time?"—and rather to stand against Christ healing him than to ask for it; but Christ was moved with compassion, and he bade the evil spirit come out of the evil man. Oh! I am so glad of this instance of his being moved with compassion. I do not so much wonder that he has pity on those that believe in him, neither do I so much marvel that he has pity even on weak faith; but here was a case in which there was no faith, no desire, nor anything that could commend him to our Lord's sympathy. Is there no such case among the crowds gathered together here? You do not know why you have come into this assembly. You scarcely feel at home in this place. Though you have led a very sad life, you do not want to be converted—not you. You almost shun the thought. Yet it is written, "He will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." Well we have known it in this house, and I hope we shall know it again and again that the Lord has laid violent hands of love upon unprepared souls. They have been smitten down with repentance, renewed in heart, and saved from their sins. Saul of Tarsus had no thought that he should ever be an apostle of Christ, but the Lord stopped the persecutor, and changed him into a preacher; so that ever afterwards he propagated the faith which once he destroyed. May the Lord have compassion on you tonight. Well may we offer that prayer; for what will be your fate if you die as you are? What will be your doom eternally if you pass out of this world, as soon you must, without being sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and forgiven your iniquities? Jesus knows the terrors of the world to come. He describes the torments of hell. He sees your danger; he warns you; he pities you; he sends his messengers to counsel

you; he bids me say to the very chief of sinners, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "Only return unto me and confess thine iniquity, and I will have mercy upon thee," saith the Lord. May God grant that the compassion of Christ may be seen in thy case.

As I turned over the Greek Concordance to find out where this word is repeated again and again, I found one instance in Luk 7:13 It refers to the widow at the gates of Nain. Her son was being carried out—her only son. He was dead, and she was desolate. The widow's only son was to her her sole stay; the succour as well as the solace of her old age. He was dead and laid upon the bier, and when Jesus saw the disconsolate mother, he was moved with compassion, and he restored her son. Oh! is there not refreshment here for you mothers that are weeping for your boys; you that have ungodly sons, unconverted daughters, the Lord Jesus sees your tears. You weep alone sometimes, and when you are sitting and enjoying the Word, you think, "Oh! that my Absalom were renewed; oh! that Ishmael might live before thee." Jesus knows about it. He was always tender to his own mother, and he will be so to you. And you that are mourning over those that have been lately taken from you, Jesus pities you. Jesus wept, he sympathises with your tears. He will dry them and give you consolation. "He was moved with compassion."

Still the occasions on which we find this expression most frequently used in the Evangelists are when crowds of people were assembled. At the sight of the great congregations that gathered to hear him, our Lord was often moved with compassion. Sometimes it was because that they were hungry and faint, and in the fulness of his sympathy he multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed them. At the same time he showed his disciples that it is a good work to feed the poor. He would not have them so spiritually-minded as to forget that the poor have flesh and blood that require sustenance, and they need to eat and to drink, to be housed and clothed: the Christian's charity must not lie in words only, but in deeds. Our Lord was moved with compassion, it is said, when he saw the number of sick people in the throng, for they made a hospital of his preaching place. Wherever he paused or even passed by, they laid the sick in the streets; he could not stand or walk without the spectacle of their pallets to harrow his feelings. And he healed their impotent folk, as if to

show that the Christian does well to minister to the sick—that the patient watcher by the bedside may be serving the Lord, and following his example, as well as the most diligent teacher or the most earnest preacher of the glorious gospel. All means that can be used to mitigate human suffering are Christlike, and they ought to be carried out in his name, and carried to the utmost perfection possible. Christ is the patron of the hospital: he is the president of all places where men's bodies are cared for. But we are also told that the multitude excited his compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he taught them as a guide that showed the path by leading the way; and he looked after their welfare as a Shepherd who regarded the health of their bodies as well as the good estate of their souls. Surely, brethren and sisters, if you love him, and wish to be like him, you cannot look on this congregation without pity. You cannot go out into the streets of London and stand in the high roads among the surging masses for half an hour without saying, "Whither away these souls? Which road are they travelling? Will they all meet in heaven?" What! live ye in London, move ye about in this great metropolis, and do ye never have the heartache, never feel your soul ready to burst with pity? Then shame upon you! Ask yourself whether ye have the spirit of Christ at all. In this congregation, were we all moved with pity as we should be, I should not have to complain, as I sometimes must, that persons come in and out here in want of someone to speak with them, to condole, to console, or to commune with them in their loneliness, and they find no helper. Time was when such a thing never occurred, but, in conversing with enquirers lately, I have met with several cases in which persons in a distressed state of mind have said that they would have given anything for half an hour's conversation with any Christian to whom they might have opened their hearts. They came from the country, attended the Tabernacle, and no one spoke to them. I am sorry it should be so. You used to watch for souls, most of you. Very careful were you to speak to those whom you saw again and again. I do pray you mend that matter. If you have any bowels of mercy, you should be looking out for opportunities to do good. Oh! never let a poor wounded soul faint for want of the balm. You know the balm. It has healed yourselves. Use it wherever the arrows of God have smitten a soul. Enough; I must leave this point; I have given you, I think, every case in which it is said that Jesus was moved with compassion. Very briefly let

me notice:—

III. SOME OF THE FORESIGHTS OF HIS COMPASSION.

The Lord has gone from us, but as he knew what would happen while he was away, he has, with blessed forethought, provided for our wants. Well he knew that we should never be able to preserve the truth pure by tradition. That is a stream that always muddies and defiles everything. So in tender forethought he has given us the consolidated testimony, the unchangeable truth in his own Book; for he was moved with compassion. He knew the priests would not preach the gospel; he knew that no order of men could be trusted to hold fast sound doctrine from generation to generation; he knew there would be hirelings that dare not be faithful to their conscience lest they should lose their pay; while there would be others who love to tickle men's ears and flatter their vanity rather than to tell out plainly and distinctly the whole counsel of God. Therefore, he has put it here, so that if you live where there is no preacher of the gospel, you have the old Book to go to. He is moved with compassion for you. For where a man cannot go, the Book can go, and where in silence no voice is heard, the still clear voice of this blessed Book can reach the heart. Because he knew the people would require this sacred teaching, and could not have it otherwise, he was moved with compassion towards us all, and gave us the blessed Book of inspired God-breathed Scripture.

But then, since he knew that some would not read the Bible, and others might read and not understand it, he has sent his ministers forth to do the work of evangelists. He raises up men, saved themselves from great sin, trophies of redeeming grace, who feel a sympathy with their fellow-men who are revelling in sin, reckless of their danger. These servants of his the Lord enables to preach his truth, some with more, some with less ability than others; still, there are, thank God, throughout this happy realm, and in other favoured lands, men everywhere, who, because sinners will not come to Christ of themselves, go after them and persuade them, plead with them, and intreat them to believe and turn to the Lord. This cometh of Christ's tender gentleness. He was moved with compassion, and therefore he sent his servants to call sinners to repentance.

But since the minister, though he may call as he may, will not bring souls to Christ of himself, the Lord Jesus, moved with compassion, has sent his Spirit. The Holy Ghost is here. We have not to say:—

"Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove."

He is here. He dwells in his Church, and he moves over the congregation, and he touches men's hearts, and he subtly inclines them to believe in Christ. Oh! this is great mercy when a Prince spreads a feast and gives an invitation. That is all you can expect him to do. But if he keeps a host of footmen and says, "Go and fetch them one by one till they do come," that is more gracious still. But if he goes himself and with sacred violence compels them to come in—oh! this is more than we could have thought he would have done; but he is moved with compassion, and he does that. Furthermore, brethren, the Lord Jesus knew that after we were saved from the damning power of sin, we should always be full of wants, and therefore he was moved with compassion, and he sets up the throne of grace, the mercy-seat, to which we may always come, and from which we may always obtain grace to help in time of need. Helped by his Spirit, we can bring what petitions we will, and they shall be heard. And then, since he knew we could not pray as we ought, he was moved with compassion when he sent the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities, to teach us how to pray. Now I do not know a single infirmity that I have or that you have, my Christian brother, but what Christ Jesus has been moved with compassion about it, and has provided for it. He has not left one single weak point of which we have to say, "There I shall fail, because he will not help there"; but he has looked us over and over from head to foot, and said, "You will have an infirmity there: I will provide for it. You will have a weakness there: I will provide for it." And oh! how his promises meet every case! Did you ever get into a corner where there was not a promise in the corner too? Had you ever to pass through a river but there was a promise about his being in the river with you? Were you ever on the sick bed without a promise like this, "I will make thy bed in thy sickness?" In the midst of pestilence have not you found a promise that "he shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust?" The Lord's great compassion has met the wants of all his servants to the end. If our

children should ever need much patience to be exercised towards them as Christ needs to exercise towards us, I am sure there would be none of us able to bear the house. They have their infirmities, and they full often vex and grieve us, it may be, but oh! we ought to have much compassion for the infirmities of our children—ay, and of our brethren and sisters, and neighbours—for what compassion has the Lord had with us? I do believe none but God could bear with such untoward children as we ourselves are. He sees our faults, you know, when we do not see them, and he knows what those faults are more thoroughly than we do. Yet still he never smites in anger. He cuts us not off, but he still continues to show us abounding mercies. Oh! what a guardian Saviour is the Lord Jesus Christ to us, and how we ought to bless his name at all times, and how his praise should be continually in our mouth. One thought strikes me that I must put in here: he knew that we should be very forgetful; and he was moved with compassion with our forgetfulness when he instituted the blessed Supper, and we can sit around the table and break bread, and pour forth the wine in remembrance of him. Surely this is another instance of how he is moved with compassion, and not with indignation, towards our weaknesses. And now let me close with:—

IV. PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

I shall only recall my own experience in order to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, my brethren and sisters. I do well remember when I was under conviction of sin, and smarted bitterly under the rod of God, that when I was most heavy and depressed there would sometimes come something like hope across my spirit. I knew what it was to say, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life," yet when I was at the lowest ebb and most ready to despair, though I could not quite lay hold of Christ, I used to get a touch of the promise now and then, till I half hoped that, after all, I might prove to be God's prisoner, and he might yet set me free. I do remember well, when my sins compassed me about like bees, and I thought it was all over with me, and I must be destroyed by them, it was at that moment when Jesus revealed himself to me. Had he waited a little longer, I had died of despair, but that was no desire of his. On swift wings of love he came and manifested his dear wounded self to my heart. I looked to him and was lightened, and my peace flowed like a river. I

rejoiced in him. Yes, he was moved with compassion. He would not let the pangs of conviction be too severe; neither would he suffer them to be protracted too long for the spirit of man to fail before him. It is not his wont to break a leaf that is driven by the tempest. "He will not quench the smoking flax." Yea, and I do remember since I first saw him and began to love him many sharp and severe troubles, dark and heavy trials, yet have I noted this, that they have never reached that pitch of severity which I was unable to bear. When all gates seemed closed, there has still been with the trial a way of escape, and I have noted again that in deeper depressions of spirits through which I have passed, and horrible despondencies that have crushed me down, I have had some gleams of love, and hope, and faith at the last moment; for he was moved with compassion. If he withdrew his face, it was only till my heart broke for him, and then he showed me the light of his countenance again. If he laid the rod upon me, yet when my soul cried under his chastening he could not bear it, but he put back the rod, and he said, "My child, I will comfort thee." Oh! the comforts that he gives on a sick bed! Oh! the consolations of Christ! when you are very low. If there is anything dainty to the taste in the Word of God, you get it then; if there be any bowels of mercy, you hear them sounding for you then. When you are in the saddest plight, Christ comes to your aid with the sweetest manifestations; for he is moved with compassion. How frequently have I noticed, and I tell it to his praise, for though it shows my weakness, it proves his compassion, that sometimes, after preaching the gospel, I have been so filled with self-reproach, that I could hardly sleep through the night because I had not preached as I desired. I have sat me down and cried over some sermons, as though I knew that I had missed the mark and lost the opportunity. Not once nor twice, but many a time has it happened, that within a few days someone has come to tell me that he found the Lord through that very sermon, the shortcoming of which I had deplored. Glory be to Jesus; it was his gentleness that did it. He did not want his servant to be too much bowed down with a sense of infirmity, and so he had compassion on him and comforted him. Have not you noticed, some of you, that after doing your best to serve the Lord, when somebody has sneered at you, or you have met with such a rebuff as made you half- inclined to give up the work, an unexpected success has been given you, so that you have not played the Jonah and ran away to Tarshish, but kept to your work? Ah!

how many times in your life, if you could read it all, you would have to stop and write between the lines, "He was moved with compassion." Many and many a time, when no other compassion could help, when all the sympathy of friends would be unavailing, he has been moved with compassion towards us, has said to us, "Be of good cheer," banished our fears with the magic of his voice, and filled our souls to overflowing with gratitude. When we have been misrepresented, traduced, and slandered, we have found in the sympathy of Christ our richest support, till we could sing with rapture the verse—I cannot help quoting it now, though I have often quoted it before:—

"If on my face for thy dear name
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
Since thou rememberest me."

The compassion of the Master making up for all the abuses of his enemies. And, believe me, there is nothing sweeter to a forlorn and broken spirit than the fact that Jesus has compassion. Are any of you sad and lonely? Have any of you been cruelly wronged? Have you lost the goodwill of some you esteemed? Do you seem as if you had the cold shoulder even from good people? Do not say, in the anguish of your spirit, "I am lost," and give up. He hath compassion on you. Nay, poor fallen woman, seek not the dark river and the cold stream—he has compassion. He who looks down with the bright eyes of yonder stars and watches thee is thy friend. He yet can help thee. Though thou hast gone so far from the path of virtue, throw not thyself away in blank despair, for he hath compassion. And thou, broken down in health and broken down in fortune, scarcely with shoe to thy feet, thou art welcome in the house of God, welcome as the most honoured guest in the assembly of the saints. Let not the weighty grief that overhangs thy soul tempt thee to think that hopeless darkness has settled thy fate and foreclosed thy doom. Though thy sin may have beggared thee, Christ can enrich thee with better riches. He hath compassion. "Ah!" say you, "they will pass me on the stairs; they will give me a broad pathway, and if they see me in the street they will not speak to me—even his disciples will not." Be it so; but better than his disciples, tenderer by far, is Jesus. Is there a man here, whom to associate

with were a scandal from which the pure and pious would shrink?; the holy, harmless, undefiled one will not disdain even him—for this man receiveth sinners—he is a friend of publicans and sinners. He is never happier than when he is relieving and retrieving the forlorn, the abject, and the outcast. He despises not any that confess their sins and seek his mercy. No pride nestles in his dear heart, no sarcastic word rolls off his gracious tongue, no bitter expression falls from his blessed lips. He still receives the guilty. Pray to him now. Now let the silent prayer go up, "My Saviour, have pity upon me; be moved with compassion towards me, for if misery be any qualification for mercy, I am a fit object for thy compassion. Oh! save me for thy mercy's sake!" Amen.

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The Feast Of The Lord (John)

The governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. - John 2:9-10

I has exhausted my time [this morning](#) by describing the feast of Satan - how at the four tables, whereat did sit the profligate, the self-righteous, the worldly, and the secretly sinful, the course of Satan, was always on this wise, - first, the good wine, and when men had well drunken, that which was worse. His feast diminished in its value as it proceeded, and went from the bright crackling of the thorn under the pot to the blackness of darkness for ever. I had then in my second point to show, that the rule of Christ's banquet is just the very reverse - that Christ doth always give the best wine last - that he doth save the good things until the end of the feast; nay, that sometimes the first cups at the table of Christ are full of wormwood and gall, and are exceeding bitter, but that if we tarry at the feast, they will grow sweeter, and sweeter, and sweeter, until at last, when we shall come into the land Beulah, and especially when we shall enter

into the city of our God, we shall be compelled to say, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

Now, my dear friends, this is a great fact, that Christ's feast increaseth in sweetness. When first the lord Jesus Christ proclaimed a feast for the sons of men, the first cup he set upon the table was but a very little one, and it had in it but few words of consolation. You remember the inscription upon that ancient vessel, the first cup of consolation that was ever held to the sons of men - "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." There was to them but little sweetness there: much to us, because we can understand it better, and some to them, because God's Spirit might help them to understand it, but still in the revelation of it there seemed but little promise. As the world went on, there were greater cups of precious wine brought forth, whereof patriarchs and ancient saints did drink; but beloved, all the wine they ever had under the Old Testament dispensation was far behind that of which we drink. He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is more highly favoured than he who is chief under the Old Testament dispensation. Our fathers did eat manna, but we do eat the bread that came down from heaven; they did drink of water in the wilderness, but we drink of that living water whereof if a man drink he shall never thirst. It is true they had much sweetness; the cups of the ancient tabernacle had precious wine in them; there was in the outward symbol the sign and the shadow, much that was delightful to the faith of the true believer; but we must remember that we are drinking to-day of that wine which prophets and kings desired to drink of, but died without a taste thereof. They guessed its sweetness; they could by faith foresee what it would be; but lo! we are allowed to sit at the table and quaff full draughts of wines on the lees well refined, which God hath given to us in this mountain wherein he hath made a feast of fat things for all people.

But, beloved, the text still stands true of us - there is better wine to come. We are in our privileges superior to patriarchs, and kings, and prophets. God has given us a brighter and a clearer day than they had; theirs was but the twilight of the morning, compared with the noon-day which we enjoy. But think not that we are come to the best wine yet. There are more noble banquets for God's church; and who knoweth how long, ere

the best of the precious wine shall be broached? Know ye not that the King of Heaven is coming again upon this earth; Jesus Christ, who came once and broached his heart for us on Calvary, is coming again, to flood the earth with glory. He came once with a sin-offering in his hand: behold, he comes no more with a sin-offering, but with the cup of salvation and of thanksgiving, to call upon the name of the Lord and joyously to take unto himself the throne of his father David. You and I, if we be alive and remain, shall yet set that cup to our lips; and if we die, we have this privilege, this happy consolation, that we shall not be behind hand, for "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible," and we shall drink of that millennial wine which Christ our Saviour hath reserved to the last. Saints! ye cannot tell what golden goblets those are of which ye shall drink in the thousand years of the Redeemer's triumph. Ye cannot tell what wine, sparkling and red, that shall be, which shall come from the vintage of the hills of glory, when he whose garments are red with treading the wine-press, shall descend in the great day and stand upon the earth. Why, the very thought of this cheered Job. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Let this rejoice and cheer thee, Christian, that the good wine is kept even unto that time.

And now, having shown that this is the rule of Christ in the great dispensation which he uses to all his Church, I shall come to the subject of this evening, which is this: First, The fact that the believer shall find that Christ keeps for him the best wine till the last; secondly, The reason of Christ for so doing; and thirdly, The lesson which we ought to learn therefrom.

I. First, THE FACT THAT CHRIST KEEPS HIS GOOD WINE TILL THE LAST. I was thinking as I rode here how very true this is of some of God's people. Why there are some of God's best beloved who have their names upon the breastplate of the great high priest, who are purchased with his blood, and are very dear to his soul, who have not known from their youth up what it is to get out of the depths of poverty. They have to live from hand to mouth, not knowing one day whence another meal shall come. How many more there are of God's people that are lying on beds of

affliction. Some of the most precious of God's diamonds are lying on the dunghill of disease. Ye may go and climb to many a chamber where ye shall see the victims of all kinds of diseases, loathsome, protracted, and painful, and ye shall see God's dear ones languishing out a dying life. I might point you to others of God's servants, whose days are spent in toil. There is needed for the human body, and especially for the soul, a little rest and a little of the food of knowledge; but these have had so little instruction that they cannot get mental food ready for themselves; if they read they can scarce understand, and they have hard bondage in this life, which maketh their life bitter and hindereth them from knowledge. They have to work from morning to night, with scarce a moment's rest. Oh, beloved, will it not be true of them, when death shall give them their discharge, when they shall leave this world, which has been to them, with an emphasis, a vale of tears? Will not they have to say: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now?" Oh, what a change for her who has come limping along these many Sabbath days to the sanctuary! for there, she shall go no more up to the Lord's house limping and lame, but the "lame man shall leap like the hart," and like Miriam, she shall dance with the daughters of Israel. Ah, ye may have had to suffer sickness and sorrow and pain, blindness and deafness, and a thousand of this world's ills: what a change for you, when you find them all gone! No racking pains, no pining want, no anxious care. Ye shall not have to cry for the sunlight to penetrate your abodes, or weep because your sight is failing through incessant labour with that murderous needle; but ye shall see the light of God, brighter than the light of the sun, and ye shall rejoice in the beams that proceed from his countenance. Ye shall have no more infirmities; immortality shall have covered and swallowed them up; that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power; that which was sown disordered, full of pain and sorrow, and disjointed and full of agony, shall be raised full of delectable delights, no more capable of anguish, but quivering with joy and bliss unspeakable. Ye shall no more be poor; ye shall be rich, richer than the miser's dream. Ye shall no more have to labour; there shall ye rest upon your beds, each one of you walking in your uprightness. Ye shall no more suffer from neglect and scorn and ignominy and persecution; ye shall be glorified with Christ, in the day when he shall come to be admired of them that love him. What a change for such! The best wine indeed is kept to the last, in their case, for they

have never had any good wine here, to the eyes of men, though secretly they have had many a drink from the bottle of Jesus. He has often put his cordial cup to their lips. They have been like the ewe lamb that belonged to the man in Nathan's parable: they have drunk out of Christ's own cup on the earth, but still even sweeter than that cup shall be the draught which they shall receive at the last.

But, my dear friends, although I put these first, as especially feeling the change, because we can see the difference, yet will it be true of the most favoured of God's children, all of them shall say, "The best wine is kept till now." Of all the men whom I might envy, I think I should first of all envy the apostle Paul. What a man! How highly favoured! how greatly gifted! how much blessed! Ah, Paul, thou couldst talk of revelations and of visions from on high. He heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, and he saw that which few eyes have ever seen. He was caught up into the third heaven. What draughts of joy the apostle Paul must have had! what lookings into the deep things of God! what soarings into the heights of heaven! Perhaps there was never a man who was more favoured of God; to have his mind expanded, and then to have it filled full with the wisdom and the revelation of the knowledge of the Most High. But ask the apostle Paul whether he believes there is anything better to come, and he tells you, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as we are known." He was evidently expecting something more than he had received; and, beloved, he was not disappointed. There was a heaven as much above all the enjoyments of Paul, as the enjoyments of Paul were above the depressions of his spirit, when he said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There are children of God who have all that they can need of this world's goods; they seem to be free from earthly care, and they have faith enough to trust their God with regard to the future. Their faith is firm and strong; they have much love to the Redeemer; they are engaged in some delightful work, and the Holy Spirit attends that work with great success. Their days follow steadily one after another, like the waves of the still calm sea. God is with them, and they are greatly blessed; they spread out their roots by the river, their leaf also doth not wither, and whatsoever they do, it prospereth; whichever way they turn their hand the Lord their God is

with them, in whatsoever land they put their feet they are like Joshua, that land is given to them to be an inheritance to them for ever. But, beloved, even these shall see greater things than they have as yet heheld. High as their Master has taken them into the house of banqueting, lofty though the room be in which they now feast, the Master shall say to them, "Come up higher." They shall know more, enjoy more, feel more, do more, possess more. They shall be nearer to Christ ; they shall have richer enjoyments and sweeter employments than they have had; and they shall feel that their Master hath kept his good wine even until now.

Entering into particulars for a moment, very briefly, I must just observe, that there are many aspects under which we may regard the heavenly state, and in each of these we shall have to say, that Christ hath kept the good wine until then. Here on earth the believer enters into rest by faith; the Christian enjoys rest even in the wilderness; the promise is fulfilled. "They shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." God giveth to his beloved sleep; there is a peace that passeth all understanding, which we may enjoy even in this land of turmoil, strife, and alarms, - a peace which the worldling knoweth not of, nor can he guess it.

"A holy calm within the heart,
The pledge of glorious rest.
Which for the church of God remains,
The end of cares, the end of pains."

But beloved, drink as we may of the cup of peace, the good wine is kept until a future time. The peace we drink to-day is dashed with some drops of bitter. There are disturbing thoughts; the cares of this world will come, doubts will arise; live as we may in this world, we must have disquietudes; thorns in the flesh must come. But oh! the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." What good wine shall that be! God hath a sun without a spot, a sky without a cloud, a day without a night, a sea without a wave, a world without a tear. Happy are they who, having passed through this world, have entered into rest, and ceased from their own works, as God did from his, bathing their weary souls in seas of heavenly rest.

View heaven under another aspect. It is a place of holy company. In this world we have had some good wine of sweet company. We can tell of many of the precious sons of Zion with whom we have taken sweet counsel; blessed be the Lord; the righteous have not all failed from among men. Some of you can remember golden names that were very dear to you in the days of your youth - of men and women with whom you used to go up to God's house and take sweet counsel. Ah, what words used to drop from their lips, and what sweet balm you had in the days of your sorrow when they comforted and consoled you: and you have friends still left, to whom you look up with some degree of reverence, while they look upon you with intense affection. There are some men that are comforters to your soul, and when you talk to them you feel that their heart answers to your heart, and that you can enjoy union and communion with them. But beloved, the good wine is kept till the last. All the fellowship with the saints that we have had here, is as nothing compared with what we are to enjoy in the world to come. How sweet it is for us to recollect, that in heaven we shall be in the company of the best men, the noblest men, the most mighty men, the most honourable and the most renowned. We shall sit with Moses, and talk with him of all his life of wonders; we shall walk with Joseph, and we shall hear from him of the grace that kept him in his hour of peril; I doubt not you and I shall have the privilege of sitting by the side of David, and hearing him recount the perils and the deliverances through which he passed. The saints of heaven make but one communion, they are not divided into separate classes; we shall be allowed to walk through all the glorious ranks, and hold fellowship with all of them; nor need we doubt but that we shall be able to know them all. There are many reasons which I could not now enumerate, for it would occupy me too much time, that seem to my mind to settle the point, that in heaven we shall know even as we are known, and shall perfectly know each other; and that indeed, makes us long to be there. "The general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in haven." Oh, to get away from this poor church here, that is full of strifes and divisions, and bickerings and jealousies and animosities - to get away from the society of men that are full of infirmities, although they have much grace, and to get into a place where there shall be no infirmities in those with whom we talk - no hasty tempers, - where we

cannot possibly strike a chord that would make a jarring note - when it shall not be in our power to raise among those holy birds of Paradise a cause of strife - when we shall walk in the midst of them all, and see love beaming from every eye, and feel that deep affection is seated in every heart. Oh! that will be the best wine. Are you not longing to drink of it? - to enter into that great church fellowship, and attend those glorious church meetings,

"Where all the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
To bless the conduct of his grace,
And make his wonders known."

Again, look at heaven, if you will, in the point of knowledge. We know very much on earth that makes us happy; Jesus Christ hath taught us many things that give us joy and gladness. It is a world of ignorance, but still through grace we have entered into the school of the gospel, and we have learned some sweet truths. It is true we are very much like the boy who is beginning to write. We had to make many ugly pothooks and hangers, and we have not yet learned to write the sweet running hand of joy; but nevertheless, the Lord has taught us some great truths to fill our heart with joy; - the great doctrine of election, the knowledge of our redemption, the fact of our security in Christ; these great but simple doctrines have filled our hearts with bliss. But, brethren, the best wine is kept till the last, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall take the book and break the seals thereof, and permit us to read it all, then shall we rejoice indeed, for the best wine will be at our lips. There are old casks of knowledge that contain the richest wine, and Christ shall stave them in, and we shall drink of them to the full. It is not fit that we should know all things now, - we could not bear many things, and therefore Christ keeps them back; but

"There shall you see and hear and know
All you desired or wished below,
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy."

You may, if you please, look at heaven in another sense - as a place of manifestations and of joys. Now this world is a place of manifestations to the believer. Shall I venture for a moment, or even for a second, to talk of manifestations of himself which Christ is pleased to afford to his poor children on earth? No, beloved, your own experience shall supply my lack. I will only say that there are times when the Lord Jesus saith unto his beloved, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves." But, what must be the fellowship of heaven? I fail to-night in attempting to talk to you of the best wine, for this simple reason - I believe there are very few men that can preach of heaven so as to interest you much, for you feel that all we can say is so far behind the reality, that we might as well have let it alone. Baxter might write a Saint's Rest, but I am no Baxter - would God I were! The day may come perhaps, when I may talk more copiously of these blessings; but at present, in my own soul, when I begin to talk of the communion of heaven, I seem overcome, I cannot imagine it; for the next thought that always succeeds my first attempt to think of it, is a thought of overwhelming gratitude, coupled with a kind of fear that this is too good for such an unworthy worm as I. It was a privilege for John to put his head on the Master's bosom, but that is nothing compared with the privilege of lying in his embrace forever. Oh! we must wait until we get there, and as one of old said, "In five minutes you shall know more of heaven than I could tell you in all my life." It needs but that we should see our Lord, that we should fly into his arms, that we should feel his embrace, that we should fall at his feet, and, was I about to say, weep for joy? No, that were impossible, but lie there, as it were dissolved away in ecstasy - to feel that we at least have arrived in that dear place which he hath spoken to us of when he said: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me; in my Father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you." Truly he hath kept the best wine until the last.

II. And now, WHAT IS OUR LORD'S REASON FOR DOING THIS? That was the second point. Very briefly.

The Lord might have given us the best wine first, but he will not act as the devil doth; he will always make a broad distinction between his dealings and the dealings of Satan.

Again, he will not give us the best wine first, because that is not his good pleasure. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That is the only reason why you will get it at all; and the reason why you do not receive it now is because it is not your Father's good pleasure that you should have it just yet.

Again; your Father doth not give you the good wine now, because he is giving you an appetite for it. At the old feasts of the Romans men used to drink bitter things, and all kinds of singular and noxious mixtures, to make them thirsty. Now, in this world, God is, as it were, making his children thirsty, that they may take deeper draughts of heaven. I cannot think that heaven would be so sweet to me if I had not first to dwell on earth. Who knoweth best the sweet of rest? Is it not the labourer? Who understandeth best the joy of peace? Is it not the man who hath dwelt in the land of war? Who knoweth most the sweetness of joy? Is it not the man who hath passed through a world of sorrow? Ye are having your appetites sharpened by these trials; ye are being made ready to receive the fulness of joy that is in the presence of God for ever.

Again, the Lord hath this also in view. He is making you fit for the best wine, that he may be glorified by the trial of your faith. If it were in my power to go to heaven to-night, and I could enter there, yet if I should have a suspicion that there was more to do or more to suffer here, I would infinitely prefer to wait my Father's time; because, methinks, in heaven we shall bless God for all we have suffered. When it is all over, how sweet it will be to talk of it! When you and I shall meet each other in the streets of heaven - and there be some of you that have had but few trials, but few doubtings and fearings, and tribulations and conflicts, - you will talk of how God delivered you; but you will not be able to talk as some of the tried saints will. Ah! what sweet stories some of them will tell! I should like to go by the side of Jonah, and hear how he went down to the bottom of the mountains, and how he thought the earth with her bars was about him for ever. And Jeremiah, - I often think what a deal we shall get out of

Jeremiah in eternity, - what he will have to tell, who took such plunges into the sea of sorrow! And David, too, the sweet Psalmist, so full of experience, he will never have done talking of what the Lord has done for him! And I think you and I, when we get to heaven, will have enough to think of. As a poor woman once said, when she was in great doubt and fear whether she should be saved at all; she said in her prayer, "Lord, if thou wilt save me, only one thing I can promise thee. If thou wilt take me to heaven thou shalt never hear the last of it, for I will praise thee while immortality lasts, and I will tell the angels thou savedst ME." And this is the constant burden of heaven. They are each one wondering that he is there. Beloved, if we did not have to pass through these trials and troubles, and these soul conflicts, and such like, we should have very little to talk about in heaven. I have no doubt that the babes in paradise are as happy as the rest, but I do not wish to be a babe in paradise. I bless God I did not go to heaven when an infant: I shall have the more to praise God for, when I shall look back through a life of mercies, a life of trials, and yet a life of sustaining grace. There will be a louder song, because the deeper have been our troubles. These, I think, are some of God's reasons.

III. And now, dear brethren and sisters, what shall I say about the LESSON WE ARE TO LEARN FROM THIS FACT of Christ keeping the best wine until now? Going home the other night I noticed the difference between the horse's pace in coming here and going home, and I thought to myself, "Ah! the horse goes well, because he is going home;" and the thought struck me, "How well a Christian ought to go, cause he is going home." You know, if we were going from home, every rough stone in the road might check us, and we might need a good deal of whip to make us go. But it is going home. Bless God, every step we take is going home. It may be knee-deep in trouble, but it is all on the road; we may be ancle-deep in fear, but it is going home; I may stumble, but I always stumble homewards. All my afflictions and griefs, when they cast me down, but cast me onwards towards heaven. The mariner does not mind the waves, if every wave sends him nearer his haven, and he does not care how loudly howl the winds, if they only blow him nearer port. That is the Christian's happy lot: he is going homeward. Let that cheer thee, Christian, and make thee travel on joyfully, not needing the whip to urge thee to duty, but always going on with alacrity through duty and through

trial, because thou art going homeward.

Again: if we have the best things to come dear friends, do not let us be discontented. Let us put up with a few of the bad things now, for they only seem to be so. A traveller who is on a journey in a hurry, if he has to stay for a night at an inn, he may grumble a little at the want of accommodation, but he does not say very much, because he is off to-morrow, he is only stopping a short time at the inn; he says, "I shall get home to-morrow night," and then he thinks of the joys of home, and does not care about the discomforts of his hard journey. You and I are travellers. It will soon be over. We may have had but a very few shillings a week compared with our neighbour, but we shall be equal with him when we get there. He may have had a large house, with a great many rooms, while we had, it may be only one upper room; ah! we shall have as large a mansion as he in Paradise. We shall soon be at the journey's end, and then the road will not signify, long as we have got there. Come! let us put up with these few inconveniences on the road, for the best wine is coming; let us pour away all the vinegar of murmuring, for the best wine shall come.

Once more; if the Christian has the best wine to come, why should he envy the worldling? David did; he was discontented when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, and you and I are often tempted to do it; but you know what we ought to say when we see the wicked prosper, when we see them happy, and full of delights of sinful pleasure. We ought to say, "Ah! my good wine is to come; I can bear that you should have your turn; my turn will come afterwards; I can be put off with these things, and lie with Lazarus at the gate, while the dogs lick my sores; my turn is to come, when the angels shall carry me into Abraham's bosom, and your turn is to come too, when in hell you lift up your eyes, being in torments.

Christian, what more shall I say to thee? - though there be a thousand lessons to learn from this, that the best wine is kept to the last. "Take heed to thyself, that thou also keepest thy good wine until the last. The further thou goest on the road, seek to bring to thy Saviour the more acceptable sacrifice. Thou hadst little faith years ago: man! bring out the good wine now! Seek to have more faith. Thy Master is better to thee

every day, and thou shalt see him to be the best of all Masters and friends. Seek to be better to thy Master every day; be more generous to his cause, more active to labour for him, more kind to his people, more diligent in prayer; and take heed that as thou growest in years thou growest in grace, so that when thou comest at last to the river Jordan, and the Master shall give thee the best wine, thou mayest also give to him the best wine, and praise him most loudly when the battle shall just be over, and when the whirlwind is dying away into the everlasting peace of paradise."

And now, dear friends, I am conscious that I have totally failed in endeavouring to bring forth this good wine; but it is written that God hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit, but that ear hath not heard it. Now, if I had told it to you to-night your ear would have heard it, and the text would not have been true; and as I have unwittingly proved the truth of this Scripture, I cannot be very sorry at having helped to witness the truth of my Master's word. Only this I say, - the nearer you live to Christ the nearer you will be to heaven, for if there is one place next door to Pisgah it is Calvary. It may seem strange, but if you live much on Calvary you live very near Nebo; for although Moses may have seen Canaan from Nebo, I have never seen heaven anywhere but close to Calvary. When I have seen my Saviour crucified, then I have seen him glorified; when I have read my name written in his blood, then I have seen afterwards my mansion which he has prepared for me. When I have seen my sins washed away, then I have seen the white robe that I am to wear for ever. Live near to the Saviour, man, and you shall not be very far off heaven. Recollect, after all, it is not far to heaven. It is only one gentle sigh, and we are there. We talk of it as a land very far off, but close it is, and who knows but that the spirits of the just are here to-night? Heaven is close to us; we cannot tell where it is, but this we know, that it is not a far off land. It is so near, that, swifter than thought, we shall be there, emancipated from our care and woe, and blessed for ever.

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Compassion for Souls

"She went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept."—Genesis 21:16.

Briefly let us rehearse the circumstances. The child Isaac was, according to God's word, to be the heir of Abraham. Ishmael, the elder son of Abraham, by the bondwoman Hagar, resided at home with his father till he was about eighteen years of age; but when he began to mock and scoff at the younger child whom God had ordained to be the heir, it became needful that he and his mother should be sent away from Abraham's encampment. It might have seemed unkind and heartless to have sent them forth, but God having arranged to provide for them sent a divine command which at once rendered their expulsion necessary, and certified its success. We may rest assured that whatever God commands he will be quite certain to justify. He knew it would be no cruelty to Hagar or Ishmael to be driven into independence, and he gave a promise which secured them everything which they desired. "Also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a great nation;" and again, "I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation." Had they both been able to go forth from Abraham's tent in faith they might have trodden the desert with a joyous footstep, fully assured that he who bade them go, and he who promised that he would bless them, would be certain to provide all things needful for them. Early in the morning they were sent forth on their journey, with as much provision as they could carry, and probably they intended to make their way to Egypt, from which Hagar had come. They may have lost their way; at any rate, they are spoken of as wandering. Their store of food became exhausted, the water in the skin bottle was all spent; both of them felt the fatigue of the wilderness, and the heat of the pitiless sand; they were both faint and weary, and the younger utterly failed. As long as the mother could sustain the tottering, fainting footsteps of her boy, she did so; when she could do so no longer, he swooned with weakness, and she laid him down beneath the slight shade of the desert tamarisk, that he might be as far as possible

screened from the excessive heat of the sun. Looking into his face and seeing the pallor of coming death gathering upon it, knowing her inability to do anything whatever to revive him, or even to preserve his life, she could not bear to sit and gaze upon his face, but withdrew just far enough to be able still to watch with all a mother's care. She sat down in the brokenness of her spirit, her tears gushed forth in torrents, and heartrending cries of agony startled the rocks around. It was needful that the high spirit of the mother and her son should be broken down before they received prosperity: the mother had been on a former occasion graciously humbled by being placed in much the same condition, but she had probably relapsed into a haughty spirit, and had encouraged her boy in his insolence to Sarah's son, and therefore she must be chastened yet again; and it was equally needful that the high-spirited lad should for little bear the yoke in his youth, and that he who would grow up to be the wild man, the father of the unconquerable Arab, should feel the power of God ere he received the fulfillment of the promise given to him in answer to Abraham's prayer. If I read the text aright while the mother was thus weeping, the child, almost lost to all around, was nevertheless conscious enough of his own helpless condition, and sufficiently mindful of his father's God to cry in his soul to heaven for help; and the Lord heard not so much the mother's weeping (for the feebleness of her faith, which ought to have been stronger in memory of a former deliverance, hindered her prayer), but the silent, unuttered prayers of the fainting lad went up into the ears of Elohim, and the angel of Elohim appeared, and pointed to the well. The child received the needed draught of water, was soon restored, and in him and his posterity the promise of God received and continues to receive a large fulfillment. I am not about to speak upon that narrative except as it serves me with an illustration for the subject which I would now press upon you.

Behold the compassion of a mother for her child expiring with thirst, and remember that such a compassion ought all Christians to feel towards souls that are perishing for lack of Christ, perishing eternally, perishing without hope of salvation. If the mother lifted up her voice arid wept, so also should we; and if the contemplation of her dying, child was all too painful for her, so may the contemplation of the wrath to come, which is to pass upon every soul that dies impenitent, become too painful for us,

but yet it the same time it should stimulate us to earnest prayer and ardent effort for the salvation of our fellow men.

I shall speak, this morning, upon compassion for souls, the reasons which justify it, the sight it dreads, the temptation it must fight against, the paths it should pursue, the encouragement it may receive.

I. COMPASSION FOR SOULS—THE REASONS WHICH JUSTIFY IT, NAY, COMPEL IT.

It scarce needs that I do more than rehearse in bare outline the reasons why we should tenderly compassionate the perishing sons of men. For first, observe, the dreadful nature of the calamity which will overwhelm them. Calamities occurring to our fellow men naturally awaken in us a feeling of commiseration; but what calamity under heaven can be equal to the ruin of a soul? What misery can be equal to that of a man cast away from God, and subject to his wrath world without end! To-day your hearts are moved as you hear the harrowing details of war. They have been dreadful indeed; houses burnt, happy families driven as vagabonds upon the face of the earth, domestic circles and quiet households broken up, men wounded, mangled, massacred by thousands, and starved, I was about to say, by millions; but the miseries of war, if they were confined to this world alone, were nothing compared with the enormous catastrophe of tens of thousands of spirits accursed by sin, and driven by justice into the place where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. The edge of the sword grows blunt at last, the flame of war dies out for want of fuel, but, lo! I see before me a sword which is never quiet, a fire unquenchable. Alas! that the souls of men should fall beneath the infinite ire of justice. All your hearts have been moved of late with the thought of famine, famine in a great city. The dogs of war, and this the fiercest mastiff of them all, have laid hold upon the fair throat of the beautiful city which thought to sit as a lady for ever and see no sorrow; you are hastening with your gifts, if possible to remove her urgent want and to avert her starvation; but what is a famine of bread compared with that famine of the soul which our Lord describes when he represents it as pleading in vain for a drop of water to cool its tongue tormented in the flame? To be without bread for the body is terrible, but to be without the

bread of life eternal, none of us can tell the weight of horror which lies there! When Robert Hall in one of the grand flights of his eloquence pictured the funeral of a lost soul, he made the sun to veil his light, and the moon her brightness; he covered the ocean with mourning and the heavens with sackcloth, and declared that if the whole fabric of nature could become animated and vocal, it would not be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing to express the magnitude and extent of the catastrophe. Time is not long enough for the sore lamentation which should attend the obsequies of a lost soul. Eternity must be charged with that boundless woe, and must utter it in weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Not the tongues of prophets, nor of seraphs, could set forth all the sorrow of what it is to be condemned from the mouth of mercy, damned by the Savior who died to save, pronounced accursed by rejected love. The evil is so immense that imagination finds no place, and understanding utterly fails. Brethren, if our bowels do not yearn for men who are daily hastening towards destruction, are we men at all?

I could abundantly justify compassion for perishing men, even on the ground of natural feelings. A mother who did not, like Hagar, weep for her dying child—call her not "mother," call her "monster." A man who passes through the scenes of misery which even this city presents in its more squalid quarters, and yet is never disturbed by them, I venture to say he is unworthy of the name of man. Even the common sorrows of our race may well suffuse our eyes with tears, but the eternal sorrow, the infinite lake of misery—he who grieves not for this, write him down a demon, though he wear the image and semblance of a man. Do not think the less of this argument because I base it upon feelings common to all of woman born, for remember that grace does not destroy our manhood when it elevates it to a higher condition.

In this instance what nature suggests grace enforces. The more we become what we shall be, the more will compassion rule our hearts. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the pattern and mirror of perfect manhood, what said he concerning the sins and the woes of Jerusalem? He knew Jerusalem must perish; did he bury his pity beneath the fact of the divine decree, and steel his heart by the thought of the sovereignty or the justice

that would be resplendent in the city's destruction? Nay, not he, but with eyes gushing like fountains, he cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings! and ye would not." If you would be like Jesus, you must be tender and very pitiful. Ye would be as unlike him as possible if we could sit down in grim content, and, with a Stoic's philosophy, turn all the flesh within you into stone. If it be natural, then, and above all, if it be natural to the higher grace-given nature, I beseech you, let your hearts be moved with pity, do not endure to see the spiritual death of mankind. Be in agony as often as you contemplate the ruin of any soul of the seed of Adam.

Brethren, the whole ruin and current, and tenor and spirit of the gospel influences us to compassion. Ye are debtors, for what were ye if compassion had not come to your rescue? Divine compassion, all undeserved and free, has redeemed you from your vain conversation. Surely those who receive mercy should show mercy; those who owe all they have to the pity of God, should not be pitiless to their brethren. The Savior never for a moment tolerates the self-righteous isolation which would make you despise the prodigal, and cavil at his restoration, much less the Cainite spirit which cries, "Am I my brother's keeper?" No doctrine is rightly received by you if it freezes the genial current of your Christian compassion. You may know the truth of the doctrine, but you do not know the doctrine in truth if it makes you gaze on the wrath to come without emotions of pity for immortal souls. You shall find everywhere throughout the gospel that it rings of brotherly love, tender mercy, and weeping pity. If you have indeed received it in its power, the love of Christ will melt your spirit to compassion for those who are despising Christ, and sealing their own destruction.

Let me beseech you to believe that it is needful as well as justifiable that you should feel compassion for the sons of men. You all desire to glorify Christ by becoming soul-winners—I hope you do—and be it remembered that, other things being equal, he is the fittest in God's hand to win souls who pities souls most. I believe he preaches best who loves best, and in the Sunday-school and in private life each soul-seeker shall have the blessing very much in proportion to his yearning for it. Paul becomes a

savior of many because his heart's desire and prayer to God is that they may be saved. If you can live without souls being converted, you shall live without their being converted; but if your soul breaketh for the longing that it hath towards Christ's glory and the conversion of the ungodly, if like her of old you say, "Give me children, or I die," your insatiable hunger shall be satisfied, the craving of your spirit shall be gratified. Oh! I would to God there should come upon us a divine hunger which cannot stay itself except men yield themselves to Jesus; an intense, earnest, longing, panting desire that men should submit themselves to the gospel of Jesus. This will teach you better than the best college training how to deal with human hearts. This will give the stammering tongue the ready word; the hot heart shall burn the cords which held fast the tongue. You shall become wise to win souls, even though you never exhibit the brilliance of eloquence or the force of logic. Men shall wonder at your power—the secret shall be hidden from them, the fact being that the Holy Ghost shall overshadow you, and your heart shall teach you wisdom, God teaching your heart. Deep feeling on your part for others shall make others feel for themselves, and God shall bless you, and that right early.

But I stand not here any longer to justify what I would far rather commend and personally feel.

"Did Christ o'er sinners weep,
And shall our cheeks be dry?
Let floods of consecrated grief
Stream forth from every eye,"

Is God all love, and shall God's children be hard and cold? Shall heaven compassionate and shall not earth that has received hearer's mercy send back the echo of compassion? O God, make us imitators of thee in thy pity towards erring men.

II. We shall pass on to notice THE SIGHT WHICH TRUE COMPASSION DREADS.

Like Hagar, the compassionate spirit says, "Let me not see the death of the child," or as some have read it, "How can I see the death of the child?"

To contemplate a soul passing away without hope is too terrible a task! I do not wonder that ingenious persons have invented theories which aim at mitigating the terrors of the world to come to the impenitent. It is natural they should do so, for the facts are so alarming as they are truthfully given us in God's word, that if we desire to preach comfortable doctrine and such as will quiet the consciences of idle professors, we must dilute the awful truth. The revelation of God concerning the doom of the wicked is so overwhelming as to make it penal, nay, I was about to say damnable, to be indifferent and careless in the work of evangelising the world. I do not wonder that this error in doctrine springs up just now when abounding callousness of heart needs an excuse for itself. What better pillow for idle heads than the doctrine that the finally impenitent become extinct? The logical reasoning of the sinner is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," and the professing Christian is not slow to feel an ease of heart from pressing responsibilities when he accepts so consolatory an opinion. Forbear this sleeping draught, I pray you, for in very deed the sharp stimulant of the truth itself is abundantly needful; even when thus bestirred to duty we are sluggish enough, and need not that these sweet but sleep-producing theories should operate upon us.

For a moment, I beseech you, contemplate that which causes horror to every tender heart; behold, I pray you, a soul lost, lost beyond all hope of restitution. Heaven's gates have shut upon the sanctified, and the myriads of the redeemed are there, but that soul is not among them, for it passed out of this world without having washed its robes in Jesus' blood. For it there are no harps of gold, no thrones of glory, no exultation with Christ; from all the bliss of heaven it is for ever excluded. This punishment of loss were a heavy enough theme for contemplation. The old divines used to speak much of the poena damni, or the punishment of loss; there were enough in that phase of the future to make us mourn bitterly, as David did for Absalom. My child shut out of heaven! My husband absent from the seats of the blessed! My sister, my brother not in glory! When the Lord counts up his chosen, my dear companion outside the gates of pearl, outside the jeweled battlements of the New Jerusalem! O God, 'tis a heartbreaking sorrow to think of this. But then comes the punishment added to the loss. What saith the Savior? "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "These shall go away

into everlasting punishment." And yet again, "And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites." And yet again, "Into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Metaphors," say you. It is true, but not meaningless metaphors. There is a meaning in each expression—and rest assured though man's metaphors sometimes exaggerate, God's never do; his symbols everywhere are true; never is there an exaggeration in the language of inspiration. Extravagances of utterance! He uses them not; his figures are substantial truth. Terrible as the scriptural emblems of punishment are, they set forth matters of undoubted fact, which if a man could look upon this day, the sight might blanch his hair, and quench his eye. If we could hear the wailings of the pit for a moment, we should earnestly entreat that we might never hear them again. We have to thank God that we are not allowed to hear the dolorous cries of the lost, for if we did they would make our life bitter as gall. I cast a veil over that which I cannot paint; like Hagar I cannot bear to look at the dread reality which it breaks my heart to think upon.

How all this gathers intensity, when it comes to be our own child, our own friend! Hagar might perhaps have looked upon a dying child, but not upon her dying Ishmael. Can you bear now to think for a moment of the perdition of your own flesh and blood? Does not your spirit flinch and draw back with horror instinctively at the idea of one of your own family being lost? Yet, as a matter of stern fact, you know that some of them will be lost if they die as they are now living? At God's right hand they cannot stand unless they be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. You know that, do not try to forget it.

It will greatly add to your feeling of sorrow if you are forced to feel that the ruin of your child or of any other person may have been partly caused by your example. It must be a dreadful thing for a father to feel, "My boy learned to drink from me; my child heard the first blasphemous word from his father's lips." Or mother, if your dying daughter should say, "I was led into temptation by my mother's example," what a grief will this be! O parents, converted late in life, you cannot undo the evil which you have already done; God has forgiven you, but the mischief wrought in your children's characters is indelible, unless the grace of God step in. I

want you to seek after that grace with great earnestness. As you must confess that you have helped to train your child as a servant of sin, will you not long to see your evil work undone before it ends in your child's eternal destruction?

If we shall have to feel that the ruin of any of our friends or relations is partly occasioned by our own personal neglect of religion, it will cause us bitter pangs. If our example has been excellent and admirable in all respects, but that we have forgotten the Lord and his Christ, it will have been none the less injurious to men's souls. I sometimes think that these examples are the very worst in their effect. Immoral, ungodly men can hardly work the same measure of mischief as moral but unchristian men. I will tell you why. The ungodly quote the orderly life of the moralist as an argument that there can be goodness apart from Christianity, and this often helps men to rest satisfied apart from Christ Jesus. And what, O moralist, though you never taught your child a vice, if you taught it unbelief, and if your example helped to harm its heart in bold rebellion against God! Ah! then, how will you blame yourself when you are converted, or curse yourself if both you and your child perish.

Dear friends, it makes a terrible addition to the sight of a soul being lost if we have to feel we were under responsibility concerning it, and have been in any measure unfaithful. I cannot bear the idea of any of my congregation perishing, for in addition to the compassion I hope I feel, I am influenced by a further additional consideration, for I am set as a watchman to your souls. When any die, I ask myself, "Was I faithful? Did I speak all the truth? And did I speak it from my very soul every time I preached?" John Walsh, the famous Scotch preacher, was often out of bed in the coldest night, by the hour together, in supplication; and when some one wondered that he spent so many hours upon his knees, he said, "Ah, man, I have three thousand souls to give account of in the day of judgment, and I do not know but what it is going very ill with some of them." Alas! I have more than that to give account of, and well may I cry to God that I may not see you perish. O may it never be that you shall go from these pews to the lowest hell. You, too, my fellow Christian, have your own responsibilities, each one in your measure—your children, your school classes, your servants, ay, and your neighbors, for if you are not

doing any good and do not assume any responsibility towards the regions in which you dwell, that responsibility rests upon you none the less. You cannot live in a district without being responsible to God for doing something towards the bettering of the people among whom you reside. Can you endure it then, that your neighbors should sink into hell? Do not your hearts long for their salvation?

Is it not an awful thing that a soul should perish with the gospel so near? If Ishmael had died, and the water had been within bow-shot, and yet unseen till too late, it had been a dreadful reflection for the mother. Would she not have torn her hair with double sorrow? And yet many of you are being lost with the gospel ringing in your ears; you are perishing while Christ is lifted up before you; you are dying in the camp through the serpent's bite, though the brazen serpent is yonder before your eyes, and with many tears we cry to you, "Look unto Jesus Christ, and live!" Ah, woe is me, woe is me, if you perish when salvation is brought so close home to you. Some of you are very near the kingdom of God; you are very anxious, very concerned, but you have not believed in Jesus; you have much that is good, but one thing you lack. Will you perish for lack of only one thing? A thousand pities will it be if you make shipwreck in the harbor's mouth and go to hell from the gates of heaven.

We must add to all this, the remembrance that it is not one soul which is lost, but tens of thousands are going down to the pit. Mr. Beecher said in one of his sermons, "If there were a great bell hung high in heaven which the angels swung every time a soul was lost, how constantly would its solemn toll be heard!" A soul lost! The thunder would not suffice to make a knell for a lost spirit. Each time the clock ticks a soul departs out of this world, perhaps oftener than that, and out of those who make the last journey how few mount to the skies; what multitudes descend to endless woe! O Christians, pull up the sluices of your souls, and let your hearts pour out themselves in rivers of compassion.

III. In the third place, I said I would speak upon COMPASSION FOR THE SOULS OF MEN—THE TEMPTATION IT MUST RESIST.

We must not fall into the temptation to imitate the example of Hagar too

closely. She put the child under the shrubs and turned away her gaze from the all too mournful spectacle. She could not endure to look, but she sat where she could watch in despair. There is a temptation with each one of us to try to forget that souls are being lost. I can go home to my house along respectable streets, and naturally should choose that way, for then I need not see the poverty of the lowest quarters of the city, but am I right if I try to forget that there are Bethnal Greens and Kent Streets, and such like abodes of poverty? The close courts, the cellars, the crowded garrets, the lodging-houses—am I to forget that these exist? Surely the only way for a charitable mind to sleep comfortably in London is to forget how one half of the population lives; but is it our object to live comfortably? Are we such brute beasts that comfort is all we care for; like swine in their sty? Nay, brethren, let us recall to our memories the sins of our great city, its sorrows and griefs, and let us remember also the sins and sorrows of the wide, wide world, and the tens of thousands of our race who are passing constantly into eternity. Nay, look at them! Do not close those eyes! Does the horror of the vision make your eyeballs ache? Then look until your heart aches too, and your spirit breaks forth in vehement agony before the Lord. Look down into hell a moment; open wide the door; listen, and listen yet again. You say you cannot, it sickens your soul; let it be sickened, and in its swooning let it fall back into the arms of Christ the Savior, and breathe out a cry that he would hasten to save men from the wrath to come. Do not ignore, I pray you, what does exist. It is a matter of fact that in this congregation many are going down to hell, that in this city there are multitudes who are hastening as certainly to perdition as time is hastening to eternity. It is no dream, no fiction of a fevered brain that there is a hell. If you think so, then why dare you call yourselves Christians? Renounce your Bible, renounce your baptism, renounce your profession if one spark of honesty remains in you. Call not yourselves Christians when you deny the teaching of your Master. Since assuredly there is a dreadful hell, shut not your eyes to it, put not the souls of your fellows away among the shrubs, and sit not down in supineness. Come and look, come and look, I say, till your hearts break at the sight. Hear the cries of dying men whose consciences are awakened too late. Hear the groans of spirits who are feeling the sure consequences of sin, where sin's cure will never avail them. Let this stir you, my brethren, to action—to action immediate and intense. You tell me I preach dreadful things; ay,

and they are wanted, they are wanted. Was there ever such a happy age as this? Were there ever such sleepy persons as ourselves? Take heed lest you take sad precedence of all others in the accusations of conscience, because knowing the gospel, and enjoying it, you nevertheless use so little exertion in spreading it abroad among the human race. Let us shun the temptation which Hagar's example might suggest.

IV. I will now speak upon THE PATH WHICH TRUE COMPASSION WILL BE SURE TO FOLLOW; and what is that?

First of all, true pity does all it can. Before Hagar sat down and wept, she had done her utmost for her boy; she had given him the last drop from the bottle; she had supported his tottering footsteps, she had sought out the place under the shrubs where he might be a little sheltered she had laid him down gently with soothing words, and then, but not till then, she sat herself down. Have we done all that it is possible for us to do for the unconverted around us? There are preventable causes of men's ruin. Some causes you and I cannot touch, but there are some we ought at once to remove. For instance, it is certain that many perish through ignorance. It ought never to be that a soul should perish of ignorance within a mile of where a Christian lives. I would even allot a wider area in regions where the people dwell not so thickly. It should at least be the resolve of each Christian, "Within this district where I live, so far as my ability goes, everybody shall know the gospel by some means or other. If I cannot speak to each one will send something for him to read; it shall not be said that a man lost his way for ever because he had no Bible. The Holy Ghost alone can lead men into the truth, but it is our part to put the letter of the word before all men's eyes.

Prejudice, too, is another preventable cause of unbelief. Some will not hear the gospel, or listen to it, because of their notions of its sternness, or of the moroseness of its professors. Such a prejudice may effectually close their hearts; be it yours to remove it. Be kind to the ungodly; be loving, be tender, be affable, be generous to them, so that you may remove all unnecessary antipathy to the gospel of Jesus. Do them all the good you can for their bodies, that they may be the more likely to believe in your love towards their souls. Let it be said by each one here, "If a soul

perishes, I, at least, will have done all in my power to reclaim it."

But what next does compassion do? Having done all it can, it sits down and weeps over its own feebleness. I have not the pathos wherewith to describe to you the mother sitting there and pouring out her tears, and lifting up her plaintive voice over her child. The voice of a broken heart cannot be described, it must be heard. But, ah! there is wonderful power with God in the strong crying and tears of his people. If you know how to weep before the Lord, he will yield to tears what he will not yield to anything besides. O ye saints, compassionate sinners; sigh and cry for them; be able to say, as Whitfield could to his congregation, "Sirs, if ye are lost, it is not for want of my weeping for you, for I pour out my soul day and night in petitions unto God that ye may live." When Hagar's compassion had wailed itself out, she looked unto God, and God heard her. Take care that your prayers be abundant and continuous for those who are dying without hope.

And then what else doth Hagar teach us? She stood there ready to do anything that was needful after the Lord had interposed. The angel opened her eyes; until then she was powerless, and sat and wept, and prayed, but when he pointed to the well, did she linger for a minute? Was she unprepared with the bottle wherewith to draw water? Did she delay to put it to her child's lips? Was she slack in the blessed task? Oh, no! with what alacrity did she spring to the well; with what speed did she fill the bottle; with what motherly joy did she hasten to her child, and gave him the saving draught! And so I want every member here to stand ready to mark the faintest indication of grace in any soul. Watch always for the beginning of their conversion, be ready with the bottle of promise to carry a little comfort to their parched lips; watch with a mother's earnestness, watch for the opportunity of doing good to souls; yearn over them, so that when God shall work you shall work with him instanter, and Jesus shall not be hindered because of your carelessness and want of faith. This is the path which the true Christian should pursue. He is earnest for souls, and therefore he lays himself out for them. If we did really know what souls are, and what it is for them to be cast away, those of us who have done very little or nothing would begin to work for Christ directly. It is said in old classic story, that a certain king of Lydia had a son who had

been dumb from his birth, but when Lydia was captured, a soldier was about to kill the king, when the young man suddenly found a tongue, and cried out, "Soldier, would you kill the king?" He had never spoken a word before, but his astonishment and fear gave him speech. And methinks if ye had been dumb to that moment, if ye indeed saw your own children and neighbors going down into the pit, you would cry out, "Though I never spoke before I will speak now. Poor souls, believe in Christ, and ye shall be saved." You do not know how such an utterance as that, however simple, might be blessed. A very little child once found herself in company with an old man of eighty, a fine old man who loved little children, and who took the child upon his knee to fondle it. The little one turning round to him said, "Sir, I got a grandpa just like you, and my grandpa love Jesus Christ, does you?" He said, "I was eighty-four years of age and had lived always among Christian people, but nobody ever thought it worth his while to say as much as that to me." That little child was the instrument of the old man's conversion. So have I heard the story. He knew he had not loved the Savior, and he began to seek him, and in his old age he found salvation. If as much as that is possible to a child it is possible to you. O dear brother, if you love Jesus, burst the bonds of timidity, or it may be of supineness; snap all fetters, and from this day feel that you cannot bear to think of the ruin of a soul, and must seek its salvation if there be in earth or heaven ways and means by which you can bring a blessing to it.

V. But I must close, and the last point shall be **THE ENCOURAGEMENT WITH TRUE COMPASSION FOR SOULS WILL ALWAYS RECEIVE.**

First take the case in hand. The mother compassionated, God compassionated too. You pity, God pities. The motions of God's Spirit in the souls of his people are the footfalls of God's eternal purposes about to be fulfilled. It is always a hopeful sign for a man that another man prays for him. There is a difficulty in getting a man to hell whom a child of God is drawing towards heaven by his intercessions. Satan is often defeated in his temptations by the intercession of the saints. Have hope then that your personal sense of compassion for souls is an indication that such souls God will bless. Ishmael, whom Hagar pitied, was a lad about whom promises had been made large and broad; he could not die; she had

forgotten that, but God had not. No thirst could possibly destroy him, for God had said he would make of him a great nation. Let us hope that those for whom you and I are praying and laboring are in God's eternal purpose secured from hell, because the blood of Christ has bought them, and they must be the Lord's. Our prayers are ensigns of the will of God. The Holy Ghost leads us to pray for those whom he intends effectually to call.

Moreover, those we pray for, we may not know it, but there may be in their souls at this time a stirring of divine life. Hagar did not know that her son was praying, but God did. The lad did not speak, but God heard his heart cry. Children are often very reticent to their parents. Often and often have I talked with young lads about their souls, who have told me that they could not talk to their fathers upon such matters. I know it was so with me. When I was under concern of soul the last persons I should have elected to speak to upon religion would have been my parents, not out of want of love to them, nor absence of love on their part; but so it was. A strange feeling of diffidence pervades a seeking soul, and drives it from its friends. Those whom you are praying for may be praying too, and you do not know it; but the time of love will come when their secret yearnings will be revealed to your earnest endeavors.

The lad was preserved after all, the well of waters was revealed, and the bottle put to his lips. It will be a great comfort to you to believe that God will hear importunate prayers. Your child will be saved, your husband will be brought in yet, good woman, only pray on. Your neighbor shall be brought to hear the truth and be converted, only be earnest about it.

I do not know how to preach, this morning; the tongue cannot readily speak when the heart feels too much. I pray that we may have a great revival of religion in our midst as a church; my spirit longs and pants for it. I see a great engine of enormous strength, and a well-fashioned machine: the machine cannot work of itself, it has no power in it, but if I could get the band to unite the machine with the engine, what might be done! Behold, I see the omnipotence of God, and the organization of this church. O that I could get the band to bind the two together! The band is living faith. Do you possess it? Brethren, help me to pass it round the fly wheel, and oh, how God will work, and we will work through his power,

and what glorious things shall be done for Christ! We must receive power from on high, and faith is the belt that shall convey that power to us. The divine strength shall be manifest through our weakness. Cease not to pray. More than you ever have done, intercede for a blessing, and the Lord will bless us: he will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. Amen.

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No Compromise

And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again. - Genesis 24:5-8

Genesis is both the book of beginnings and the book of dispensations. You know what use Paul makes of Sarah and Hagar, of Esau and Jacob, and the like. Genesis is, all through, a book instructing the reader in the dispensations of God towards man. Paul saith, in a certain place, "which things are an allegory," by which he did not mean that they were not literal facts, but that, being literal facts, they might also be used instructively as an allegory. So may I say of this chapter. It records what actually was said and done; but at the same time, it bears within it allegorical instruction with regard to heavenly things. The true minister

of Christ is like this Eleazar of Damascus; he is sent to find a wife for his Master's son. His great desire is, that many shall be presented unto Christ in the day of his appearing, as the bride, the Lamb's wife.

The faithful servant of Abraham, before he started, communed with his master; and this is a lesson to us, who go on our Lord's errands. Let us, before we engage in actual service, see the Master's face, talk with him, and tell to him any difficulties which occur to our minds. Before we get to work, let us know what we are at, and on what footing we stand. Let us hear from our Lord's own mouth what he expects us to do, and how far he will help us in the doing of it. I charge you, my fellow-servants, never to go forth to plead with men for God until you have first pleaded with God for men. Do not attempt to deliver a message which you have not first of all yourself received by his Holy Spirit. Come out of the chamber of fellowship with God into the pulpit of ministry among men, and there will be a freshness and a power about you which none shall be able to resist. Abraham's servant spoke and acted as one who felt bound to do exactly what his master bade him, and to say what his master told him; hence his one anxiety was to know the essence and measure of his commission. During his converse with his master he mentioned one little point about which there might be a hitch; and his master soon removed the difficulty from his mind. It is about that hitch, which has occurred lately on a very large scale, and has upset a good many of my Master's servants, that I am going to speak this morning: may God grant that it may be to the benefit of his church at large!

I. Beginning our sermon, we will ask you, first, to **THINK OF THE SERVANT'S JOYFUL BUT WEIGHTY ERRAND**. It was a joyful errand: the bells of marriage were ringing around him. The marriage of the heir should be a joyful event. It was an honourable thing for the servant to be entrusted with the finding of a wife for his master's son. Yet it was every way a most responsible business, by no means easy of accomplishment. Blunders might very readily occur before he was aware of it; and he needed to have all his wits about him, and something more than his wits, too, for so delicate a matter. He had to journey far, over lands without track or road; he had to seek out a family which he did not know, and to find out of that family a woman whom he did not know, who nevertheless

should be the right person to be the wife of his master's son: all this was a great service.

The work this man undertook was a business upon which his master's heart was set. Isaac was now forty years old, and had shown no sign of marrying. He was of a quiet, gentle spirit, and needed a more active spirit to urge him on. The death of Sarah had deprived him of the solace of his life, which he had found in his mother, and had, no doubt, made him desire tender companionship. Abraham himself was old, and well stricken in years; and he very naturally wished to see the promise beginning to be fulfilled, that in Isaac should his seed be called. Therefore, with great anxiety, which is indicated by his making his servant swear an oath of a most solemn kind, he gave him the commission to go to the old family abode in Mesopotamia, and seek for Isaac a bride from thence. Although that family was not all that could be desired, yet it was the best he knew of; and as some heavenly light lingered there, he hoped to find in that place the best wife for his son. The business was, however, a serious one which he committed to his servant. My brethren, this is nothing compared with the weight which hangs on the true minister of Christ. All the Great Father's heart is set on giving to Christ a church which shall be his beloved for ever. Jesus must not be alone: his church must be his dear companion. The Father would find a bride for the great Bridegroom, a recompense for the Redeemer, a solace for the Saviour: therefore he lays it upon all whom he calls to tell out the gospel, that we should seek souls for Jesus, and never rest till hearts are wedded to the Son of God. Oh, for grace to carry out this commission!

This message was the more weighty because of the person for whom the spouse was sought. Isaac was an extraordinary personage; indeed, to the servant he was unique. He was a man born according to promise, not after the flesh, but by the power of God; and you know how in Christ, and in all that are one with Christ, the life comes by the promise and the power of God, and springeth not of man. Isaac was himself the fulfillment of promise, and the heir of the promise. Infinitely glorious is our Lord Jesus as the Son of man! Who shall declare his generation? Where shall be found a helpmeet for him? a soul fit to be espoused unto him? Isaac had been sacrificed; he had been laid upon the altar, and although he did

not actually die, his father's hand had unsheathed the knife wherewith to slay him. Abraham in spirit had offered up his son; and you know who he is of whom we preach, and for whom we preach, even Jesus, who has laid down his life a sacrifice for sinners. He has been presented as a whole burnt-offering unto God. Oh! by the wounds, and by the bloody sweat, I ask you where shall we find a heart fit to be wedded to him? How shall we find men and women who can worthily recompense love so amazing, so divine, as that of him who died the death of the cross? Isaac had also been, in a figure, raised from the dead. To his father he was "as good as dead," as said the apostle; and he was given back to him from the dead. But our blessed Lord has actually risen from an actual death, and stands before us this day as the Conqueror of death, and the Spoiler of the grave. Who shall be joined to this Conqueror? Who is fit to dwell in glory with this glorious One? One would have thought that every heart would aspire to such happiness, and leap in prospect of such peerless honour, and that none would shrink back except through a sense of great unworthiness. Alas! it is not so, though so it ought to be.

What a weighty errand have we to fulfil to find those who shall be linked for ever in holy union with the Heir of the promise, even the sacrificed and risen One! Isaac was everything to Abraham. Abraham would have said to Isaac, "All that I have is thine." So is it true of our blessed Lord, whom he hath made Heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds, that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." What a dignity will be put upon any of you who are married to Christ! To what a height of eminence will you be uplifted by becoming one with Jesus! O preacher, what a work hast thou to do to-day, to find out those to whom thou shalt give the bracelet, and upon whose face thou shalt hang the jewel! To whom shall I say, "Wilt thou give thy heart to my Lord! Wilt thou have Jesus to be thy confidence, thy salvation, thine all in all? Art thou willing to become his that he may be thine?"

Said I not truly that it was a joyful, but a weighty errand, when you think what she must be to whom his master's son should be espoused? She must, at least, be willing and beautiful. In the day of God's power, hearts are made willing. There can be no marriage to Jesus without a heart of love. Where shall we find this willing heart? Only where the grace of God

has wrought it. Ah, then, I see how I may find beauty, too, among the sons of men! Marred as our nature is by sin, only the Holy Spirit can impart that beauty of holiness which will enable the Lord Jesus to see comeliness in his chosen. Alas! in our hearts there is an aversion to Christ, and an unwillingness to accept of him, and at the same time a terrible unfitness and unworthiness! The Spirit of God implants a love which is of heavenly origin, and renews the heart by a regeneration from above; and then we seek to be one with Jesus, but not till then. See, then, how our errand calls for the help of God himself.

Think what she will become who is to be married to Isaac? She is to be his delight; his loving friend and companion. She is to be partner of all his wealth; and specially is she to be a partaker in the great covenant promise, which was peculiarly entailed upon Abraham and his family. When a sinner comes to Christ, what does Christ make of him? His delight is in him: he communes with him; he hears his prayer, he accepts his praise; he works in him and with him, and glorifies himself in him. He makes the believing man joint-heir with himself of all that he has, and introduces him into the covenant treasure-house, wherein the riches and glory of God are stored up for his chosen. Ah, dear friends! it is a very small business in the esteem of some to preach the gospel; and yet, if God is with us, ours is more than angels' service. In a humble way you are telling of Jesus to your boys and girls in your classes; and some will despise you as "only Sunday-school teachers"; but your work has a spiritual weight about it unknown to conclaves of senators, and absent from the counsels of emperors. Upon what you say, death, and hell, and worlds unknown are hanging. You are working out the destinies of immortal spirits, turning souls from ruin to glory, from sin to holiness.

"'Tis not a work of small import
Your loving care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And filled the Saviour's hands."

In carrying out his commission, this servant must spare no exertion. It would be required of him to journey to a great distance, having a general indication of direction, but not knowing the way. He must have divine

guidance and protection. When he reached the place, he must exercise great common-sense, and at the same time a trustful dependence upon the goodness and wisdom of God. It would be a wonder of wonders if he ever met the chosen woman, and only the Lord could bring it to pass. He had all the care and the faith required. We have read the story of how he journeyed, and prayed, and pleaded. We should have cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?" but we see that the Lord Jehovah made him sufficient, and his mission was happily carried out. How can we put ourselves into the right position to get at sinners, and win them for Jesus? How can we learn to speak the right words? How shall we suit our teaching to the condition of their hearts? How shall we adapt ourselves to their feelings, their prejudices, their sorrows, and their temptations? Brethren, we who preach the gospel continually may well cry, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." To seek for pearls at the bottom of the sea is child's play compared with seeking for souls in this wicked London. If God be not with us, we may look our eyes out, and wear our tongues away in vain. Only as the Almighty God shall lead, and guide, and influence, and inspire, can we perform our solemn trust; only by divine help shall we joyfully come back, bringing with us the chosen of the Lord. We are the Bridegroom's friends, and we rejoice greatly in his joy, but we sigh and cry till we have found the chosen hearts in whom he will delight, whom he shall raise to sit with him upon his throne.

II. Secondly, I would have you CONSIDER THE REASONABLE FEAR WHICH IS MENTIONED. Abraham's servant said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land." This is a very serious, grave, and common difficulty. If the woman be not willing, nothing can be done; force and fraud are out of the question; there must be a true will, or there can be no marriage in this instance. Here was the difficulty: here was a will to be dealt with. Ah, my brethren! this is our difficulty still. Let me describe this difficulty in detail as it appeared to the servant, and appears to us.

She may not believe my report, or be impressed by it. When I come to her, and tell her that I am sent by Abraham, she may look me in the face, and say, "There be many deceivers nowadays." If I tell her that my master's son is surpassingly beautiful and rich, and that he would fain

take her to himself, she may answer, "Strange tales and romances are common in these days; but the prudent do not quit their homes." Brethren, in our case this is a sad fact. The great evangelical prophet cried of old, "Who hath believed our report?" We also cry in the same words. Men care not for the report of God's great love to the rebellious sons of men. They do not believe that the infinitely glorious Lord is seeking the love of poor, insignificant man, and to win it has laid down his life. Calvary, with its wealth of mercy, grief, love, and merit, is disregarded. Indeed, we tell a wonderful story, and it may well seem too good to be true; but it is sad indeed that the multitude of men go their ways after trifles, and count these grand realities to be but dreams. I am bowed down with dismay that my Lord's great love, which led him even to die for men, should hardly be thought worthy of your hearing, much less of your believing. Here is a heavenly marriage, and right royal nuptials placed within your reach; but with a sneer you turn aside, and prefer the witcheries of sin.

There was another difficulty: she was expected to feel a love to one she had never seen. She had only newly heard that there was such a person as Isaac, but yet she must love him enough to leave her kindred, and go to a distant land. This could only be because she recognized the will of Jehovah in the matter. Ah, my dear hearers! all that we tell you is concerning things not seen as yet; and here is our difficulty. You have eyes, and you want to see everything; you have hands, and you want to handle everything; but there is one whom you cannot see as yet, who has won our love because of what we believe concerning him. We can truly say of him, "Whom having not seen, we love: in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." I know that you answer our request thus: "You demand too much of us when you ask us to love a Christ we have never seen." I can only answer, "It is even so: we do ask more of you than we expect to receive." Unless God the Holy Ghost shall work a miracle of grace upon your hearts, you will not be persuaded by us to quit your old associations, and join yourselves to our beloved Lord. And yet, if you did come to him, and love him, he would more than content you; for you would find in him rest unto your souls, and a peace which passeth all understanding.

Abraham's servant may have thought: She may refuse to make so great a change as to quit Mesopotamia for Canaan. She had been born and bred away there in a settled country, and all her associations were with her father's house; and to marry Isaac she must tear herself away. So, too, you cannot have Jesus, and have the world too: you must break with sin to be joined to Jesus. You must come away from the licentious world, the fashionable world, the scientific world, and from the (so-called) religious world. If you become a Christian, you must quit old habits, old motives, old ambitions, old pleasures, old boasts, old modes of thought. All things must become new. You must leave the things you have loved, and seek many of those things which you have hitherto despised. There must come to you as great a change as if you had died, and were made over again. You answer, "Must I endure all this for One whom I have never seen, and for an inheritance on which I have never set my foot?" It is even so. Although I am grieved that you turn away, I am not in the least surprised, for it is not given to many to see him who is invisible, or to choose the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life. The man or woman who will follow God's messenger to be married to so strange a Bridegroom is a rare bird.

Moreover, it might be a great difficulty to Rebekah, if she had had any difficulties at all, to think that she must henceforth lead a pilgrim life. She would quit house and farm for tent and gipsy life. Abraham and Isaac found no city to dwell in, but wandered from place to place, dwelling alone, sojourners with God. Their outward mode of life was typical of the way of faith, by which men live in the world, and are not of it. To all intents and purposes Abraham and Isaac were out of the world, and lived on its surface without lasting connection with it. They were the Lord's men, and the Lord was their possession. He set himself apart for them, and they were set apart for him. Rebekah might well have said, "That will never do for me. I cannot outlaw myself. I cannot quit the comforts of a settled abode to ramble over the fields wherever the flocks may require me to roam." It does not strike the most of mankind that it would be a good thing to be in the world, and yet not to be of it. They are no strangers in the world, they long to be admitted more fully into its "society." They are not aliens here with their treasures in heaven, they long to have a good round sum on earth, and find their heaven in

enjoying it themselves, and enriching their families. Earthworms as they are, the earth contents them. If any man becomes unworldly, and makes spiritual things his one object, they despise him as a dreamy enthusiast. Many men think that the things of religion are merely meant to be read of, and to be preached about; but that to live for them would be to spend a dreamy, unpractical existence. Yet the spiritual is, after all, the only real: the material is in deepest truth the visionary and unsubstantial. Still, when people turn away because of the hardness of holy warfare, and the spirituality of the believing life, we are not astonished, for we hardly hoped it could be otherwise. Unless the Lord renews the heart, men will always prefer the bird-in-the-hand of this life to the bird-in-the-bush of the life to come.

Moreover, it might be that the woman might not care for the covenant of promise. If she had no regard for Jehovah and his revealed will, she was not likely to go with the man, and enter upon marriage with Isaac. He was the Heir of the promises, the inheritor of the covenant privileges which the Lord by oath had promised. His chosen would become the mother of that chosen seed in whom God had ordained to bless the world throughout all the ages, even the Messiah, the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head.

Peradventure the woman might not see the value of the covenant, nor appreciate the glory of the promise. The things we have to preach of, such as life everlasting, union with Christ, resurrection from the dead, reigning with him for ever and ever, seem to the dull hearts of men to be as idle tales. Tell them of a high interest for their money, of large estates to be had for a venture, or of honours to be readily gained, and inventions to be found out, they open all their eyes and their ears, for here is something worth knowing; but the things of God, eternal, immortal, boundless — these are of no importance to them. They could not be induced to go from Ur to Canaan for such trifles as eternal life, and heaven, and God.

So you see our difficulty. Many disbelieve altogether, and others cavil and object. A greater number will not even listen to our story; and of those who do listen, most are careless, and others dally with it, and postpone the serious consideration. Alas! we speak to unwilling ears.

III. In the third place, I would ENLARGE UPON HIS VERY NATURAL SUGGESTION. This prudent steward said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: Must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?" If she will not come to Isaac, shall Isaac go down to her? This is the suggestion of the present hour: if the world will not come to Jesus, shall Jesus tone down his teachings to the world? In other words, if the world will not rise to the church, shall not the church go down to the world? Instead of bidding men to be converted, and come out from among sinners, and be separate from them, let us join with the ungodly world, enter into union with it, and so pervade it with our influence by allowing it to influence us. Let us have a Christian world.

To this end let us revise our doctrines. Some are old-fashioned, grim, severe, unpopular; let us drop them out. Use the old phrases so as to please the obstinately orthodox, but give them new meanings so as to win philosophical infidels, who are prowling around. Pare off the edges of unpleasant truths, and moderate the dogmatic tone of infallible revelation: say that Abraham and Moses made mistakes, and that the books which have been so long had in reverence are full of errors. Undermine the old faith, and bring in the new doubt; for the times are altered, and the spirit of the age suggests the abandonment of everything that is too severely righteous, and too surely of God.

The deceitful adulteration of doctrine is attended by a falsification of experience. Men are now told that they were born good, or were made so by their infant baptism, and so that great sentence, "Ye must be born again," is deprived of its force. Repentance is ignored, faith is a drug in the market as compared with "honest doubt," and mourning for sin and communion with God are dispensed with, to make way for entertainments, and Socialism, and politics of varying shades. A new creature in Christ Jesus is looked upon as a sour invention of bigoted Puritans. It is true, with the same breath they extol Oliver Cromwell; but then 1888 is not 1648. What was good and great three hundred years ago is mere cant to-day. That is what "modern thought" is telling us; and under its guidance all religion is being toned down. Spiritual religion is

despised, and a fashionable morality is set up in its place. Do yourself up tidily on Sunday; behave yourself; and above all, believe everything except what you read in the Bible, and you will be all right. Be fashionable, and think with those who profess to be scientific—this is the first and great commandment of the modern school; and the second is like unto it—do not be singular, but be as worldly as your neighbours. Thus is Isaac going down into Padan-aram: thus is the church going down to the world.

Men seem to say—It is of no use going on in the old way, fetching out one here and another there from the great mass. We want a quicker way. To wait till people are born again, and become followers of Christ, is a long process: let us abolish the separation between the regenerate and unregenerate. Come into the church, all of you, converted or unconverted. You have good wishes and good resolutions; that will do: don't trouble about more. It is true you do not believe the gospel, but neither do we. You believe something or other. Come along; if you do not believe anything, no matter; your "honest doubt" is better by far than faith. "But," say you, "nobody talks so." Possibly they do not use the same words, but this is the real meaning of the present-day religion; this is the drift of the times. I can justify the broadest statement I have made by the action or by the speech of certain ministers, who are treacherously betraying our holy religion under pretence of adapting it to this progressive age. The new plan is to assimilate the church to the world, and so include a larger area within its bounds. By semi-dramatic performances they make houses of prayer to approximate to the theatre; they turn their services into musical displays, and their sermons into political harangues or philosophical essays—in fact, they exchange the temple for the theatre, and turn the ministers of God into actors, whose business it is to amuse men. Is it not so, that the Lord's-day is becoming more and more a day of recreation or of idleness, and the Lord's house either a joss-house full of idols, or a political club, where there is more enthusiasm for a party than zeal for God? Ah me! the hedges are broken down, the walls are levelled, and to many there is henceforth, no church except as a portion of the world, no God except as an unknowable force by which the laws of nature work.

This, then, is the proposal. In order to win the world, the Lord Jesus must conform himself, his people, and his Word to the world. I will not dwell any longer on so loathsome a proposal.

IV. In the fourth place, NOTICE HIS MASTER'S OUTSPOKEN, BELIEVING REPUDIATION OF THE PROPOSAL. He says, shortly and sharply, "Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again." The Lord Jesus Christ heads that grand emigration party which has come right out from the world. Addressing his disciples, he says, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We are not of the world by birth, not of the world in life, not of the world in object, not of the world in spirit, not of the world in any respect whatever. Jesus, and those who are in him, constitute a new race. The proposal to go back to the world is abhorrent to our best instincts; yea, deadly to our noblest life. A voice from heaven cries, "Bring not my son thither again." Let not the people whom the Lord brought up out of Egypt return to the house of bondage; but let their children come out, and be separate, and the Lord Jehovah will be a Father unto them.

Notice how Abraham states the question. In effect, he argues it thus: this would be to forego the divine order. "For," says Abraham, "the Lord God of heaven took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred." What, then, if he brought Abraham out, is Isaac to return? This cannot be. Hitherto the way of God with his church has been to sever a people from the world to be his elect—a people formed for himself, who shall show forth his praise. Beloved, God's plan is not altered. He will still go on calling those whom he did predestinate. Do not let us fly in the teeth of that fact, and suppose that we can save men on a more wholesale scale by ignoring the distinction between the dead in sin and the living in Zion. If God had meant to bless the family at Padan-aram by letting his chosen ones dwell among them, why did he call Abraham out at all? If Isaac may do good by dwelling there, why did Abraham leave? If there is no need of a separate church now, what have we been at throughout all these ages? Has the martyr's blood been shed out of mere folly? Have confessors and reformers been mad when contending for doctrines which, it would seem, are of no great account? Brethren, there are two seeds—the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent—and the

difference will be maintained even to the end; neither must we ignore the distinction to please men.

For Isaac to go down to Nahor's house for a wife would be placing God second to a wife. Abraham begins at once with a reference to Jehovah, "the God of heaven"; for Jehovah was everything to him, and to Isaac also. Isaac would never renounce his walk with the living God that he might find a wife. Yet this apostasy is common enough nowadays. Men and women who profess godliness will quit what they profess to believe in order to get richer wives or husbands for themselves or their children. This mercenary conduct is without excuse. "Better society" is the cry—meaning more wealth and fashion. To the true man God is first—yea, all in all; but God is placed at the fag-end, and everything else is put before him by the base professor. In the name of God I call upon you who are faithful to God and to his truth, to stand fast, whatever you lose, and turn not aside, whatever you might gain. Count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. We want Abraham's spirit within us, and we shall have that when we have Abraham's faith.

Abraham felt that this would be to renounce the covenant promise. See how he puts it: "The God that took me from my father's house sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land." Are they, then, to leave the land, and go back to the place from which the Lord had called them? Brethren, we also are heirs of the promise of things not seen as yet. For the sake of this we walk by faith, and hence we become separate from those around us. We dwell among men as Abraham dwelt among the Canaanites; but we are of a distinct race: we are born with a new birth, live under different laws, and act from different motives. If we go back to the ways of worldlings, and are numbered with them, we have renounced the covenant of our God, the promise is no longer ours, and the eternal heritage is in other hands. Do you not know this? The moment the church says, "I will be as the world," she has doomed herself with the world. When the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose, then the flood came, and swept them all away. So will it again happen should the world take the church into its arms: then shall come some overwhelming judgment, and, it may be, a deluge of devouring fire. The covenant promise and the covenant

heritage are no longer ours if we go down to the world and quit our sojourning with the Lord.

Besides, dear friends, no good can come of trying to conform to the world. Suppose the servant's policy could have been adopted, and Isaac had gone down to Nahor's house, what would have been the motive? To spare Rebekah the pain of separating from her friends and the trouble of travelling. If those things could have kept her back, what would she have been worth to Isaac? The test of separation was wholesome, and by no means ought it to be omitted. She is a poor wife who would not take a journey to reach her husband. And all the converts that the church will ever make by softening down its doctrine, and by becoming worldly, will not be worth one bad farthing a gross. When we get them, the next question will be, "How can we get rid of them?" They would be of no earthly use to us. It swelled the number of Israelites when they came out of Egypt that a great number of the lower order of Egyptians came out with them. Yes, but that mixed multitude became the plague of Israel in the wilderness, and we read that "the mixt multitude fell a lusting." The Israelites were bad enough, but it was the mixed multitude that always led the way in murmuring. Why is there such spiritual death to-day? Why is false doctrine so rampant in the churches? It is because we have ungodly people in the church and in the ministry. Eagerness for numbers, and especially eagerness to include respectable people, has adulterated many churches, and made them lax in doctrine and practice, and fond of silly amusements. These are the people who despise a prayer-meeting, but rush to see "living waxworks" in their schoolrooms. God save us from converts who are made by lowering the standard, and tarnishing the spiritual glory of the church! No, no; if Isaac is to have a wife worthy of him, she will come away from Laban and the rest, and she will not mind a journey on camel-back. True converts are never daunted by truth or holiness—these, in fact, are the things which charm them.

Besides, Abraham felt that there could be no reason for taking Isaac down there, for the Lord would assuredly find him a wife. Abraham said, "He shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence." Are you afraid that preaching the gospel will not win souls? Are you despondent as to success in God's way? Is this why you pine for

clever oratory? Is this why you must have music, and architecture, and flowers, and millinery? After all, is it by might and by power, and not by the Spirit of God? It is even so in the opinion of many. Brethren beloved, there are many things which I might allow to other worshippers which I have denied myself in conducting the worship of this congregation. I have long worked out before your very eyes the experiment of the unaided attractiveness of the gospel of Jesus. Our service is severely plain. No man ever comes hither to gratify his eye with art, or his ear with music. I have set before you, these many years, nothing but Christ crucified, and the simplicity of the gospel; yet where will you find such a crowd as this gathered together this morning? Where will you find such a multitude as this meeting, Sabbath after Sabbath, for five-and-thirty years? I have shown you nothing but the cross, the cross without the flowers of oratory, the cross without the blue lights of superstition or excitement, the cross without diamonds of ecclesiastical rank, the cross without the buttresses of a boastful science. It is abundantly sufficient to attract men first to itself, and afterwards to eternal life! In this house we have proved successfully, these many years, this great truth, that the gospel plainly preached will gain an audience, convert sinners, and build up and sustain a church. We beseech the people of God to mark that there is no need to try doubtful expedients and questionable methods. God will save by the gospel still: only let it be the gospel in its purity. This grand old sword will cleave a man's chine, and split a rock in halves. How is it that it does so little of its old conquering work? I will tell you. Do you see this scabbard of artistic work, so wonderfully elaborated? Full many keep the sword in this scabbard, and therefore its edge never gets to its work. Pull off that scabbard. Fling that fine sheath to Hades, and then see how, in the Lord's hands, that glorious two-handed sword will mow down fields of men as mowers level the grass with their scythes. There is no need to go down to Egypt for help. To invite the devil to help Christ is shameful. Please God, we shall see prosperity yet, when the church of God is resolved never to seek it except in God's own way.

V. And now, fifthly, observe HIS RIGHTEOUS ABSOLUTION OF HIS SERVANT. "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again."

When we lie a-dying, if we have faithfully preached the gospel, our conscience will not accuse us for having kept closely to it: we shall not mourn that we did not play the fool or the politician in order to increase our congregation. Oh, no! our Master will give us full absolution, even if few be gathered in, so long as we have been true to him. "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only bring not my son thither again." Do not try the dodges which debase religion. Keep to the simple gospel; and if the people are not converted by it, you will be clear. My dear hearers, how much I long to see you saved! But I would not belie my Lord, even to win your souls, if they could be so won. The true servant of God is responsible for diligence and faithfulness; but he is not responsible for success or non-success. Results are in God's hands. If that dear child in your class is not converted, yet if you have set before him the gospel of Jesus Christ with loving, prayerful earnestness, you shall not be without your reward. If I preach from my very soul the grand truth that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will save my hearers, and if I persuade and entreat them to believe in Jesus unto eternal life; if they will not do so, their blood will lie upon their own heads. When I go back to my Master, if I have faithfully told out his message of free grace and dying love, I shall be clear. I have often prayed that I might be able to say at the last what George Fox could so truly say: "I am clear, I am clear!" It is my highest ambition to be clear of the blood of all men. I have preached God's truth, so far as I know it, and I have not been ashamed of its peculiarities. That I might not stultify my testimony I have cut myself clear of those who err from the faith, and even from those who associate with them. What more can I do to be honest with you? If, after all, men will not have Christ, and his gospel, and his rule, it is their own concern. If Rebekah had not come to Isaac she would have lost her place in the holy line. My beloved hearer, will you have Jesus Christ or not? He has come into the world to save sinners, and he casts out none. Will you accept him? Will you trust him? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Will you believe him? Will you be baptized into his name? If so, salvation is yours; but if not, he himself hath said it, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Oh, do not expose yourselves to that damnation! Or, if you are set upon it; then, when the great white throne shall be seen in yonder skies, and the day of wrath has come, do me the justice to acknowledge that I bade you flee to Jesus, and

that I did not amuse you with novel theories. I have brought neither flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, nor any other kind of music to please your ears, but I have set Christ crucified before you, and bidden you believe and live. If you refuse to accept the substitution of Christ, you have refused your own mercies. Clear me in that day of all complicity with the novel inventions of deluded men. As for my Lord, I pray of him grace to be faithful to the end, both to his truth, and to your souls. Amen.

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Confession of Sin--A Sermon With Seven Texts

My sermon this morning will have seven texts, and yet I pledge myself that there shall be but three different words in the whole of them; for it so happens that the seven texts are all alike, occurring in seven different portions of God's holy Word. I shall require, however, to use the whole of them to exemplify different cases; and I must request those of you who have brought your Bibles with you to refer to the texts as I shall mention them.

The subject of this morning's discourse will be this—CONFESSIO OF SIN. We know that this is absolutely necessary to salvation. Unless there be a true and hearty confession of our sins to God, we have no promise that we shall find mercy through the blood of the Redeemer. "Whosoever confesseth his sins and forsaketh them shall find mercy." But there is no promise in the Bible to the man who will not confess his sins. Yet, as upon every point of Scripture there is a liability of being deceived, so more especially in the matter of confession of sin. There be many who make a confession, and a confession before God, who notwithstanding, receive no blessing, because their confession has not in it certain marks which are

required by God to prove it genuine and sincere, and which demonstrate it to be the work of the Holy Spirit. My text this morning consists of three words, "I have sinned." And you will see how these words, in the lips of different men, indicate very different feelings. While one says, "I have sinned," and receives forgiveness; another we shall meet with says, "I have sinned," and goes his way to blacken himself with worse crimes than before, and dive into greater depths of sin than heretofore he had discovered.

The Hardened Sinner.

PHARAOH - I have sinned. - Exodus 9:27

I. The first case I shall bring before you is that of the HARDENED SINNER, who, when under terror, says, "I have sinned." And you will find the text in the book of Exodus, the 9th chap. and 27th verse: "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked."

But why this confession from the lips of the haughty tyrant? He was not often wont to humble himself before Jehovah. Why doth the proud one bow himself? You will judge of the value of his confession when you hear the circumstances under which it was made. "And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So that there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation." "Now," says Pharaoh, whilst the thunder is rolling through the sky, while the lightning-flashes are setting the very ground on fire, and while the hail is descending in big lumps of ice, now, says he, "I have sinned." He is but a type and specimen of multitudes of the same class. How many a hardened rebel on shipboard, when the timbers are strained and creaking, when the mast is broken, and the ship is drifting before the gale, when the hungry waves are opening their mouths to swallow the ship up alive and quick as those that go into the pit—how many a hardened sailor has then bowed his knee, with tears in his eyes, and cried, "I have sinned!" But of what avail and of what value was his

confession? The repentance that was born in the storm died in the calm; that repentance of his that was begotten amidst the thunder and the lightning, ceased so soon as all was hushed in quiet, and the man who was a pious mariner when on board ship, became the most wicked and abominable of sailors when he placed his foot on *terra firma*. How often, too, have we seen this in a storm of thunder and lightning? Many a man's cheek is blanched when he hears the thunder rolling; the tears start to his eyes, and he cries, "O God, I have sinned!" while the rafters of his house are shaking, and the very ground beneath him reeling at the voice of God which is full of majesty. But alas, for such a repentance! When the sun again shines, and the black clouds are withdrawn, sin comes again upon the man, and he becomes worse than before. How many of the same sort of confessions, too, have we seen in times of cholera, and fever, and pestilence! Then our churches have been crammed with hearers, who, because so many funerals have passed their doors, or so many have died in the street, could not refrain from going up to God's house to confess their sins. And under that visitation, when one, two, and three have been lying dead in the house, or next door, how many have thought they would really turn to God! But, alas! when the pestilence had done its work, conviction ceased; and when the bell had tolled the last time for a death caused by cholera, then their hearts ceased to beat with penitence, and their tears did flow no more.

Have I any such here this morning? I doubt not I have hardened persons who would scorn the very idea of religion, who would count me a cant and hypocrite if I should endeavour to press it home upon them, but who know right well that religion is true, and who feel it in their times of terror! If I have such here this morning, let me solemnly say to them, "Sirs, you have forgotten the feelings you had in your hours of alarm; but, remember, God has not forgotten the vows you then made." Sailor, you said if God would spare you to see the land again, you would be his servant; you are not so, you have lied against God, you have made him a false promise, for you have never kept the vow which your lips did utter. You said, on a bed of sickness, that if he would spare your life you would never again sin as you did before; but here you are, and this week's sins shall speak for themselves. You are no better than you were before your sickness. Couldst thou lie to thy fellow-man, and yet go unreprieved? And

thinkest thou that thou wilt lie against God, and yet go unpunished? No; the vow, however rashly made, is registered in heaven; and though it be a vow which man cannot perform, yet, as it is a vow which he has made himself, and made voluntarily too, he shall be punished for the non-keeping it; and God shall execute vengeance upon him at last, because he said he would turn from his ways, and then when the blow was removed he did it not. A great outcry has been raised of late against tickets-of-leave; I have no doubt there are some men here, who before high heaven stand in the same position as the ticket-of-leave men stand to our government. They were about to die, as they thought; they promised good behaviour if they might be spared, and they are here to-day on ticket-of-leave in this world: and how have they fulfilled their promise? Justice might raise the same outcry against them as they do against the burglars so constantly let loose upon us. The avenging angel might say, "O God, these men said, if they were spared they would be so much better; if anything they are worse. How have they violated their promise, and how have they brought down divine wrath upon their heads!" This is the first style of penitence; and it is a style I hope none of you will imitate, for it is utterly worthless. It is of no use for you to say, "I have sinned," merely under the influence of terror, and then to forget it afterwards.

The Double-minded Man.

BALAAM - I have sinned. - Numbers 22:34

II. Now for a second text. I beg to introduce to you another character—the *double-minded man*, who says, "I have sinned," and feels that he has, and feels it deeply too, but who is so worldly-minded that he "loves the wages of unrighteousness." The character I have chosen to illustrate this, is that of Balaam. Turn to the book of Numbers, the 22nd chap. and the 34th verse: "And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned."

"I have sinned," said Balaam; but yet he went on with his sin afterwards. One of the strangest characters of the whole world is Balaam. I have often marvelled at that man; he seems really in another sense to have come up to the lines of Ralph Erskine -

"To good and evil equal bent,

And both a devil and a saint."

For he did seem to be so. At times no man could speak more eloquently and more truthfully, and at other times he exhibited the most mean and sordid covetousness that could disgrace human nature. Think you see Balaam; he stands upon the brow of the hill, and there lie the multitudes of Israel at his feet; he is bidden to curse them, and he cries, "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?" And God opening his eyes, he begins to tell even about the coming of Christ, and he says, "I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him, but not nigh." And then he winds up his oration by saying—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" And ye will say of that man, he is a hopeful character. Wait till he has come off the brow of the hill, and ye will hear him give the most diabolical advice to the king of Moab which it was even possible for Satan himself to suggest. Said he to the king, "You cannot overthrow these people in battle, for God is with them; try and entice them from their God." And ye know how with wanton lusts they of Moab tried to entice the children of Israel from allegiance to Jehovah; so that this man seemed to have the voice of an angel at one time, and yet the very soul of a devil in his bowels. He was a terrible character; he was a man of two things, a man who went all the way with two things to a very great extent. I know the Scripture says, "No man can serve two masters." Now this is often misunderstood. Some read it, "No man can *serve two* masters." Yes he can; he can serve three or four. The way to read it is this: "No man can serve two *masters*," They cannot both be masters. He can serve two, but they cannot both be his master. A man can serve two who are not his masters, or twenty either; he may live for twenty different purposes, but he cannot live for more than one master purpose—there can only be one master purpose in his soul. But Balaam laboured to serve two; it was like the people of whom it was said, "They feared the Lord, and served other gods." Or like Rufus, who was a loaf of the same leaven; for you know our old king Rufus painted God on one side of his shield, and the devil on the other, and had underneath, the motto: "Ready for both; catch who can." There are many such, who are ready for both. They meet a minister, and how pious and holy they are; on the Sabbath they are the most respectable and upright people in the world, as you would think; indeed they effect a drawling in their speech, which they think to be eminently

religious. But on a week day, if you want to find the greatest rogues and cheats, they are some of those men who are so sanctimonious in their piety. Now, rest assured, my hearers, that no confession of sin can be genuine, unless it be a whole hearted one. It is of no use for you to say, "I have sinned," and then keep on sinning. "I have sinned," say you, and it is a fair, fair face you show; but, alas! alas! for the sin you will go away and commit. Some men seem to be born with two characters. I remarked when in the library at Trinity College, Cambridge, a very fine statue of Lord Byron. The librarian said to me, "Stand here, sir." I looked, and I said, "What a fine intellectual countenance! What a grand genius he was!" "Come here," he said, "to the other side." "Ah! what a demon! There stands the man that could defy the deity." He seemed to have such a scowl and such a dreadful leer in his face; even as Milton would have painted Satan when he said—"Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven." I turned away and said to the librarian, "Do you think the artist designed this?" "Yes," he said, "he wished to picture the two characters—the great, the grand, the almost superhuman genius that he possessed, and yet the enormous mass of sin that was in his soul." There are some men here of the same sort. I dare say, like Balaam, they would overthrow everything in argument with their enchantments; they could work miracles; and yet at the same time there is something about them which betrays a horrid character of sin, as great as that which would appear to be their character for righteousness. Balaam, you know, offered sacrifices to God upon the altar of Baal: that was just the type of his character. So many do; they offer sacrifices to God on the shrine of Mammon; and whilst they will give to the building of a church, and distribute to the poor, they will at the other door of their counting-house grind the poor for bread, and press the very blood out of the widow, that they may enrich themselves. Ah! it is idle and useless for you to say, "I have sinned," unless you mean it from your heart. That double minded man's confession is of no avail.

The Insincere Man.

SAUL - I have sinned. - 1 Samuel 15:24

III. And now a third character, and a third text. In the first book of Samuel, the 15th chap. and 24th verse: "And Saul said unto Samuel, I

have sinned."

Here is the *insincere man*—the man who is not like Balaam, to a certain extent sincere in two things; but the man who is just the opposite—who has no prominent point in his character at all, but is moulded everlastingly by the circumstances that are passing over his head. Such a man was *Saul*. Samuel reproved him, and he said, "I have sinned." But he did not mean what he said: for if you read the whole verse you will find him saying, "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words; *because I feared the people:*" which was a lying excuse. Saul never feared anybody; he was always ready enough to do his own will—he was the despot. And just before he had pleaded another excuse, that he had saved the bullocks and lambs to offer to Jehovah, and therefore both excuses could not have been true. You remember, my friends, that the most prominent feature in the character of Saul. was his insincerity. One day he fetched David from his bed, as bethought, to put him to death in his house. Another time he declares, "God forbid that I should do aught against thee, my son David." One day, because David saved his life, he said, "Thou art more righteous than I; I will do so no more." The day before he had gone out to fight against his own son-in-law, in order to slay him. Sometimes Saul was among the prophets, easily turned into a prophet, and then afterwards among the witches; sometimes in one place, and then another, and insincere in everything. How many such we have in every Christian assembly; men who are very easily moulded! Say what you please to them, they always agree with you. They have affectionate dispositions, very likely a tender conscience; but then the conscience is so remarkably tender, that when touched it seems to give, and you are afraid to probe deeper,—it heals as soon it is wounded. I think I used the very singular comparison once before, which I must use again: there are some men who seem to have india-rubber hearts. If you do but touch them, there is an impression made at once; but then it is of no use, it soon restores itself to its original character. You may press them whatever way you wish, they are so elastic you can always effect your purpose; but then they are not fixed in their character, and soon return to be what they were before. O sirs, too many of you have done the same; you have bowed your heads in church, and said, "We have erred and strayed from thy ways;" and you did not mean what you said.

You have come to your minister; you have said, "I repent of my sins;" you did not then feel you were a sinner; you only said it to please him. And now you attend the house of God; no one more impressible than you; the tear will run down your cheek in a moment, but yet, notwithstanding all that, the tear is dried as quickly as it is brought forth, and you remain to all intents and purposes the same as you were before. To say, "I have sinned," in an unmeaning manner, is worse than worthless, for it is a mockery of God thus to confess with insincerity of heart.

I have been brief upon this character; for it seemed to touch upon that of Balaam; though any thinking man will at once see there was a real contrast between Saul and Balaam, even though there is an affinity between the two. Balaam was the great bad man, great in all he did; Saul was little in everything except in stature, little in his good and little in his vice; and he was too much of a fool to be desperately bad, though too wicked to be at any time good: while Balaam was great in both: the man who could at one time defy Jehovah, and yet at another time could say, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more."

The Doubtful Penitent.

ACHAN - I have sinned. - Joshua 7:20

IV. And now I have to introduce to you a very interesting case; it is the case of the doubtful penitent, the case of *Achan*, in the book of Joshua, the 7th chap. and the 20th verse:—"And Achan answered Joshua, indeed I have sinned."

You know that Achan stole some of the prey from the city of Jericho—that he was discovered by lot, and put to death. I have singled this case out as the representative of some whose characters are doubtful on their death beds; who do repent apparently, but of whom the most we can say is, that we hope their souls are saved at last, but indeed we cannot tell. Achan, you are aware, was stoned with stones, for defiling Israel. But I find in the Mishna, an old Jewish exposition of the Bible, these words, "Joshua said to Achan, the Lord shall trouble thee *this* day." And the note upon it is—He said *this* day, implying that he was only to be troubled in this life, by

being stoned to death, but that God would have mercy on his soul, seeing that he had made a full confession of his sin." And I, too, am inclined, from reading the chapter, to concur in the idea of my venerable and now glorified predecessor, Dr. Gill, in believing that Achan really was saved, although he was put to death for the crime, as an example. For you will observe how kindly Joshua spoke to him. He said, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." And you find Achan making a very full confession. He says, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." It seems so full a confession, that if I might be allowed to judge, I should say, "I hope to meet Achan the sinner, before the throne of God." But I find Matthew Henry has no such opinion; and many other expositors consider that as his body was destroyed, so was his soul. I have, therefore, selected his case, as being one of doubtful repentance. Ah! dear friends, it has been my lot to stand by many a death-bed, and to see many such a repentance as this; I have seen the man, when worn to a skeleton, sustained by pillows in his bed; and he has said, when I have talked to him of judgment to come, "Sir, I feel I have been guilty, but Christ is good; I trust in him." And I have said within myself, "I believe the man's soul is safe." But I have always come away with the melancholy reflection that I had no proof of it, beyond his own words; for it needs proof in acts and in future life, in order to sustain any firm conviction of a man's salvation. You know that great fact, that a physician once kept a record of a thousand persons who thought they were dying, and whom he thought were penitents; he wrote their names down in a book as those, who, if they had died, would go to heaven; they did not die, they lived; and he says that out of the whole thousand he had not three persons who turned out well afterwards, but they returned to their sins again, and were as bad as ever. Ah! dear friends, I hope none of you will have such a death-bed repentance as that; I hope your minister or your parents will not have to stand by your bedside, and then go away and say, "Poor fellow, I hope he is saved. But alas! death-bed repentances are such flimsy things; such poor, such trivial grounds of hope, that I am

afraid, after all, his soul may be lost." Oh! to die with a full assurance; oh! to die with an abundant entrance, leaving a testimony behind that we have departed this life in peace! That is a far happier way than to die in a doubtful manner, lying sick, hovering between two worlds, and neither ourselves nor yet our friends knowing to which of the two worlds we are going. May God grant us grace to give in our lives evidences of true conversion, that our case may not be doubtful!

The Repentance of Despair.

JUDAS - I have sinned. - Matthew 27:4

V. I shall not detain you too long, I trust, but I must now give you another bad case; the worst of all. It is the REPENTANCE OF DESPAIR. Will you turn to the 27th chap. of Matthew, and the 4th verse? There you have a dreadful case of the repentance of despair. You will recognize the character the moment I read the verse: "And Judas said, I have sinned." Yes, Judas the traitor, who had betrayed his Master, when he saw that his Master was condemned, "repented, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood, and cast down the pieces in the temple, and went" and what?—" and *hanged himself*." Here is the worst kind of repentance of all; in fact, I know not that I am justified in calling it repentance; it must be called remorse of conscience. But Judas did confess his sin, and then went and hanged himself. Oh! that dreadful, that terrible, that hideous confession of despair. Have you never seen it? If you never have, then bless God that you never were called to see such a sight. I have seen it once in my life, I pray God I may never see it again,—the repentance of the man who sees death staring him in the face, and who says, "I have sinned." You tell him that Christ has died for sinners; and he answers, "There is no hope for me; I have cursed God to his face; I have defied him; my day of grace I know is past; my conscience is seared with a hot iron; I am dying, and I know I shall be lost!" Such a case as that happened long ago, you know, and is on record—the case of Francis Spira—the most dreadful case, perhaps, except that of Judas, which is upon record in the memory of man. Oh! my hearers, will any of you have such a repentance? If you do, it will be a beacon to all persons who sin in future; if you have such a repentance as that, it will be a warning to generations

yet to come. In the life of Benjamin Keach—and he also was once of my predecessors—I find the case of a man who had been a professor of religion, but had departed from the profession, and had gone into awful sin. When he came to die, Keach, with many other friends, went to see him, but they could never stay with him above five minutes at a time; for he said, "Get ye gone; it is of no use your coming to me; I have sinned away the Holy Ghost; I am like Esau, I have sold my birthright, and though I seek it carefully with tears, I can never find it again." And then he would repeat dreadful words, like these: 'My mouth is filled with gravel stones, and I drink wormwood day and night. Tell me not tell me not of Christ! I know he is a Saviour, but I hate him and he hates me. I know I must die; I know I must perish!' And then followed doleful cries, and hideous noises, such as none could bear. They returned again in his placid moments only to stir him up once more, and make him cry out in his despair, "I am lost ! I am lost ! It is of no use your telling me anything about it!" Ah! I there may be a man here who may have such a death as that; let me warn him, ere he come to it ; and may God the Holy Spirit grant that that man may be turned unto God, and made a true penitent, and then he need not have any more fear; for he who has had his sins washed away in a Saviour's blood, need not have any remorse for his sins, for they are pardoned through the Redeemer.

The Repentance of the Saint.

JOB - I have sinned. - Job 7:20

VI. And now I come into daylight. I have been taking you through dark and dreary confessions; I shall detain you there no longer, but bring you out to the two good confessions which I have to read to you. The first is that of Job in 7th chap., at the 20th verse: "I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?" This is the *repentance of the saint*. Job was a saint, but he sinned. This is the repentance of the man who is a child of God already, an acceptable repentance before God. But as I intend to dwell upon this in the evening, I shall now leave it, for fear of wearying you. David was a specimen of this kind of repentance, and I would have you carefully study his penitential psalms, the language of which is ever full of weeping humility and earnest penitence.

The Blessed Confession.

THE PRODIGAL - I have sinned. - Luke 15:18

VII. I come now to the last instance, which I shall mention; it is the case of the prodigal. In Luke xv. 18, we find the prodigal says: "Father I have sinned." Oh, here is *a blessed confession!* Here is that which proves a man to be a regenerate character—"Father, I have sinned." Let me picture the scene. There is the prodigal; he has run away from a good home and a kind father, and he has spent all his money with harlots, and now he has none left. He goes to his old companions, and asks them for relief. They laugh him to scorn. "Oh," says he, "you have drunk my wine many a day; I have always stood paymaster to you in all our revelries; will you not help me?" "Get you gone" they say; and he is turned out of doors. He goes to all his friends with whom he had associated, but no man gives him anything. At last a certain citizen of the country said,—"You want something to do, do you? Well go and feed my swine." The poor prodigal, the son of a rich landowner, who had a great fortune of his own, has to go out to feed swine; and he a Jew too!—the worst employment (to his mind,) to which he could be put. See him there, in squalid rags, feeding swine; and what are his wages? Why, so little, that he "would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine eat, but no man gave to him." Look, there he is, with the fellow commoners of the sty, in all his mire and filthiness. Suddenly a thought put there by the good Spirit, strikes his mind. "How is it," says he, "that in my father's house there is bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." Off he goes. He begs his way from town to town. Sometimes he gets a lift on a coach, perhaps, but at other times he goes trudging his way up barren hills and down desolate vales, all alone. And now at last he comes to the hill outside the village, and sees his father's house down below. There it is; the old poplar tree against it, and there are the stacks round which he and his brother used to run and play; and at the sight of the old homestead all the feelings and associations of his former life rush upon him, and tears run down his cheeks, and he is almost ready to run away again. He says "I wonder whether father's

dead? I dare say mother broke her heart when I went away; I always was her favorite. And if they are either of them alive, they will never see me again; they will shut the door in my face. What am I to do? I cannot go back, I am afraid to go forward." And while he was thus deliberating, his father had been walking on the housetop, looking out for his son; and though he could not see his father, his father could see him. Well, the father comes down stairs with all his might, runs up to him, and whilst he is thinking of running away, his father's arms are round his neck, and he falls-to kissing him, like a loving father indeed, and then the son begins,—"Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," and he was going to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." But his father puts his hand on his mouth. "No more of that," says he; "I forgive you all; you shall not say anything about being a hired servant—I will have none of that. Come along," says he, "come in, poor prodigal. Ho!" says he to the servants, "bring hither the best robe, and put it on him, and put shoes on his poor bleeding feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry." Oh, what a precious reception for one of the chief of sinners! Good Matthew Henry says—"His father saw him, there were eyes of mercy; he ran to meet him, there were legs of mercy; he put his arms round his neck, there were arms of mercy; he kissed him, there were kisses of mercy; he said to him—there were words of mercy,—Bring hither the best robe, there were deeds of mercy, wonders of mercy—all mercy. Oh, what a God of mercy he is."

Now, prodigal, you do the same. Has God put it into your heart? There are many who have been running away a long time now. Does God say "return?" Oh, I bid you return, then, for as surely as ever thou dost return he will take thee in. There never was a poor sinner yet who came to Christ, whom Christ turned away. If he turns you away, you will be the first. Oh, if you could but try him! "Ah, sir, I am so black, so filthy, so vile." Well come along with you—you cannot be blacker than the prodigal. Come to your Father's house, and as surely as he is God he will keep his word—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

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Confession of Sin

"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."—Psalm 32:5.

David's grief for sin was long and terrible. Its effects were visible upon his outward frame; "his bones waxed old;" "his moisture was turned into the drought of summer." No remedy could he find, until he made a full confession before the throne of the heavenly grace. He tells us, that for a time he kept silence, and then his heart became more and more filled with grief: like some mountain tarn whose outlet is blocked up, his soul was swollen with torrents of sorrow. He dreaded to confront his sin. He fashioned excuses; he endeavoured to divert his thoughts, by giving his mind to the cares of his kingdom or the pleasures of his court, but it was all to no purpose; the rankling arrow made the wound bleed anew, and made the gash more wide and deep every day. Like a festering sore his anguish gathered and increased, and as he would not use the lancet of confession, his spirits became more and more full of torment, and there was no rest in his bones because of sin. At last it came to this, that he must return unto his God in humble penitence, or he must die outright; so he hastened to the mercy-seat, and there unrolled the volume of his iniquities before the eye of the all-seeing One, acknowledging all the evil of his ways in language such as you read in the fifty-first and other penitential Psalms. Having done this, a work so simple and yet so difficult to pride, he received at once the token of divine forgiveness; the bones which had been broken were made to rejoice, and he came forth from his closet to sing the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.

See, dear friends, the value of a truthful grace-wrought confession of sin; it is to be prized above all price, for he that confesseth his sin and forsaketh it, shall find mercy. Now, it is a well known fact, that when God

is pleased to bestow upon men any choice gift, Satan, who is the god of counterfeits, is sure very soon to produce a base imitation, true in appearance, but worthless in reality: his object is deception, and full often he succeeds. How many there are who have made a worthless confession, and yet are relying upon it as though it were a work of grace; they have come before God as a matter of form, and have said, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners;" and having so done, imagine that they have received the divine absolution, when alas! alas! it is easy to be deceived, and difficult to cultivate within one's heart that genuine repentance, which is the work of God the Holy Ghost.

May God grant us his gracious assistance while we describe two widely different sorts of confession which have been very vividly brought before us during the past week; and then we will have a few words upon the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy which is vested in God, who gives forgiveness to those whose confession is sincere.

I. Let me set before you TWO SORTS OF CONFESSION.

At this present moment, unhappily, two persons are lying under sentence of death, for murders of the most atrocious character. Without wishing to say a single word with regard to the state of soul of either of these persons—for into that it is no business of mine to pry—it seems to me that the published reports of their cases, may very properly furnish us with types of two sorts of persons. It is remarkable that two such cases as those of Dr. Pritchard and Constance Kent should be before the public eye at the same moment and that the points of contrast in their confession should be so exceedingly clear. I cannot but hope and pray that we may gather some few lessons of warning from crimes which have no doubt exercised a great influence for evil upon the masses of our country.

The confession which has been made by Dr. PRITCHARD, maybe taken as a specimen of those which are full often made by impenitent sinners, which can never be regarded as acceptable before the throne of the Most High. Here is a man who is accused of the atrocious crime of murdering his wife and his mother-in-law, and when he answers to the indictment, we are not astonished to hear him plead, "Not Guilty!" I am far from

being severe upon him for so pleading, but viewing him as a type, I would remind you that thousands of those who call themselves "miserable sinners" in our public services, if they were called to plead before the bar of God, would have the effrontery to say "Not Guilty." They might not use the words, very probably they would use terms having the opposite meaning, but their heart-plea would be, "not guilty." If they had the law of God explained to them and they were questioned upon each commandment, "Have you broken this? Have you broken that?" though ready enough to confess in the gross that they have sinned, when it came to details they would be for denying all. We have heard of a woman who readily allowed that she was a sinner "O yes, sir, we are all sinners. Just so, sir." But when the visitor sat down and opened the book, and pointing to the commandment, said, "Have you ever had any other God save the Lord?" She did not know that she ever had. "Had she ever taken God's name in vain?" "O dear no, sir, I never did anything so wicked." Each precept was explained, and she very positively claimed that she had not broken it. She had not violated the Sabbath; she had not killed anybody; she had not committed adultery; she had not borne false witness, or coveted anything; she was altogether, in detail, innocent, though in the gross she was quite willing to say as other people, "Oh, yes! I am a sinner, of course, sir, we are all sinners!" which, being interpreted, means, "I am ready to say anything you like to put into my mouth, but I do not believe a syllable of it." The inward speech of the unconverted man is, "I am not guilty." Ask the unhumiliated transgressor, "Art thou worthy of God's wrath?" and his proud heart replies, "I am not." "Art thou worthy to be cast away for ever from God's presence on account of sin?" and the unbroken, uncontrite soul replies. "I am not. I am no thief, nor adulterer, nor extortioner; I have not sinned as yon publican has done. I thank God that I am not as other men are." Man pleads Not Guilty, and yet all the while within his heart, so proud and boastful, there may readily be discerned abundant evidence of abounding sin. The leprosy is white upon his unclean brow, and yet the man claims to be sound and whole. If there were no other evidence against us, the very pride which boasts of innocence would be sufficient to convict us of sin, and will be so when we are taught right reason by the Holy Spirit.

The guilty man whose case we are now looking upon as an illustration,

endeavoured, as a means of defense for himself, to involve another in the dreadful guilt and punishment of his atrocious sin. There were very distinct signs that he would have been perfectly satisfied if the woman who had ministered to his sinful pleasures had been accused and condemned of the crime of which he alone was guilty. Certainly this is the case with the great mass of those who are compelled to acknowledge their sins. Our first parent could not deny that he had taken of the forbidden fruit, but he laid the blame upon Eve: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." Ah Adam! where is thy manliness, where thy love to thy spouse, that thou wouldst involve in the ruin her who was bone of thy bone so as to escape thyself? And she! she will not take the blame for a moment, but it is the serpent; she casts all the sin on him. In this first ease of sin, the attempt was less atrocious than in that of the prisoner before us, because there was real guilt both in the woman and in the serpent, while it does not appear that the servant girl in Pritchard's family had any share in the poisoning. However, the human heart is such, that if we could really throw all the shame and blame of sin upon another who was perfectly innocent, there would be a strong temptation to do so if we might by such means be considered innocent. Nay, let me show that Adam virtually did that, for he said "The woman whom thou gavest me," thus virtually laying the blame of his rebellious deed upon God himself. And God, what hand had he in Adam's eating of the fruit of the accursed tree? It was an act of Adam's free will, he did as he pleased concerning it, and the most holy God could in no sense be made partaker of his transgression. Yet, think of it! He would sooner that the great God, who is hymned of angels as the thrice Holy One, should bear the fault of his iniquity than he would bear it himself. Such are we naturally. We may bend the knee and say we are miserable sinners, but unless the grace of God has taught us to make true confession we are always for shifting the burden to some other shoulder, and making it out that alter all, though nominally miserable sinners, we are not so bad as a great many other people, and have a deal saddled upon us which really is no fault of ours, but belongs to providence, to fate, to our fellow men, to the devil, to the weather, and I know not what besides.

The convicted criminal who stands before us in our picture made no

confession whatever until the case was proved and sentence pronounced. The case was clear enough, but he did his best to make it difficult; had he been completely free from the crime, his bearing and tone could have been scarcely more confident when asserting his innocence. I admit that it was very natural that he should not aid to convict himself, it is because it is so natural that the man serves so admirably as a representative of human nature when it makes its impenitent confessions. When it could not avail the wretch to withhold the truth, when facts were brought out so clear, when the jury had decided, when the judge had pronounced sentence, then, and not till then, he yielded to tears and entreaties, and proffered a confession, such as it was. So is it ever with unregenerate humanity; though cognizant of sin, we only acknowledge before the Lord that which is too glaring to be denied. Sin may be held up before the eyes of the man who is guilty of it, and often he will disown his own offspring, or assert that it is not what God's Word declares it to be. Holy Scripture accuses us of a thousand sins which we practically claim to be innocent of, for we flatter ourselves that the Bible puts too harsh a construction upon our actions, and that we are not what it declares us to be. When our fellow-men concur in censuring our fault we are compelled to blush, but of what value is a repentance which owes its existence to the overwhelming testimony of our fellow offenders against us. This force-work is far removed from the free and ready acknowledgments of a man whose heart is touched by divine grace and melted by the love of Jesus. When men are upon their dying beds, when the ghosts of their iniquities haunt them, when the red hand of guilt draws the curtain, when they can almost hear the sentence of the last judgment. then they will make a confession, but may we not fear that it is of little value, since it is wrung and extorted from them by fear of hell and horror of the wrath to come. True repentance wrought in us by the Holy Ghost drops as freely as honey droppeth from the comb, but merely natural confessions are like the worst of the wine squeezed by main force from the dregs. O dear friends, God deliver you from ungracious confessions of sin, and enable you sincerely to repent at the foot of Jesus' cross!

When the confession came, in the case before us, it was very partial. He had killed one, but he professed himself guiltless of the other's death. Villain as he was, on his own shewing, he could go the length of owning

half his crime, but then he started back and acted the liar. No, she died by accident, and he, to avoid being charged unjustly—innocent creature as he was—had put the poison in the bottle afterwards. He had the wickedness to feign a wonder that his tale was not believed, and likened those who doubted him to those who would not believe the Lord of glory. Now, the confessions of unregenerate men are precisely of this sort. They will go the length of owning, if they have been drinking, or if they have broken the laws of the state, "yes, we have offended here," but the great mass of sins against God are not confessed, nor allowed to be sins at all. Men will often lay a stress upon sins of which they are not conspicuously guilty, and omit those which are the most glaring. What unrenewed man thinks it a sin to forget God, to forsake the Creator's fountain of living waters for the cisterns of the creature, or to live without God in the world? And yet, these are the most crying of all iniquities. To rob God of his glory, to despise his Son, to disbelieve the gospel, to live for self, to be self-righteous—all these are heinous evils, but what carnal man owns to them as such? Covetousness! again, who ever confesses that? Thousands are guilty of it, but few will own it even in private before the Lord. No confession will be acceptable before God, unless you are willing to make a clean breast of the whole of your evil ways, words and thoughts, before the searcher of hearts. I do not wonder if you should fail to tell to others your offenses; it were not meet you should do so except wherein you have offended them and may make retribution by the confession; but before God you must open all, you must roll away the stone from the mouth of that sepulcher, even though your iniquity, like Lazarus, should stink. There must be no mincing the matter, things must be called by their right names; you must be willing to feel the horrible sinfulness of sin, amid as far as you can, you must descend to the very bottom of its terrible guiltiness, and acknowledge its blackness, its heinousness, its devilry, its abomination. No confession will be acceptable before God, if you knowingly and wilfully gloss over any sin; if you make any exception, or are partial with respect to any form of iniquity. That confession which hides some sins and only confesses certain others stops one leak in the soul and opens another.

Nor ought it to be forgotten, that when the criminal had confessed his sin, yet still in the last confession—which we may suppose to have been true,

there are words of extenuation, and nothing to indicate any deep and suitable sensibility of his great enormity. He hints at reasons why he was scarcely accountable—a sort of madness and the influence of strong drink must be execrated for the crime, and not the man himself. O God, thou knowest how often in our natural confessions, before thy grace met with us, we made wretched and mean excuses for ourselves! We said that a strong temptation overcame us; it was an unguarded moment; it was our constitution amid our besetting sins; it was our friend who led us astray; it was God's providence which tried us; it was anything rather than ourselves—we were to blame, no doubt, but still there were extenuating circumstances. Beloved friends! a man can never make a true confession till he feels that sin is his own sin, and is willing to confess it as such; he must cease to apologize any longer, and must just stand forth before the Lord, and cry, "I have sinned, willfully and infamously, and here, standing in thy presence, I acknowledge it: but if a word of apology could save my soul, I dare not utter it, for I should again be guilty of a lie." May this teach us to seek out rather the aggravations of our sin than fancied extenuations of it. Try to see the worst of thy case, sinner, more than to gloss it or gild it over and make it seem better than it is.

All this, remember, was committed by this miserable murderer, who is so soon to appear before his God, not through ignorance, but in spite of a clear consciousness of the wrong of his deed. Had he been some person of a low mental organization, or of neglected intellect, there might be some plea. If, for instance, he had never been able to read, and had received his only education amid thieves and vagabonds, there might have been some excuse, and we might have said, "It is the sin of the community which fails to provide moral and religious instruction for the people;" but here is a man who knows better, who, I suppose, had listened to thousands of sermons, had a knowledge of the Bible, had pretended to pray, was well taught as to the matter of right and wrong, and yet still, in defiance of all this, he sins, and to make the matter worse, shows no signs of softening of heart, no tenderness, no melting, nothing of deep regret, and shame, and contrition, and humbleness of heart, but is, apparently (I say no more) as obdurate in confessing his guilt as when he was denying it. Ah! but there are too many who make confession, having no broken hearts, no streaming eyes, no flowing tears, no humbled spirits. Know ye this,

that ten thousand confessions, if they are made by hardened hearts, if they do not spring from really contrite spirits shall be only additions to your guilt as they are mockeries before the Most High. Let these suffice as remarks upon unacceptable confession. Oh Lord, let thy Holy Spirit give to the guilty one, of whom we have been speaking, and to us all that broken and contrite heart, which thou wilt accept through Jesus Christ!

The second case must now come before us, and here again I do not desire to speak anything about the state of heart of CONSTANCE KENT, I only speak of her outward act, and only of that as a symbol of true confession. Here is one avowedly guilty of a most atrocious murder, a very great and terrible crime; but when she appears in court she is brought there upon her own confession; her life was in no danger from the witness of other people. She surrendered herself voluntarily, and when she stood before the judge, she pleaded guilty. No doubt her anxious friends had suggested to her the desirableness of pleading "Not guilty," hoping to save her life by failure in the evidence, or plea of insanity, or some other legal method of saving criminals from the gallows. Mark, however, how distinctly she says "Guilty;" and though the question is repeated and space is given her to retract, her reply is still the one self-condemning word "GUILTY!" Even so before the Lord, whenever we come to confess we must approach him with this cry, Guilty, Guilty! "Lord, I cannot say anything else. If hell be my eternal portion for it, I dare say no other. The stones in the streets would cry out against me if I denied my guilt. When my memory shows me the record of my days, its truthful witness is that I have broken thy law; and when my conscience looks at the way in which I have transgressed, it cannot say anything but this, 'Thou hast wilfully broken God's law and thou deservest his wrath.'" Now sinner, thou shalt never be at peace with God until thou art willing unreservedly to plead "Guilty." That self-righteous spirit of thine must be cast out as though it were the very devil, for it is next akin to the devil, and is quite as mischievous, and thou must be brought down humbly to lie at the foot of Jehovah's throne and confess that thou dost richly deserve his wrath, for thou hast defied his righteous law and sinned against him with a high hand. You must plead "Guilty," or remain guilty for ever. You shall never find pardon through Jesus Christ till you are willing, truly and really, to own yourself a sinner.

Constance Kent was anxious to free all others from the blame of her sin. Her counsel says, in open court, "Solemnly, in the presence of Almighty God, as a person who values her own soul, she wishes me to say that the guilt is her own alone; and that her father and others, who have so long suffered most unjust and cruel suspicions, are wholly and absolutely innocent." This is well spoken. I know nothing of this young woman's heart, but using her as an illustration rather than an example, we are safe in saying that it is a very blessed sign of true repentance when the sinner cries out with David, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." There will be in a gracious penitent no attempt to lay the blame upon the tempter, or upon providence; no dwelling upon circumstances, the suddenness of the temptation, or the hastiness of one's temper. "Oh God," says the sinner, "I have sinned myself; I have nothing in the world that is so trimly my own as my own sin. For this my sin, I alone am accountable, and I feel it, amid I cannot, I dare not impeach any one else with being guilty of my sin. I must stand in my own person before thee, O God, even if that involves my eternal ruin." it will never do for you to lay the blame on your mothers and fathers because they did not teach you better, upon the minister for not being earnest enough, or upon your master for telling you to do wrong. It is true that we may be partakers of your sins in a measure, but if you be sincerely penitent, the guilt which will strike you will not be another man's guilt, nor another man's share in your sin, but your own guilt. A sinner has not been brought truly before the Lord in humble contrition, unless his cry is "Lord! I have sinned, I have sinned so as to be guilty myself, in my own person. Have mercy upon me!"

The unhappy young woman now condemned to die needed no witness to come forward to prove her guilt and ensure her conviction. No one saw the deed; it was done so secretly that the most expert detectives were not able to find a satisfactory clue to the mystery. There may be collateral evidence to support her confession; it may, or it may not be true that her conviction would now have been certain had her confession been retracted; but she did not need that, for without any voice of man to witness she witnessed against herself. It will never suffice for us merely to

confess to the Lord what other people have seen, and to feel guilty because we know that the case is reported in the neighborhood. Many people who have fallen into sin, have felt very penitent because they knew they should damage their names, or lose their situations; but to have your private sin brought before you by conscience, and voluntarily without any pressure but the burden of sin itself and the work of the Holy Spirit, to come before God and say, "Lord, thou knowest in this matter I have offended, and though none saw me except thine eye and mine; yet thine eye might well flash with anger at me, while mine shall be wet with many a tear of penitence on account of it:" that is what you need, Sinner, thou must come before God now and let out thine heart without any external pressure. Spontaneously must thy soul flow out, poured out like water before the Lord, or thou must not hope that he will give thee pardon.

She confessed all. It was a solemn moment when the judge said, "I must repeat to you, that you are charged with having wilfully, intentionally, and with malice killed and murdered your brother. Are you guilty or not guilty?" Yes, she was guilty, just as the judge had put it. She did not object to those words which made the case come out so black. The willfulness?—yes, she acknowledged that. The intention, the malice?—yes, all that. The killing, the murdering—was it just murder?—was it nothing less? No, nothing else. Not a word of extenuation. She acknowledges all, just as the judge puts it. She is guilty in every deed of the whole charge. Sinner, will you confess sin as God puts it? Many will confess sin after their own fashion, but will you confess it as God puts it? Are you brought to see sin as God sees it? as far as mortal eye could bear that dreadful sight, and do you confess now just what God lays to your door, that you have been his enemy, a traitor, full of evil, covered with iniquity? Will you confess that you have crucified his dear Son, and have in all ways deserved his hottest wrath and displeasure—will you plead guilty to that? If not, you shall have no pardon; but if you will do this, he is merciful and just to forgive you your sins through Jesus the great atoning sacrifice.

She had not, nor had her counsel for her, a single word to say by way of apology; in fact, at her request, one supposed excuse was utterly discarded: "She wishes me to say that she was not driven to this act, as has been asserted, by unkind treatment at home, as she met with nothing

there but tender and forbearing hove." Her counsel might have said she was very young—it was hoped that her youth might plead for her. Being young, she might be readily led astray by an evil passion—might not that excuse linger? It was long ago, and her confession was her own; she had brought herself there into that dock—might not this be a reason for mercy? Nothing of the kind. The judge might think so if he pleased, but there was nothing said for her about that, nor did she desire that it should be suggested. She might secretly hope, but her confession was so thorough, that there was not a single word to sully its clear stream. So, sinner, if you come before God, you must not say, "Lord, I am to be excused because of my position—I was in poverty, and I was tempted to steal; or, I had been in bad company, and so I learned to blaspheme; or, I had a hard master, and so I was driven to sin to find some pleasure there." No; if you are really penitent, you will find no reason whatever why you should have sinned, except the evil of your own heart, and that you will plead as an aggravation, not as an excuse. "Guilty! guilty! guilty! am I, O God, before thy face; I offer no excuse, no extenuation. Thou must deal with me upon pure mercy, if thou dost save me, for justice can only award me my well-deserved doom."

Notice that when she was asked whether she had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon her, there was still a solemn silence. Was there no reason to be given why the dreadful sentence of being hanged by the neck until dead, should not be passed upon a young and weeping girl? She did not so much as hint at one. I remember well the time when I thought there was no reason why the flames of hell should not consume me, and why the crushing weight of God's wrath should not roll over me for ever and for ever. Methinks every sinner who has really come to Christ, has been made to feel that however angry God may be with sin, time is not one whit too angry. Until we know the power of divine grace, we read in the Bible concerning eternal punishment, and we think it is too heavy and too hard, and we are apt to kick against it, and find out some heretic or other who teaches us another doctrine; but when the soul is really quickened by divine grace, and made to feel the weight of sin, it thinks the bottomless pit none too deep, and the punishment of hell none too severe for sin such as it has committed. This is not the emotion of a mind rendered morbid by sickness, but these are

the genuine workings of God the Holy Ghost in the soul, bringing the man to stand guilty before the Lord, with his mouth closed, not able to say a word against the sentence of divine justice. May God bring such there who have never been there yet!

In the confession, as we read the story, there was much tenderness. I do not wonder that the judge exhibited deep emotion, who could help it? Remember, I am not pretending to know her heart, I am only judging the externals; as far as thine externals went there seemed to be a great brokenness of spirit. She appeared really to know what guilt meant, and to stand there with this resolve upon her soul, that though she could not make any atonement for her crime, she would acknowledge it honestly, and accordingly she confessed it as one who felt within her own soul the terrible weight of her guilt. This is the manner in which we must stand before God if we would find mercy. It is all very well for us to use fine language, but words alone are worthless. Those words which come fresh from your lips, dictated by your own heart, because the Holy Ghost is there, will suffice if the heart be in them. It is to the contrite that the promise is given. Look to Jesus for contrition, for without it there is no pardon.

II. Thus we have tried, as far as we could, to bring out the distinctions which pertain to confessions, and now let us have a word or two upon
THE EXERCISE OF THE PREROGATIVE OF MERCY ON GOD'S PART.

"Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." In every case where there is a genuine, gracious confession, mercy is freely given. There is a notion abroad, that confession deserves mercy. We read in the papers such remarks as these, "expiating sin by confession," or, "made such atonement as he could by confessing his sin." Confession makes no atonement in any shape whatever. There is no one single word in that law which I read to you this morning, in the twentieth of Exodus, about the possibility of taking away sin by mere confession. Justice has but one rule, and that is, sin must be punished. If the sinner violates law, law in the case of man may remit the penalty, but in the case of God never. The attributes of God are not like the qualities of man, they never come into collision with one another, nor do they abridge the sphere of each other.

The justice of God is as awful and all-reaching as if there had not a grain of mercy, while the mercy of God is as unrestrained and Almighty as if he were utterly unjust. The reason why sin can be forgiven in the case of a penitent sinner is, because for that sinner Jesus Christ has borne the full weight of all the wrath which his sin deserves. The fire-cloud of Jehovah's wrath was waiting for the sinner—the sinner must receive the whole of its dread discharge; but for every sinner that repenteth and believeth in him Christ stood beneath that terrible cloud, and all the lightning was discharged on him. He suffered as incarnate God, all the chastisement which was due to his people. The grief of our Savior we can never tell: the woes of Gethsemane and Gabbatha and Golgotha are not to be expressed, but they were accepted by God in the stead of all the suffering and grief which the law most righteously claimed on every law-breaker. And now, through what Christ Jesus has done, the eternal mercy of God comes streaming forth in perfect consistency with justice. Mercy provided the great substitute, and now mercy with loving heart calls upon sinners repenting and believing, and assures them that all sin is put away through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Let every sinner know, then, that although his repentance does not deserve mercy, the God of love has been pleased to promise free pardon to all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, because Christ deserves it. Pardon is given to penitent sinners as a matter of justice, as well as mercy, because of the throes, and grief, and agonies of the Divine Redeemer.

How consistent it is with the nature of things that penitent sinners, and penitent sinners only should obtain mercy through Jesus Christ! When you read the story of the man who made no confession till it was forced out of him, although you can respond to his wish, "Fellow creatures, pray for me," you cannot feel much sympathy, if any, with him. His conduct seems to harden one's heart against him, not merely because of his guilt, but because of the lie of his confession. But, when you read the other story, although it contains no request to pray, you find you do not want one for your heart cries at once, "Father forgive her;" and you think within yourself, "If the prerogative of mercy can be exercised in this case, let it be." If it were put to a show of hands of all our country whether the law should be executed on Constance Kent, I think we should all say "Let the penitent sinner live." Great was her offense, and no excuse is to be

offered for her, as she offers none for herself. It was a great and dreadful crime, which must be a blight upon her all her days, yet, let her be spared for she has confessed most fully—not on the ground of justice, but on the ground that this seems to be a case in which, if the prerogative of mercy is to be sovereignly exercised at all, it should now have free scope. Methinks when the eternal God sees a poor sinner standing before himself, and hears him cry, "I am guilty, Lord! I am guilty through and through! I alone am guilty! I have broken thy law! If thou smite me thou art just! My heart is broken because I have sinned. I cannot be more wretched than I now am, for sin is my plague and my misery; and while I confess it I do not think that my confession has any merit in it. Save me for Jesus' sake!" "Why, methinks," the mighty God says, "I have brought that soul, through my grace, into a state in which it is ready to receive the precious gift of justification and pardon through the blood of my dear Son."

See how one grace gives a fitness for another. The sinner is brought to Jesus, his heart is broken, and then it is ready to be bound up. Time penitent sinner has paid honour to the prerogative of the law-giver. He has, as far as he could do so, dethroned the law-giver by his sin, but now by his confession he restores him to his throne. Such a sinner knows the bitterness of sin, amid knowing its bitterness, he will hate it for the future. If he be pardoned, he will not go back as the dog to his vomit, or the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. This pardoned sinner will not take to himself the credit of having been pardoned by his confessions, he will not go abroad and talk lightly of his sin, he will be sure to speak much of the leniency of the Law-giver and the power of Jesus' precious blood; he will admire evermore, even in eternity, the mighty grace which pardoned such as he is. On the other hand, if man were forgiven, and no true penitence wrought in him, what would be the result? Why, it would be turning wolves loose upon society. Methinks if God gave forgiveness to men without working a work of grace in them by which they are brought to repentance, it would be offering a premium for sin, it would be breaking down the floodgates which restrain vice, it would be destroying all the excellent fruits which free grace is intended to produce. What! is the man to be pardoned for all the past and to remain without repentance for his evil ways? Then will he make the future just as the past has been; nay, he will sin with a higher hand and with a stronger

arm. because he sees with what impunity he may rebel. What! shall a proud, unhumiliated sinner rejoice in the forgiving love of the Father Then will he arrogantly boast that there was not much evil in his sin after all; he will lie no singer to the praise of sovereign grace, but rather, with the boastful lips of the legalist he will render unto himself praise for the dexterous manner in which he has escaped from the condemnation due to sin. God will give pardon to those only to whom he gives repentance, for it were unsafe to give it elsewhere. God bring us down and lay us in the dust, for then, and then only. are we prepared to hear him say, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee."

I take it for granted that there are some here who will say, "I wish I could repent. I know that it would not merit eternal life. I understand that faith—faith in Jesus Christ is the way by which I must be saved, but I would be humbled on account of sin." My dear friend, your desire to be humble may perhaps be an indication that you are already in that condition; but, if you are lamenting your hardness of heart, I will suggest two or three things. Remember your past sins. I do not want you to write out a list of them all, there is not paper enough in this world for that, but let some of them start out before your memory, and if they do not make you blush, they might do so. Next think over all the aggravations of those sins. Recollect the training you had as a child. You were blessed with godly parents. Remember the providential warnings you received. Think of the light and knowledge against which you have offended; that tenderness of conscience against which you kicked. Then I beg you to consider against what a God you have offended, so great, so good, so kind, who has never done you a displeasure, but has been all generosity and kindness to you till this day. Your offenses have been insults against the King of heaven. Your transgressions have been undermining, as far as they could, the throne of the eternal majesty. Look at sin in the light of God, to be humbled. And if this will not do it, let me pray that God the Holy Spirit may take you to the foot of the cross. Remember, that in order that sin might be put away, it was necessary that God should be veiled in human flesh. No one else could bear the load of sin but God, and he only could bear it by becoming man. See the suffering of the Savior when "despised and rejected." Mark the spitting, the shame, the smiting. Watch his wounds;

"Count the purple drops, and say,
'Thus mast sin be wash'd away.'"

And surely, if God the Holy Ghost bless it, such a meditation will make thee see the blackness and vileness of sin. John Bradford said, that when he was in prayer, he never liked to rise from his knees till he began to feel something of brokenness of heart. Get thee up to thy chamber, then, poor sinner, if thou wouldst have a broken and contrite spirit, and come not out until thou hast it. Remember, that thou wilt never feel so broken in heart as when thou canst see Jesus bearing all thy sins. Faith and repentance are born together, and aid the health of each other.

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
Will dissolve a heart of stone."

Go as you are to Christ, and ask him to give that tenderness of heart which shall be to you the indication that pardon has come; for pardon cannot and will not come unattended by a melting of soul and a hatred of sin. Wrestle with the Lord! say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Get a fast hold upon the Savior by a vigorous faith in his great atonement. Oh! may his Spirit enable thee to do this! Say in thy soul, "Here I will abide, at the horns of the altar; if I perish I will perish at the foot of the cross. From my hope in Jesus I will not depart; but I will look up still and say, Savior, thy heart was broken for me, break my heart! Thou wast wounded, wound me! Thy blood was freely poured forth, for me, Lord let me pour forth my team's that I should have nailed thee to the tree. O Lord, dissolve my soul; melt it in tenderness, and thou shalt be for ever praised for making thine enemy thy friend."

May God bless you, and make you truly repent, if you have not repented; and, if you have, may he enable you to continue in it all your days, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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Confession and Absolution

"And the publican, standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."—Luke 18:13.

The heroes of our Saviour's stories are most of them selected to illustrate traits of character entirely dissimilar to their general reputation. What would you think of a moral writer of our own day, should he endeavor in a work of fiction, to set before us the gentle virtue of benevolence by the example of a Sepoy? And yet, Jesus Christ has given us one of the finest examples of charity in the case of a Samaritan. To the Jews, a Samaritan was as proverbial for his bitter animosity against their nation, as the Sepoy is among us for his treacherous cruelty, and as much an object of contempt and hatred; but Jesus Christ, nevertheless, chose his hero from the Samaritans, that there should be nothing adventitious to adorn him, but that all the adorning might be given to the grace of charity. Thus, too in the present instance, our Saviour, being desirous of setting before us the necessity of humiliation in prayer, has not selected some distinguished saint who was famed for his humility, but he has chosen a tax-gatherer, probably one of the most extortionate of his class, for the Pharisee seems to hint as much; and I doubt not he cast his eye askance at this publican, when he observed, with selfgratulation, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Still, our Lord, in order that we might see that there was nothing to predispose in the person, but that the acceptance of the prayer might stand out, set even in a brighter light by the black foil of the publican's character, has selected this man to be the pattern and model of one who should offer an acceptable prayer unto God. Note that, and you will not be surprised to find the same characteristic exhibited very frequently in the parables of our Lord Jesus Christ. As for this publican, we know but little of his previous career, but we may, without perilling any serious error, conjecture somewhat near the truth. He may have been, and doubtless he was a Jew, piously brought up and religiously trained, but, perhaps like Levi, he ran away from his parents, and finding no other trade exactly suited to his vicious taste, he became

one of that corrupt class who collected the Roman taxes, and, ashamed to be known as Levi any longer, he changed his name to Matthew, lest anyone should recognize in the degraded cast of the publican, the man whose parents feared God, and bowed their knees before Jehovah. It may be that this publican had in his youth forsaken the ways of his fathers, and given himself up to lasciviousness, and then found this unworthy occupation to be most accordant with his vicious spirit. We cannot tell how often he had ground the faces of the poor, or how many curses had been spilled upon his head when he had broken into the heritage of the widow, and had robbed the friendless, unprotected orphan. The Roman government gave a publican far greater power than he ought to possess, and he was never slow to use the advantage for his own enrichment. Probably half of all he had was a robbery, if not more, for Zaccheus seems to hint as much in his own instance, when he says—"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have gotten anything of any man by false accusation, I restore it unto him four-fold." It was not often that this publican troubled the temple; the priests very seldom saw him coming with a sacrifice; it would have been an abomination, and he did not bring it. But so it happened, that the Spirit of the Lord met with the publican; and had made him think upon his ways, and their peculiar blackness: he was full of trouble, but he kept it to himself, pent up in his own bosom, he could scarcely rest at night nor go about his business by day, for day and night the hand of God was heavy upon him. At last, unable to endure his misery any longer, he thought of that house of God at Zion, and of the sacrifice that was daily offered there. "To whom, or where should I go," said he, "but to God?—and where can I hope to find mercy, but where the sacrifice is offered." No sooner said than done. He went; his unaccustomed feet bent their steps to the sanctuary, but he is ashamed to enter. Yon Pharisee holy man as he appeared to be, goes up unblushingly to the court of the Israelites. he goes as near as he dare to the very precincts, within which the priesthood alone might stand; and he prays with boastful language. But as for the publican, he chooses out for himself some secluded corner where he shall neither be seen nor heard, and now he is about to pray, not with uplifted hands as yonder Pharisee, not with eyes turned up to heaven with a sanctimonious gaze of hypocrisy, but fixing his eyes upon the ground, the hot tears streaming from them, not daring to lift them up to heaven. At last his stifled feelings

found utterance; yet that utterance was a groan, a short prayer that must all be comprehended in the compass of a sigh: "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is done; he is heard; the angel of mercy registers his pardon, his conscience is at peace; he goes down to his house a happy man, justified rather than the Pharisee, and rejoicing in the justification that the Lord had given to him. Well then, my business this morning is to invite, to urge, to beseech you to do what the publican did, that you may receive what he obtained. There are two particulars upon which I shall endeavor to speak solemnly and earnestly: the first is confession, the second is absolution.

I. Brethren, let us imitate the publican, first of all in his CONFESSION. There has been a great deal of public excitement during the last few weeks and months about the confessional. As for that matter, it is perhaps a mercy that the outward and visible sign of Popery in the Church of England has discovered to its sincere friends the inward and spiritual evil which had long been lurking there. We need not imagine that the confessional, or priestcraft, of which it is merely an offshoot, in the Church of England is any novelty: it has long been there, those of us who are outside her borders have long observed and mourned over it, but now we congratulate ourselves on the prospect that the Church of England herself will be compelled to discover her own evils; and we hope that God may give her grace and strength to cut the cancer out of her own breast before she shall cease to be a Protestant Church, and God shall cast her away as an abhorred thing. This morning, however, I have nothing to do with the confessional. Silly women may go on confessing as long as they like, and foolish husbands may trust their wives if they please to such men as those. Let those that are fools show it; let those that have no sense do as they please about it; but as for myself, I should take the greatest care that neither I nor mine have ought to do with such things. Leaving that, however, we come to personal matters, endeavoring to learn, even from the errors of others, how to act rightly ourselves.

Note the publican's confession; to whom was it presented? "God be merciful to me a sinner." Did the publican ever think about going to the priest to ask for mercy, and confessing his sins? The thought may have crossed his mind, but his sin was too great a weight upon his conscience

to be relieved in any such way, so he very soon dismissed the idea. "No," saith he, "I feel that my sin is of such a character that none but God can take it away; and even if it were right for me to go and make the confession to my fellow creature, yet I should think it must be utterly unavailing in my case, for my disease is of such a nature, that none but an Almighty Physician ever can remove it." So he directs his confession and his prayer to one place, and to one alone—"God be merciful to me a sinner." And you will note in this confession to God, that it was secret: all that you can hear of his confession is just that one word—"a sinner." Do you suppose that was all he confessed? No, beloved, I believe that long before this, the publican had made a confession of all his sins privately, upon his knees in his own house before God. But now, in God's house, all he has to say for man to hear, is—"I am a sinner." And I counsel you, If ever you make a confession before man, let it be a general one but never a particular one. You ought to confess often to your fellow creatures, that you have been a sinner, but to tell to any man in what respect you have been a sinner, is but to sin over again, and to help your fellow creature to transgress. How filthy must be the soul of that priest who makes his ear a common sewer for the filth of other men's hearts. I cannot imagine even the devil to be more depraved, than the man who spends his time in sitting with his ear against the lips of men and women, who, if they do truly confess, must make him an adept in every vice, and school him in iniquities that he otherwise never could have known. Oh, I charge you never pollute your fellow creature; keep your sin to yourself, and to your God. He cannot be polluted by your iniquity; make a plain and full confession of it before him; but to your fellow creature, add nothing to the general confession—"I am a sinner!"

This confession which he made before God, was spontaneous, There was no question put to this man as to whether he were a sinner or no; as to whether he had broken the seventh commandment, or the eighth, or the ninth, or the tenth; no, his heart was full of penitence and it melted out in this breathing—"God be merciful to me a sinner." They tell us that some people never can make a full confession, except a priest helps them by questions. My dear friends, the very excellence of penitence is lost, and its spell broken, if there be a question asked: the confession is not true and real unless it be spontaneous. The man cannot have felt the weight of sin,

who wants somebody to tell him what his sins are. Can you imagine any man with a burden on his back, who, before he groaned under it, wanted to be told that he had got one there? Surely not. The man groans under it, and he does not want to be told—"There it is on your back," he knows it is there. And if, by the questioning of a priest, a full and thorough confession could be drawn from any man or woman, it would be totally useless, totally vain before God, because it is not spontaneous. We must confess our sins, because we cannot help confessing them; it must come out, because we cannot keep it in; like fire in the bones, it seems as if it would melt our very spirit, unless we gave vent to the groaning of our confession before the throne of God. See this publican, you cannot hear the abject full confession that he makes; all that you can hear is his simple acknowledgment that he is a sinner; but that comes spontaneously from his lips; God himself has not to ask him the question but he comes before the throne, and freely surrenders himself up to the hands of Almighty Justice, confessing that he is a rebel and a sinner. That is the first thing we have to note in his confession—that he made it to God secretly and spontaneously; and all he said openly was that he was "a sinner."

Again: what did he confess? He confessed, as our text tells us that he was a sinner. Now, how suitable is this prayer for us! For is there a lip here present that this confession will not suit—"God be merciful to me a sinner?" Do you say,—"the prayer will suit the harlot, when, after a life of sin, rottenness is in her bones and she is dying in despair—that prayer suits her lips?" Ay, but my friend, it will suit thy lips and mine too. If thou knowest thine heart, and I know mine, the prayer that will suit her will suit us also. You have never committed the sins which the Pharisee disowned; you have neither been extortionate, nor unjust, nor an adulterer; you have never been even as the publican, but nevertheless the word "sinner" will still apply to you; and you will feel it to be so if you are in a right condition. Remember how much you have sinned against light. It is true the harlot hath sinned more openly than you, but had she such light as you have had? Do you think she had such an early education and such training as you have received? Did she ever receive such checkings of conscience and such guardings of providence, as those which have watched over your career? This much I must confess for myself—I do, and

must feel a peculiar heinousness in my own sin, for I sin against light, against conscience, and more, against the love of God received, and against the mercy of God promised. Come forward, thou greatest among saints, and answer this question,—dost not this prayer suit thee? I hear thee answer, without one moment's pause—"Ay, it suits me now; and until I die, my quivering lips must often repeat the petition, 'Lord have mercy upon me a sinner.' " Men and brethren, I beseech you use this prayer to-day, for it must suit you all. Merchant, hast thou no sins of business to confess? Woman, hast thou no household sins to acknowledge? Child of many prayers, hast thou no offense against father and mother to confess? Have we loved the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength; and have we each loved our neighbor as ourself. Oh, let us close our lips as to any boasting, and when we open them, let these be the first words that escape from them, "I have sinned, O Lord; I have broken thy commandments; Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner." But mark, is it not a strange thing that the Holy Spirit should teach a man to plead his sinnership before the throne of God? One would think that when we come before God we should try to talk a little of our virtues. Who would suppose that when a man was asking for mercy he would say of himself, "I am a sinner?" Why surely reason would prompt him to say, "Lord have mercy upon me; there is some good point about me: Lord have mercy upon me; I am not worse than my neighbors: Lord have mercy upon me. I will try to be better." Is it not against reason, is it not marvellously above reason, that the Holy Spirit should teach a man to urge at the throne of grace, that which seems to be against his plea, the fact that he is a sinner? And yet, dear brethren, if you and I want to be heard, we must come to Christ as sinners. Do not let us attempt to make ourselves better than we are. When we come to God's throne, let us not for one moment seek to gather any of the false jewels of our pretended virtues; rags are the garments of sinners. Confession is the only music that must come from our lips; "God be merciful to ME—a sinner;" that must be the only character in which I can pray to God. Now, are there not many here who feel that they are sinners, and are groaning, sighing, and lamenting, because the weight of sin lies on their conscience? Brother, I am glad thou feelest thyself to be a sinner, for thou hast the key of the kingdom in thy hands. Thy sense of sinnership is thy only title to mercy. Come. I beseech thee, just as thou art—thy nakedness

is thy only claim on heaven's wardrobe; thy hunger is thy only claim on heaven's granaries, thy poverty is thy only claim on heaven's eternal riches. Come just as thou art, with nothing of thine own, except thy sinfulness, and plead that before the throne—"God be merciful to me a sinner." This is what this man confessed, that he was a sinner, and he pleaded it, making the burden of his confession to be the matter of his plea before God.

Now again, how does he come? What is the posture that he assumes? The first thing I would have you notice is that he "stood afar off." What did he do that for? Was it not because he felt himself a separated man? We have often made general confessions in the temple, but there never was a confession accepted, except it was particular, personal, and heartfelt. There were the people gathered together for the accustomed service of worship; they join in a psalm of praise, but the poor publican stood far away from them. Anon, they unite in the order of prayer, still he could not go near them. No, he was come there for himself, and he must stand by himself. Like the wounded hart that seeks the deepest glades of the forest where it may bleed and die alone in profound solitude, so did this poor publican seem to feel he must be alone. You notice he does not say anything about other people in his prayer. "God be merciful to me," he says. He does not say "one of a company of sinners," but "a sinner," as if there were not another sinner in all the world. Mark this, my hearer, that thou must feel thyself solitary and alone, before thou canst ever pray this prayer acceptably. Has the Lord ever picked thee out in a congregation? Has it seemed to you in this Hall as if there were a great black wall round about you, and you were closed in with the preacher and with your God, and as if every shaft from the preacher's bow was levelled at you, and every threatening meant for you, and every solemn upbraiding was an upbraiding for you? If thou hast felt this, I will congratulate thee. No man ever prayed this prayer aright unless he prayed alone, unless he said "God be merciful to me," as a solitary, lonely sinner. "The publican stood afar off."

Note the next thing. "He would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven." That was because he dare not, not because he would not; he would have done it if he dared. How remarkable it is that repentance

takes all the daring out of men. We have seen fellows very dare-devils before they were touched by sovereign grace, who have become afterwards, the most trembling and conscientious men with the tenderest conscience that one could imagine. Men who were careless, bragging and defying God, have become as humble as little children, and even afraid to lift their eyes to heaven, though once they sent their oaths and curses there. But why did he not dare to lift his eyes up? It was because he was dejected in his "spirit," so oppressed and burdened that he could not look up. Is that thy case my friend this morning? Are you afraid to pray? Do you feel as if you could not hope that God would have mercy on you, as if the least gleam of hope was more light than you could possibly bear; as if your eyes were so used to the darkness of doubt and despondency, that even one stolen ray seemed to be too much for your poor weak vision? Ah! well, fear not, for happy shall it be for thee; thou art only following the publican in his sad experience now, and the Lord who helps thee to follow him in the confession, shall help thee to rejoice with him in the absolution.

Note what else he did. He smote upon his breast. He was a good theologian he was a real doctor of divinity. What did he smite his breast for? Because he knew where the mischief lay—in his breast. He did not smite upon his brow as some men do when they are perplexed, as if the mistake were in their understanding. Many a man will blame his understanding, while he will not blame his heart, and say, "Well, I have made a mistake. I have certainly been doing wrong, but I am a good-hearted fellow at the bottom." This man knew where the mischief lay, and he smote the right place.

"Here on my heart the burden lies."

He smote upon his breast as if he were angry with himself. He seemed to say, "Oh! that I could smite thee, my ungrateful heart, the harder, that thou hast loved sin rather than God." He did not do penance, and yet it was a kind of penance upon himself when he smote his breast again and again, and cried "Alas! alas! woe is me that I should ever have sinned against my God"—"God be merciful to a sinner." Now, can you come to God like this, my dear friend? Oh, let us all draw near to God in this fashion. Thou hast enough, my brother, to make thee stand alone for

there have been sins in which thou and I have stood each of us in solitary guilt. There are iniquities known only to ourselves, which we never told to the partner of our own bosom, not to our own parents or brothers, nor yet to the friend with whom we took sweet counsel. If we have sinned thus alone, let us go to our chambers, and confess alone, the husband apart, and the wife apart, the father apart, and the child apart. Let us each one wail for himself. Men and brethren, leave off to accuse one another. Cease from the bickerings of your censoriousness. and from the slanders of your envy. Rebuke yourselves and not your fellows. Rend your own hearts, and not the reputation of your neighbors. Come, let each man now look to his own case, and not to the case of another, let each cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, as here I stand alone, a sinner." And hast thou not good reason to cast down thine eyes? Does it not seem sometimes too much for us ever to look to heaven again. We have blasphemed God, some of us, and even imprecated curses on our own limbs and eyes; and when those things come back to our memory we may well be ashamed to look up. Or if we have been preserved from the crime of open blasphemy—how often have you and I forgotten God! how often have we neglected prayer! how have we broken his Sabbaths and left his Bible unread! Surely these things as they flash across our memory, might constrain us to feel that we cannot lift up so much as our eyes towards heaven. And as for smiting on our breast, what man is there among us that need not do it? Let us be angry with ourselves, because we have provoked God to be angry with us. Let us be in wrath with the sins that have brought ruin upon our souls, let us drag the traitors out, and put them at once to a summary death; they deserve it well; they have been our ruin; let us be their destruction. He smote upon his breast and said, "God, be merciful unto me a sinner."

There is one other feature in this man's prayer, which you must not overlook. What reason had he to expect that God would have any mercy upon him? The Greek explains more to us than the English does, and the original word here might be translated—"God be propitiated to me a sinner." There is in the Greek word a distinct reference to the doctrine of atonement. It is not the Unitarian's prayer—"God be merciful to me," it is more than that—it is the Christian's prayer, "God be propitiated towards me, a sinner." There is, I repeat it, a distinct appeal to the atonement and the mercy-seat in this short prayer, Friend, if we would come before God

with our confessions, we must take care that we plead the blood of Christ. There is no hope for a poor sinner apart from the cross of Jesus. We may cry, "God be merciful to me," but the prayer can never be answered apart from the victim offered, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. When thou hast thine eye upon the mercy-seat, take care to have thine eye upon the cross too. Remember that the cross is, after all "the mercy seat; that mercy never was enthroned, until she did hang upon the cross crowned with thorns. If thou wouldst find pardon, go to dark Gethsemane, and see thy Redeemer sweating, in deep anguish, gout of gore. If thou wouldst have peace of conscience, go to Gabbatha, the pavement, and see thy Saviour's back flooded with a stream of blood. If thou wouldst have the last best rest to thy conscience, go to Golgotha; see the murdered victim as he hangs upon the cross, with hands and feet and side all pierced, as every wound is gaping wide with misery extreme. There can be no hope for mercy apart from the victim offered—even Jesus Christ the Son of God. Oh, come; let us one and all approach the mercy-seat, and plead the blood. Let us each go and say, "Father, I have sinned; but have mercy upon me, through thy Son." Come, drunkard, give me thy hand; we will go together. Harlot, give me thy hand too; and let us likewise approach the throne. And you, professing Christians, come ye also, be not ashamed of your company. Let us come before his presence with many tears, none of us accusing our fellows, but each one accusing himself; and let us plead the blood of Jesus Christ, which speaketh peace and pardon to every troubled conscience.

Careless man, I have a word with thee before I have done on this point. You say, "Well, that is a good prayer, certainly, for a man who is dying. When a poor fellow has the cholera, and sees black death staring him in the face, or when he is terrified and thunderstruck in the time of storm, or when he finds himself amidst the terrible confusion and alarm of a perilous catastrophe or a sudden accident, while drawing near to the gates of death, it is only right that he should say, Lord have mercy upon me." Ah, friend, the prayer must be suitable to you then, if you are a dying man; it must be suitable to you, for you know not how near you are to the borders of the grave. Oh, if thou didst but understand the frailty of life and the slipperiness of that poor prop on which thou art resting, thou wouldst say, "Alas for my soul! if the prayer will suit me dying, it must

suit me now; for I am dying, even this day, and know not when I may come to the last gasp." "Oh," says one, "I think it will suit a man that has been a very great sinner." Correct, my friend, and therefore, if you knew yourself; it would suit you. You are quite correct in saying, that it won't suit any but great sinners; and if you don't feel yourself to be a great sinner, I know you will never pray it. But there are some here that feel themselves to be what you ought to feel and know that you are. Such will, constrained by grace, use the prayer with an emphasis this morning, putting a tear upon each letter, and a sigh upon each syllable, as they cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." But mark, my friend, thou mayest smile contemptuously on the man that makes this confession, but he shall go from this house justified, while thou shalt go away still in thy sins, without a hope, without a ray of joy to cheer thy unchastened spirit.

II. Having thus briefly described this confession, I come more briefly still to notice the ABSOLUTION which God gave. Absolution from the lips of man I do believe is little short of blasphemy. There is in the Prayer Book of the Church of England an absolution which is essentially Popish, which I should think must be almost a verbatim extract from the Romish missal. I do not hesitate to say, that there was never anything more blasphemous printed in Holywell Street, than the absolution that is to be pronounced by a clergyman over a dying man; and it is positively frightful to think that any persons calling themselves Christians should rest easy in a church until they have done their utmost to get that most excellent book thoroughly reformed and revised, and to get the Popery purged out of it. But there is such a thing as absolution, my friends, and the publican received it. "He went to his house justified rather than the other." The other had nought of peace revealed to his heart, this poor man had all, and he went to his house justified. It does not say that he went to his house, having eased his mind; that is true, but more: he went to his house "justified." What does that mean? It so happens that the Greek word here used is the one which the apostle Paul always employs to set out the great doctrine of the righteousness of Jesus Christ—even the righteousness which is of God by faith. The fact is, that the moment the man prayed the prayer, every sin he had ever done was blotted out of God's book, so that it did not stand on the record against him; and more, the moment that prayer was heard in heaven, the man was reckoned to be a righteous man.

All that Christ did for him was cast about his shoulders to be the robe of his beauty, that moment all the guilt that he had ever committed himself was washed entirely away and lost for ever. When a sinner believes in Christ, his sins positively cease to be, and what is more wonderful they all cease to be, as Kent says in those well known lines—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,
And, O my soul with wonder view
For sins to come here's pardon too."

They are all swept away in one solitary instant; the crimes of many years; extortions, adulteries, or even murder, wiped away in an instant; for you will notice the absolution was instantaneously given. God did not say to the man—"Now you must go and perform some good works, and then I will give you absolution." He did not say as the Pope does, "Now you must swelter awhile in the fires of Purgatory, and then I will let you out." No, he justified him there and then; the pardon was given as soon as the sin was confessed. "Go, my son, in peace; I have not a charge against thee; thou art a sinner in thine own estimation, but thou art none in mine; I have taken all thy sins away, and cast them into the depth of the sea, and they shall be mentioned against thee no more for ever." Can you tell what a happy man the publican was, when all in a moment he was changed? If you may reverse the figure used by Milton, he seemed himself to have been a loathsome toad, but the touch of the Father's mercy made him rise to angelic brightness and delight; and he went out of that house with his eye upward, no longer afraid. Instead of the groan that was on his heart, he had a song upon his lip. He no longer walked alone, he sought out the godly and he said, "Come and hear, ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul." He did not smite upon his breast, but he went home to get down his harp, and play upon the strings, and praise his God. You would not have known that he was the same man, if you had seen him going out, and all that was done in a minute. "But," says one, "do you think he knew for certain that all his sins were forgiven? Can a man know that?" Certainly he can. And there be some here that can bear witness that this is true. They have known it themselves. The pardon which is sealed in heaven is re-sealed in our own conscience. The mercy which is recorded above is made to shed its light into the darkness of our

hearts. Yes, a man may know on earth that his sins are forgiven, and may be as sure that he is a pardoned man as he is of his own existence. And now I hear a cry from some one saying, "And may I be pardoned this morning? and may I know that I am pardoned? May I be so pardoned that all shall be forgotten—I who have been a drunkard, a swearer, or what not? May I have all my transgressions washed away? May I be made sure of heaven, and all that in a moment?" Yes, my friend, If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, if thou wilt stand where thou art, and just breathe this prayer out, "Lord, have mercy! God be merciful to me a sinner, through the blood of Christ." I tell thee man, God never did deny that prayer yet; if it came out of honest lips he never shut the gates of mercy on it. It is a solemn litany that shall be used as long as time shall last, and it shall pierce the ears of God as long as there is a sinner to use it. Come, be not afraid, I beseech you, use the prayer before you leave this Hall. Stand where you are; endeavor to realize that you are an alone, and if you feel that you are guilty. now let the prayer ascend. Oh, what a marvellous thing, it from the thousands of hearts here present, so many thousand prayers might go up to God! Surely the angels themselves never had such a day in Paradise, as they would have to-day, if every one of us could unfeignedly make that confession. Some are doing it; I know they are; God is helping them. And sinner, do you stay away? You, who have most need to come, do you refuse to join with us. Come, brother come. You say you are too vile. No, brother, you cannot be too vile to say, "God be merciful to me." Perhaps you are no viler than we are; at any rate, this we can say—we feel ourselves to be viler than you, and we want you to pray the same prayer that we have prayed. "Ah," says one, "I cannot; my heart won't yield to that; I cannot." But friend, if God is ready to have mercy upon thee, thine must be a hard heart, if it is not ready to receive his mercy. Spirit of God, breathe on the hard heart, and melt it now! Help the man who feels that carelessness is overcoming him—help him to get rid of it from this hour. You are struggling against it; you are saying, "Would to God I could pray that I could go back to be a boy or a child again, and then I could; but I have got hardened and grown grey in sin, and prayer would be hypocrisy in me. No, brother, no, it would not. If thou canst but cry it from thy heart, I beseech thee say it. Many a man thinks he is a hypocrite, when he is not, and is afraid that he is not sincere, when his very fear is a proof of his sincerity. "But," says one, "I

have no redeeming trait in my character at all." I am glad you think so; still you may use the prayer, "God be merciful to me." "But it will be a useless prayer," says one. My brother, I assure thee not in my own name, but in the name of God, my Father and your Father, it shall not be a useless prayer. As sure as God is God, him that cometh unto Christ he will in no wise cast out. Come with me now, I beseech thee; tarry no longer; the bowels of God are yearning over thee. Thou art his child, and he will not give thee up. Thou hast run from him these many years, but he has never forgotten thee; thou hast resisted all his warnings until now, and he is almost weary, but still he has said concerning thee, "How shall I make thee as Admah; how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

"Come humbled sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve;
Come with thy guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve:
I'll go to Jesus; though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose,
I know his courts; I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.
Prostrate I'll lie before his face,
And there my sins confess;
I'll tell him I'm a wretch undone,
Without his sov'reign grace."

Go home to your houses: let everyone—preacher, deacon, people, ye of the church, and ye of the world, everyone of you, go home, and ere you feast your bodies, pour out your hearts before God, and let this one cry go up from all our lips, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

I pause. Bear with me.

I must detain you a few moments. Let us use this prayer as our own now. Oh that it might come up before the Lord at this time as the earnest supplication of every heart in this assembly! I will repeat it,—not as a text, but as a prayer,—as my own prayer, as your prayer. Will each one of you take it personally for himself? Let everyone, I entreat you, who desires to

offer the prayer, and can join in it, utter at its close an audible "Amen."

Let us pray,

"GOD-BE-MERCIFUL-TO-ME-A-SINNER."

[And the people did with deep solemnity say] "AMEN."

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Struggles of Conscience

"How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin."—Job 13:23.

There are many persons who long to have a deeper sense of their sinfulness, and then with a certain show of conscientious scruple, they make an excuse for the exercise of simple faith. That spiritual disease, which keeps sinners from Christ, assumes a different shape at different times. In Luther's day the precise evil under which men laboured, was this: they believed in being self-righteous, and so they supposed that they must have good works before they might trust in Christ. In our day the evil has taken another, and that a most extraordinary shape. Men have aimed at being self-righteous after quite a singular fashion; they think they must feel worse, and have a deeper conviction of sin before they may trust in Christ. Many hundreds do I meet with, who say they dare not come to Christ and trust him with their souls, because they do not feel their need of him enough; they have not sufficient contrition for their sins they have not repented as fully as they have rebelled. Brethren, it is the same evil, from the same old germ of self-righteousness, but it has taken another and I think a more crafty shape. Satan has wormed himself into many hearts under the garb of an angel of light, and he has whispered to the sinner, "Repentance is a necessary virtue; stop until you have repented, and when you have sufficiently mortified yourself on account of sin, then you will be fit to come to Christ, and qualified to trust and rely on him." It is with that deadly evil I want to grapple this morning. I am

persuaded it is far more common than some would think. And I think I know the reason of its great commonness. In the Puritanic age, which was noted certainly for its purity of doctrine, there was also a great deal of experimental preaching, and much of it was sound and healthy. But some of it was unscriptural, because it took for its standard what the Christian felt and not what the Saviour said; the inference from a believer's experience, rather than the message which goes before any belief. That excellent man, Mr. Rogers, of Deadham, who has written some useful works, and Mr. Sheppard, who wrote *The Sound Believer*, Mr. Flavel, and many others, give descriptions of what a sinner must be before he may come to Christ, which actually represent what a saint is, after he has come to Christ. These good brethren have taken their own experience; what they felt before they came into light, as the standard of what every other man ought to feel before he may put his trust in Christ and hope for mercy. There were some in the Puritanic times who protested against that theology, and insisted that sinners were to be bidden to come to Christ just as they were; not with any preparation either of feeling or of doing. At the present time there are large numbers of Calvinistic ministers who are afraid to give a free invitation to sinners; they always garble Christ's invitation thus: "If you are a sensible sinner you may come;" just as if stupid sinners might not come;" and then they describe what that feeling of need is, and give such a high description of it that their hearers say, "Well, I never felt like that," and they are afraid to venture for lack of the qualification. Mark you, the brethren speak truly in some respect. They describe what a sinner does feel before he comes, but they make a mistake in putting what a sinner does feel, as if that were what a sinner ought to feel. What the sinner feels, and what the sinner does, until he is renewed by grace, are just the very opposite of what he ought. We always get wrong when we say one Christian's experience is to be measured by the Word of God; and what the sinner should feel is to be measured by what Christ commands him to feel, and not by what another sinner has felt. Comparing ourselves among ourselves, we are not wise. I do believe there are hundreds and thousands who remain in doubt and darkness, and go down to despair, because there is a description given and a preparation for Christ demanded, to which they cannot attain—a description indeed which is not true, because it is a description of what they feel after they have found Christ, and not what they must feel before they may come to

him. Now, then, with all my might I come this morning to break down every barrier that keeps a soul from Christ; and, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me, to dash the battering ram of truth against every wall that has been built up, whether by doctrinal truth or experimental truth, that keeps the sinner from Christ, who desires to come and to be saved by him.

I shall attempt to address you in the following order this morning. First, a little by way of consolation; then, a little by way of instruction; a little more upon discrimination or caution; and in the last place, a few sentences by way of exhortation.

I. First, beloved, let me speak to you who are desiring to feel more and more your sins, and whose prayer is the prayer of the text, "Lord how many are mine iniquities and my sins, make me to know my transgression and my sin." Let me try to COMFORT YOU. It ought to give you much solace when you recollect that the best of men have prayed this prayer before you. The better a man is, the more anxious is he to know the worst of his case. The more a man gets rid of sin and the more he lives above his daily faults and errors, the more does he cry "Search me, O God, and know my heart; O try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Bad men do not want to know their badness; it is the good man, the man who has been renewed by grace, who is anxious to discover what is his disease, that he may have it healed. Ought it not then be to some ground of comfort to you, that your prayer is not a prayer which could come from the lips of the wicked, but a prayer which has constantly been offered by the most advanced of saints, by those who have most grown in grace. Perhaps that is a reason why it would not be offered by you, who just now can scarcely hope to be a saint at all; yet it should be a matter of sweet rejoicing that your prayer cannot be an evil one, because the "Amens" of God's people, even those who are the fathers in our Israel, go up to God with it. I am sure my aged brothers and sisters in Christ now present, can say unanimously, "That has often been my prayer, 'Lord let me know my iniquity and my sin; teach me how vile I am, and lead me daily to Christ Jesus that my sins may be put away.'"

Let this reflection also comfort you—you never prayed like this years ago when you were a careless sinner. It was the last thing you would ever think of asking for; you did not want to know your guilt. No! you found pleasure in wickedness. Sin was a sweet morsel to you; you only wanted to be let alone that you might roll it under your tongue. If any told you of your evil, you would rather they let it alone. "Ah," said you, "what business is that of yours? no doubt I make some mistakes and am a little amiss, but I don't want to be told so." Why, the last meditation you would ever have thought of entertaining would have been a meditation upon your own criminality. When conscience did speak, you said, "Lay down, sir, be quiet!" When God's word came home sharp to you, you tried to blunt its edge—you did not want to feel it. Now, ought it not to be some comfort that you have had such a gracious change wrought in you, that you are now longing for the very feeling which at one time you could not endure? Surely, man, the Lord must have begun a good work in you, for you would not have such wishes and desires as these unless he had put his hand to the plough, and had begun to plough the barren, dry, hard soil of your heart.

Yet further, there is another reason why you should take comfort; it is very probable you do already feel your guilt, and what you are asking for you already have in measure realized. It often happens that a man has the grace which he seeks for, and does not know he has it, because he makes a mistake as to what he should feel when he has the blessing. He has already got the boon which he asks God to give him. Let me just put it in another shape. If you are sorry because you cannot be sorry enough on account of sin, why you are already sorry. If you grieve because you cannot grieve enough, why you do grieve already. If it is a cause of repentance to you that your heart is very hard and that you cannot repent, why you do repent. My dear hearer, let me assure you for your comfort, that when you go down on your knees and say "Lord, I groan before thee, because I cannot groan; I cannot feel; Lord help me to feel;" why, you do feel, and you have got the repentance that you are asking for. At least you have got the first degree of it; you have got the mustard seed of repentance in tiny grain. Let it alone, it will grow; foster it with prayer and it will become a tree. The very grace which you are asking of God is speaking in your very prayer. It is repentance which asks God that I may

repent more. It is a broken heart which asks God to break it. That is not a hard heart which says, "Lord I have a hard heart; soften my heart." It is a soft heart already. That is not a dead soul which says, "Lord I am dead, quicken me." Why, you are quickened. That man is not dumb who says, "Lord I am dumb; make me speak." Why, he speaks already; and that man who says, "Lord I cannot feel," why, he feels already. He is a sensible sinner already. So that you are just the man that Christ calls to him. This experience of yours, which you think is just the opposite of what it ought to be, is just what it should be. Oh, be comforted in this respect. But sit not down in it; be comforted enough to make you run to Jesus now,—just as you are. I take thee, sinner, to be just the man the minister is always seeking after. When we say that Christ came that there might be drink given to the thirsty, you are just the man we mean—you are thirsty. "No," you say, "I don't feel that I am thirsty, I only wish I did." Why, that wish to feel thirsty is your thirst. You are exactly the man; you are far nearer the character than if you said "I do thirst, I have the qualification;" then, I should be afraid you had not got it." But, because you think you have it not, it is all the clearer proof that you have this qualification, if indeed there be any qualification. When I say, "Come unto Christ all ye that labour and are heavy laden;" and you say, "Oh, I don't feel heavy laden enough," why, you are the very man the text means. And when I say, "Whosoever will, let him come," and you say, "I wish I were more willing, I will to be willing," why you are the man. It is only one of Satan's quibbles—a bit of hell's infernal logic to drive you from Christ. Be a match for Satan now, this once and say "Thou lying fiend, thou tellest me I do not feel my need of a Saviour enough. I know I feel my need; and, inasmuch as I long to feel it I do feel it. Christ bids me come to him, and I will come—now, this morning. I will trust my soul, just as it is, in the hands of him whose body hung upon the tree. Sink or swim, here I am resting on him, and clinging to him as the rock of my salvation."

Take then, these words of comfort.

II. I must now go on to my second point, and give a few words of INSTRUCTION.

And so, my hearer, you anxiously long to know how many are your

iniquities and your sins; and your prayer is, "Lord, make me to know my transgression and my sin." Let me instruct thee, then as to how God will answer your prayers. God hath more than one way of answering the same prayer; and though the ways are diverse, they are all equally useful and efficacious. It sometimes happens that God answers this prayer by allowing a man to fall into more and more gross sin. At our last church meeting, a brother, in giving his experience of how he was brought to God, said he could not feel his guilt, his heart was very hard; till it happened one day he was tempted to the utterance of an untruth, and no sooner had he uttered it than he felt what a despicable creature he was to tell a lie to another. So that one sin led him to see the deceitfulness and vileness of his own heart; and from that day he never had to complain that he did not feel his guilt enough, but, on the contrary, he felt too guilty to come to Christ. I believe many a man, who has been educated morally, who has been trained up in such a way that he has never fallen into gross sin, finds it very difficult to say, "Lord, I feel myself to be a sinner." He knows he is a sinner, and he knows it as a matter of fact, but he cannot altogether feel it. And I have known men who have often envied the harlot and the drunkard, because, say they, "Had I been like them, I should feel more bitterly my sin, and should feel I was one of those whom Jesus came to save." It may be, though I could hope it may not be so, that God may suffer thee to fall into sin. God grant it may never be so; but if thou ever shouldst, thou wilt then have cause to say, "Lord, I am vile; now mine eyes sees myself; I abhor myself in dust and ashes, because of this my great sin." Or possibly, you may not actually fall into sin, but be taken to the very verge of it. Did you ever know what it was on a sudden to be overtaken by some fiery temptation, to feel as if the strong hand of Satan had gripped you about the loins, and was pulling on, you knew not whither, nor why, nor how, but against your will, to the very verge of the precipice of some tremendous sin, and you went on and on, till, on a sudden, just as you were about to take a dive into sin, your eyes were opened, and you said, "Great God, how came I here,—I, who hate this iniquity?—I, who abhor it?—and yet my feet had almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped." Then in the recoil you say, "Great God, hold thou me up, for if thou dost not hold me up, I fall indeed." Then you discover that there is inbred sin in your heart only lacking opportunity to spring out; that your soul is like a magazine of gunpowder, only needing

the spark, and there shall come a terrible catastrophe; that you are full of sin, grim with iniquity and evil devices, and that it only wants opportunity and strong temptation to destroy you body and soul, and that for ever. It happens sometimes that this is the way God answers this prayer.

A second method by which the Lord answers this prayer is by opening the eyes of the soul; not so much by providence, as by the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit. Let me tell thee, my hearer, if thou shouldst ever have thine eyes opened to see thy guilt, thou wilt find it to be the most awful sight that thou hast ever beheld. I have had as much experience of this as any man among you. For five years as a child there was nothing before my eyes but my guilt; thought I do not hesitate to say that those who observed my life would not have seen any extraordinary sin, yet as I looked upon myself, there was not a day in which I did not commit such gross, such outrageous sins against God, that often and often have I wished I had never been born. I know John Bunyan's experience when he said he wished he had been a frog, or a toad, rather than a man, so guilty did he feel himself to be. You know how it is with yourselves. It is as when a housewife cleans her chamber, she looks, and there is no dust; the air is clear, and all her furniture is shining brightly. But there is a chink in the window shutter, a ray of light creeps in, and you see the dust dancing up and down, thousands of grains, in the sunbeam. It is all over the room the same, but she cannot see it only where the sunbeam comes. It is just so with us; God sends a ray of divine light into the heart, and then we see how vile and full of iniquity it is. I trust, my hearer, that your prayer may not be answered as it was in my case, by terrible conviction, awful dreams, nights of misery, and days of pain. Take care; you are praying a tremendous prayer when you are asking God to show you your wickedness. Better for you to modify your prayer, and put it thus,—"Lord, let me know enough of my iniquity to bring me to Christ; not so much as to keep me from him, not so much as to drive me to despair; but only enough to be divorced from all trust in myself, and to be led to trust in Christ alone." Otherwise, Like Moses, you may be constrained to cry out in a paroxysm of agony, "O Lord, kill me I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness."

Still, however, the practical question recurs, and you ask me again, "Tell me how I can feel the need of my Saviour." The first advice I give you is this: Particularise your sins. Do not say "I am a sinner;" it means nothing; everybody says that. But say this, "Am I a liar? Am I a thief? Am I a drunkard? Have I had unchaste thoughts? Have I committed unclean acts? Have I in my soul often rebelled against God? Am I often angry without a cause? Have I a bad tempter? Am I covetous? Do I love this world better than the world to come? Do I neglect prayer? Do I neglect the great salvation?" Put the yourself much more readily than by taking yourself in the gross as being a sinner. I have heard of a hypocritical old Monk who used to whine out, while he whipped his back as softly as he could, "Lord, I am a great sinner, as big a sinner as Judas;" and when some one said, "Yes that you are—you are like Judas, a vile old hypocrite," then he would say, "No I am not." Then he would go on again, "I am a great sinner." Some one would say, "You are a great sinner, you broke the first commandment;" and then he would say, "No I have not." Then when he would go on and say, "I am a great sinner," some one would say, "Yes, you have broken the second commandment," and he would say, "No I have not;" and the same with the third and the fourth, and so on right through. So it came to pass he had kept the whole ten according to his own account, and yet he went on crying he was a great sinner. The man was a hypocrite, for if he had not broken the commandments, how could he be a sinner at all? You will find it better not to dwell on your sins in the mass, but to pen them, count them over, and look at them individually, one by one.

Then let me advise you next to hear a personal ministry. Sit not where the preacher preaches to you in the plural number, but where he deals with you as a man alone, by yourself. Seek out a preacher like Rowland Hill, of whom it is said that if you sat in the back seat in the gallery, you always had a notion that Mr. Hill meant you; or, that if you sat in the doorway where he could not see you, yet you were quite convinced he must know you were there, and that he was preaching right at you. I wonder indeed, if men ever could feel their sins under some ministers—genteel ministers, intellectual, respectable, who never speak to their hearers as if they did anything wrong. I say of these gentlemen what Hugh Latimer said of many ministers in his day, that they are more fit to dance a morris-dance

than to deal with the souls of men. I believe there are some this day more fit to deliver smart lectures and bring out pleasing things to soothe carnal minds, than to preach the Word of God to sinners. We want the like of John the Baptist back again, and Boanerges; we want men like Baxter to preach,

"As though they might not preach again,
As dying men to dying men."

We want men like John Berride, who have pulled the velvet out of their mouths years ago and cannot speak fine words—men that hit hard, that draw the bow and pull the arrow to its very head, and send it right home, taking deadly aim at the heart and the conscience of men, ploughing deep, hitting at the private lusts and at the open sins, not generalising but particularizing, not preaching to men in the mass but to men in the detail, not to the mob and the crowd, but to each man separately and individually. Grow not offended with the minister if he come home too close to you; remember that is his duty. And if the whip goes right round you, and stings you, thank Cod for it, be glad of it. Let me, if I sit under a ministry, sit under a man who uses the knife with me sometimes, a man who will not spare me, a man who will not flatter me. If there should be flattery anywhere, let it not be at any rate in the pulpit. He who deals with men's souls should deal with them very plain; the pulpit is not the place for fine words, when we have to deal with the solemnities of eternity. Take that advice, then, and listen to a personal, home-smiting ministry.

Next to that, if thou wouldst know thy sins, study much the law of God let the twentieth chapter of Exodus be often before your eyes, and take with it as a commentary, Christ's sermon, and Christ's speech when he said, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." Understand that God's commandments mean not only what they say in words, but that they touch the thought, the heart, the imagination. Think of that sentence of David, "Thy commandments are exceeding broad." And thus, I think, thou wilt soon come to detect the heinousness of thy sin, and the blackness of thy guilt. And if thou wouldst know still more, spend a little time in contemplating the fatal end of thy sin, shouldst thou die impenitent. Dare to look

downward to that fire which must be thy eternal doom, unless Jesus Christ save thee. Be wise, sinner, and look at the harvest which thou shalt surely reap if thou sowest tares; sometimes let these words ring in thy ears, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Open thy ears and listen to the end of this text—"Where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Let such a passage as this be chewed over in your soul, "The wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God." These solemn thoughts may help you. Such books as Allaine's Alarm, Baxter's Call to the Uncoverted, Doddridge's Rise and Progress, may have a good effect on your mind, in helping you to see the greatness of your guilt, by making you meditate upon the greatness of its punishment. But if thou wouldst have a better, and more effectual way still, I give thee one other piece of advice. Spend much of your time in thinking upon the agonies of Christ, for the guilt of thy sin is never so clearly seen anywhere as in the fact that it slew the Saviour. Think what an evil thing that must be which cost Christ his life, in order to save thee. Consider, I say, poor soul, how black must be that vileness which could only be washed out with his precious blood! how grievous those offences which could not be expiated unless his body were nailed to the tree, his side pierced, and unless he died in fever and in thirst, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Go thou to the garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and see the Saviour in his bloody sweat! Go thou to Pilate's hall, and see him in his shameful accusations! Go thou to the hall of Herod's praetorian guard, and see there how the mighty men set Christ at nought! And go then, last of all, to Calvary, and see that spectacle of woe, and if these do not show thee the blackness of thy sin, then nothing can. If the death of Christ do not teach thee thy need of a Saviour, then what remedy remains for a heart so hard, for a soul so blind as thine?

Thus have I given you words of instruction. Forget them not; put them into practice. Be ye not hearers only, but doers of the word.

III. And now, very briefly indeed, a few sentences by way of DISCRIMINATION.

Thou art longing, my hearer, to know thy great guilt and to feel thy need of Jesus. Take care that thou dost discriminate between the work of the

Spirit and the work of the devil. It is the work of the Spirit to make thee feel thy self a sinner, but it never was his work to make thee feel that Christ could forget thee. It is the work of the Spirit to make thee repent of sin; but it is not the work of the Spirit to make thee despair of pardon; that is the devil's work. You know Satan always works by trying to counterfeit the work of the Spirit. He did so in the land of Egypt. Moses stretched out his rod and turned all the waters into blood. Out came Jannes and Jambres and by their cunning and sleight of hand, they have a large piece of water brought, and they turn that into blood. Then Moses fills the land with frogs—the ungracious sorcerers have a space cleared and they fill that with frogs; thus they opposed the work of God by pretender to do the same work; so will the devil do with thee. "Ah!" says God the Holy Spirit; "Sinner thou canst not save thyself" "Ah!" says the devil, "and he cannot save thee either." "Ah!" says God the Holy Spirit "thou hast a hard heart, only Christ can soften it." "Ah!" says the devil, "but he wont soften it unless thou dost soften it first." "Ah!" says God the Spirit "thou hast no qualification, thou art naked, and ruined, and undone." "Yes," says the devil, "it is no use your trusting Christ, because you have no good in you, and you cannot hope to be saved." "Ah!" says God the Spirit, "thou dost not feel thy sin; thou art hard to repent, because of thy hardness." "Ah!" says the devil, "and because thou art so hard-hearted Christ cannot save thee." Now do learn to distinguish between the one and the other. When a poor penitent sometimes thinks of destroying himself, do you think that is the Spirit's work? "It is the devil's work; 'he was a murderer from the beginning.'" One sinner says, "I am so guilty, I am sure I can never be pardoned." Is that the Spirit's teaching—that lie? Oh! that comes from the father of lies. Take heed, whenever you read a biography like that of John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, as you read, say, "that is the Spirit's work, Lord send me that"—"that is the devil's work, Lord keep me from that." Do not be desirous to have the devil tearing your soul to pieces; the less you have to do with him the better, and if the Holy Ghost keeps Satan from you, bless him for it. Do not wait to have the terrors and horrors that some have, but come to Christ just as you are. You do not want those terrors and horrors, they are of little use. Let me remind you of another thing; I ask you not to acquaint yourself with your sins so as to hope to know them all, because you cannot number them with man's poor arithmetic. Young, in his *Night*

Thoughts, says, "God hides from all eyes but his own that desperate sight—a human heart." If you were to know only the tenth part of how bad you have been you would be driven mad. You who have been the most moral, the most excellent in character, if all the past sins of your heart could stand before you in their black colours, and you could see them in their true light, you would be in hell, for indeed it is hell to discover the sinfulness of sin. Do you mean to say that you would go down on your knees and ask God to send you to hell, or drive you mad? Be not so foolish; say, "Lord, let me know my guilt enough to drive me to Christ; but do not gratify my curiosity by letting me know more; no, give me enough to make me feel that I must trust Christ, or else be lost, and I shall be well content if thou givest me that, though thou deniest me more.

Once again, my dear hearers, listen to this next caution, for it is very important. Take care thou dost not try to make a righteousness out of thy feelings. If you say, "I may not go to Christ till I feel my need of him"—that is clear legality; you are on the wrong track altogether, because Christ does not want you to feel your need in order to prepare for him; he wants no preparation, and anything which you think to be a preparation is a mistake. You are to come just as you are—today, as you are, now—not as you will be, but just now, as you now are. I do not say to you, "Go home and seek God in prayer; I say come to Christ now at this very hour;" you will never be in a better state than you are now, for you were never in a worse state, and that is the fittest state in which to come to Christ. He that is very sick is just in the right state to have a doctor; he that is filthy and begrimed is just in the right state to be washed; he that is naked is just in the right state to be clothed. That is your case. But you say, "I do not feel my need." Just so: your not feeling it proves you to have the greater need. You cannot trust your feelings, because you say, you have not any. Why, if God were to hear your prayers and make you feel your need, you would begin to trust in your feelings, and would be led to say, "I trust Christ because I feel my need;" that would be just saying, "I trust myself." All these things are but Popery in disguise; all this preaching to sinners that they must feel this and feel that before they trust in Jesus, is just self-righteousness in another shape. I know our Calvinistic brethren will not like this sermon—I cannot help that—for I do not hesitate to say, that Phariseism is mixed with Hyper-Calvinism more than with any

other sect in the world. And I do solemnly declare that this preaching to the prejudice and feelings of what they call sensible sinners, is nothing more than self-righteousness taking a most cunning and crafty shape, for it is telling the sinner that he must be something before he comes to Christ. Whereas the gospel is preached not to sensible sinners, or sinners with any other qualifying adjective, but to sinners as sinners, to sinners just as they are; it is not to sinners as repentant sinners, but to sinners as sinners, be their state what it may, and their feelings whatever they may. Oh, sinners, Mercy's door is wide open flung to you this morning; let not Satan push you back saying, "You are not fit;" You are not fit! that is to say, you have all the fitness Christ wants, and that is none at all. Come to him just as you are. "Oh," says one, "but you know that hymn of Hart's? 'All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him.'

I cannot get that." Let me counsel you then, never to quote part of a hymn, or part of a text: quote it all:—

"All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him;
This he gives you,
'Tis his Spirits rising beam."

Come and ask him to give it to you, and believe he will give it you. Do believe my Master is longing to save you: trust him, act on that better, sinner, and you shall be saved, or else I will be lost with you. Do but believe that my Master has got a loving heart, and that he is able to forgive, and that he has a mighty arm and is able to deliver you. Do him the honour now of not measuring his corn with your bushel. "For his ways are not your ways, neither are his thoughts your thoughts. "As high as the heaven is above the earth, so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts." To-day he says to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Sinner, if thou believest and art not saved, why God's Word is a lie, and God is not true. And wilt thou ever dream that to be the case? No, sinner; close in now with the proclamation of this gospel, and say,—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose sceptre mercy gives;

Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.
"Perhaps he will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there."

Thou canst not perish trusting in Christ. Though thou hast no good works and no good feelings, yet if thine arms are round the cross, and if the blood be sprinkled on thy brow, when the destroying angel shall pass through the world, he shall pass over thee. Thus is it written:—"When I see the blood, I will pass over you;"—not "when I see your feelings about the blood,"—not "when I see your faith in the blood," but "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." learn to discriminate between a sense of sin which would humble thee, and a sense of sin which would only make thee proud; when thou hast come to say, "I have felt my sin enough, and therefore I am fit to come to Christ," it is nothing but pride dressed in the garb of humility.

Let me tell the one more thing before I have done with thee on this point. Anything which keeps thee from Christ is sin, whatever though thou hast which keeps thee from trusting Christ to-day is a sinful thought; and every hour thou continuest as thou art, as unbeliever in Christ, the wrath of God abideth on thee. Now why shouldst thou be asking for a thing which may help to keep thee from Christ all the longer? You know now that you have nothing good in you; why not trust in Christ for all? But you say, "I must first of all feel more." Poor soul, if you were to feel more acutely, you would find it all the harder to trust Christ. I prayed to God that he would show me my guilt; I little thought how he would answer me. Why I was such a fool that I would not come to Christ unless the devil dragged me there. I said, "Christ cannot have died for me, because I have not felt miserable enough." God heard me, and, believe me, I will never pray that prayer again; for when I began to feel my guilt, then I said, "I am too wicked to be saved," and I found the very thing I had been asking for was a curse upon me, and not a blessing. So, if thou shouldst feel what thou askest to feel, it might be the cause of thy condemnation. Be wise, therefore, and listen to my Master's voice; stay not to gather together the

fuller's soap, and the refiner's fire, but come thou and wash now in Jordan, and be clean; come, and stop not till thy heart be turned up with the plough, and thy soul hewn down with the axe. Come as thou art to him now. What man! wilt not thou come to Christ, when he has said, "Whosoever will, let him come?" Wilt thou not trust him when he looks down and smiles on thee and says, "Trust me, I will never deceive thee?" What, canst thou not say to him, "Master, I am very guilty, but thou hast said, 'Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Lord, this mercy is too great, but I believe it, I take thee at thy word; thou hast said, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will forgive your iniquities." Lord, I come to thee, I know not how it is that thou canst forgive such an one as I am, but I believe thou canst not lie, and on that promise do I rest my soul. I know thou hast said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" Lord, I cannot understand how there can be power in the blood to wash away all manner of blasphemy, but thou hast said it, and believe it. It is thy business to make thy own word true, not mine, and thou hast said, "Whosoever will, let him come;" Lord, I am not worthy, but I do will to come, or if I do not will, yet I will to will, therefore will I come, just as I am, I know I have no good feeling to recommend myself to thee, but then thou dost not want good feeling in me, thou wilt give me all I want.

Oh my dear hearers, I feel so glad I have such a gospel as this to preach to you. If you have not received it, I pray God the Holy Ghost to send it home to you. It is so simple that men cannot believe it is true. If I were to bid you take off your shoes and run from here to York and you would be saved, why you would do it at once, and the road to York would be thronged; but when it is nothing but the soul-quickening words, "Believe and live," it is too easy for your proud hearts to do. If I told you to go and earn a thousand pounds and endow a church with it, and you would be saved, you would think the price very cheap; but when I say, "Trust Christ and be saved," you cannot do that—it is too simple. Ah, madness of the human heart! strange, strange, besotted sin, when God makes the path plain, men will not run in it for that very reason; and when he sets the door wide open, that is the very reason they will not come in. They say if the door was half a-jar and they had to push it open, they would come in.

God has made the gospel too plain and too simple to suit proud hearts. May God soften proud hearts, and make you receive the Saviour.

IV. Now I come to, my last point, which I have already trenched upon, and that is by way of EXHORTATION.

Poor sinner, seven years ago you were saying just what you are saying now, and when seven more years shall have some, you will be saying just the same. Seven years ago you said, "I would trust Christ, but I do not feel as I ought." Do you feel any better now? And when another seven years are come you will feel just as you do now. You will say, "I would come, but I do not feel fit—I do not feel my need enough." Ay, and it will keep going on for ever, till you go down to the pit of hell, saying as you go down, "I do not feel my need enough," and then the lie will be detected, and you will say, "It never said in the Word of God, 'I might come to Christ when I felt my need enough,' but it said 'Whosoever will, let him come.' I would not come as I was, therefore I am justly cast away." Hear me, sinner, when I bid thee come to Jesus as thou art, and give thee these reasons for it.

In the first place, it is a very great sin not to feel your guilt, and not to mourn over it, but then it is one of the sins that Jesus Christ atoned for on the tree. When his heart was pierced,; he paid the ransomed price for your hard heart. Oh! sinner, if Christ had only died that we might be forgiven of other sins except our hard hearts, we should never go to heaven for we have, all of us, even we who have believed, committed that great sin of being impenitent before him. If He had not died to wash that sin away as well as every other sin, where should we be? The fact that thou canst not weep, nor sorrow as thou wouldst, is an addition to thy guilt; but did not Christ wash you from that sin, black though it be? Come to him, he is able to save you even from this.

Again, come to Jesus, because it is He only who can give you that heart for which you seek. If men were not to come to Christ till they feel as they should feel, they would never come at all. I will freely confess that if I had never trusted Christ until I felt I might have trusted him, I never could I trusted him, and could not trust him now. For there are times with me when after I have preached the gospel as plainly as I could, I have

returned to my own chamber and my heart has been dead, lumpish, lying like a log within my spirit, and I have thought then if I could not come to Christ as a sinner, I could not come anyhow else. If I found in the text one word before that word "sinner"—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save"—and then an adjective, and then "sinners," I should be lost. It is just because the text says, "sinners" just as they are, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," that I can hope he came to save me. If it had said Jesus Christ came into the world to save soft-hearted sinners, I should have said, "Lord, my heart is like adamant." If it had said Jesus came into the world to save weeping sinners, I should have said, "Lord, though I press my eyelids, I could not force a tear." If it had said Jesus came into the world to save sinners that felt their need of him, I should say, "I do not feel the need of it; I know I do need thee, but I do not feel it." But, Lord, thou camest to save sinners, and I am saved. I trust thou camest to save me, and here I am, sink or swim, I rest on thee. If I perish, I will perish trusting thee; and if I must be lost, in thy hands it shall be; for in my own hands I will not be in any respect, or in any degree whatever. I come to that cross, and under that cross I stand; "thy perfect righteousness my beauty is—my glorious dress."

Come sinner to Christ, because he can soften thine heart, and thou canst never soften it thyself. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins; not merely the remission, but the repentance too. He gives his grace not merely to those who seek it, but even to those that seek it not. He gives repentance not to those who repent themselves, but to those who cannot repent. And to those who are saying, "Lord I would, but cannot feel;" "I would, but cannot weep;" I say Christ is just the Saviour for you—a Christ that begins at the beginning and does not want you to begin—a Christ that shall go to the end, and won't want you to finish—a Christ that does not ask you to say Alpha, and then he will be the Omega: but he will be both Alpha and Omega. Christ, that is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. The plain gospel is just this, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." "But, Lord, I cannot see anything." "Look unto me." "But, Lord, I do not feel." "Look unto me." "But, Lord, I cannot say I feel my need." "Look unto me, not unto thyself; all this is looking to thyself." "But, Lord, I feel sometimes that I could do anything, but a week passes, and then I am hard of heart." "Look unto

me." "But Lord, I have often tried." "Try no more, look unto me." "Oh, but Lord thou knowest." "Yes. I know all things. I know everything, all thine iniquity and thy sins, but look unto me." "Oh, but often, Lord, when I have heard a sermon I feel impressed, yet it is like the morning cloud and the early dew; it passes away." "Look unto me," not to thy feelings or thy impressions, look unto me." "Well," says one, "but will that really save me, just looking to Christ?" My dear soul, if that does not save thee I am not saved. The only way in which I have been saved, and the only gospel I can find in the Bible is looking to Christ. "But if I go on in sin," says one. But you cannot go on in sin; your looking to Christ will cure you that habit of sin. "But if my heart remains hard?" It cannot remain hard; you will find that looking to Christ will keep you from having a hard heart. It is just as we sing in the penitential hymn of gratitude,—
"Dissolved by thy mercy I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

You will never feel as you ought until you do not feel what you ought; you will never come to Christ until you do not feel that you can come. Come as thou art; come in all thy poverty, and stubbornness, and hardness, just as you are now, take Christ to be your all in all. Sound your songs ye angels, smite your golden harps ye redeemed ones; there are sinners snatched from hell to-day; there are men who have trusted Christ this morning. Though they scarcely know it, their sins are all forgiven; their feet are on the rock; the new song shall soon be in their mouth, and their goings shall be established. Farewell, ye brethren, turn to God this morning; God shall keep you, and you shall see his face in glory everlasting. Amen.

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Consecration to God-Illustrated by Abraham's Circumcision

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. - Genesis 17:1-2

We commenced our exposition of the life of Abram with his calling, when he was brought out of Ur of the Chaldees, and separated unto the Lord in Canaan. We then passed on to his justification, when he believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness; and now you will bear with us if we continue to the same subject to a further stage, and attempt to describe the fuller development of Abram's vital godliness in the open and clear revelation of his consecration to God. In the chapter before us we see his sanctification unto the Lord, his ordination to service, and purification as a vessel fitted for the Master's use. All the called are justified, and all the justified are by a work of the Holy Ghost sanctified, and made meet to be afterwards glorified with Christ Jesus.

Let me remind you of the order in which these blessings come. If we should speak of sanctification or consecration, it is not as a first thing, but as an elevation to be reached only by preceding stepping-stones. In vain do men pretend to be consecrated to God before they are called of God's Spirit; such have yet to be taught that no strength of nature can suffice to serve the Lord aright. They must learn what this meaneth, "Ye must be born again," for assuredly until men are brought into spiritual life by effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, all their talk about serving God may be answered in the words of Joshua, "Ye cannot serve the Lord." I speak of consecration, but it is not as a first thing, nor even as a second thing, for a man must be justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, or he will not possess the grace which is the root of all true sanctity; for sanctification grows out of faith in Jesus Christ. Remember holiness is a flower, not a root; it is not sanctification that saves, but salvation that sanctifies. A man is not saved by his holiness, but he becomes holy because he is already saved. Being justified by faith, and having peace with God, he walks no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and in the power of the blessing which he has received by grace he dedicates himself to the service of his gracious God. Not then the due order of heavenly benefits, consecration to God follows calling and justification.

Recalling your minds to Abram's history, let me remind you that thirteen years had elapsed after the time in which God had said that Abram's faith was counted to him for righteousness, and those thirteen years, so far as we can gather from Scripture, were not at all so full of brave faith and noble deeds as we might have expected them to have been. How sure is that truth that the best of men are but men at the best, for that very man who had accepted God's promise and had not staggered at it through unbelief, within a few months afterwards, or perhaps a few days, was taken with a fit of unbelief, and at the instigation of his wife, adopted means which were not justifiable, in order that he might obtain the promised heir. He used means which may not be so vicious to him, as they would be in men of modern times, but which were suggested by an unbelieving policy, and were fraught with evil. He takes Hagar to wife. He could not leave it to God to give him the promised seed; he could not leave it with God to fulfil his promise in his own time, but justifies himself in turning aside from the narrow path of faith to accomplish by doubtful methods the end which God himself had promised and undertaken to accomplish.

How shorn of splendour is Abram seen when we read of him, "and Abram hearkened unto the voice of Sarai!" That business of Hagar is to the patriarch's deep discredit, and reflects no honour at all upon either him or his faith. Look at the consequences of his unbelieving procedure! Misery soon followed. Hagar despises her mistress; Sarai throws all the blame on her husband; the poor bond-woman is so hardly dealt with that she flees from the household. How much of real cruelty may be meant by the term "dealing hardly," I cannot tell, but one marvels that such a man as Abram allowed one who had been brought into such a relationship with him, to be heedlessly chased from his house while in a condition requiring care and kindness. We admire the truthfulness of the Holy Ghost that he has been pleased to record the faults of the saints without extenuating them. Biographies of good men in Scripture are written with unflinching integrity, their evil recorded as well as their good. These faults are not written that we may say, "Abraham did so-and-so, therefore we may do it." No, brethren, the lives of these good men are warnings to us as well as examples, and we are to judge them as we should judge

ourselves, by the laws of right and wrong. Abram did wrong both in taking Hagar to wife and in allowing her to be badly used.

In after years the child of the bond-woman mocked the child of the free-woman, and an expulsion of both mother and child was needful. There was deep sorrow in Abram's heart, a bitterness not to be told. Polygamy, though tolerated under the Old Testament, was never approved; it was only endured because of the hardness of men's hearts. It is evil, only evil, and that continually. In the family relationship there can be opened no more abundant and fruitful source of misery to the sons of men than want of chastity to the marriage-bond made with one wife. Disguise that unchastity by what name you will. All these thirteen years, so far as Scripture informs us, Abram had not a single visit from his God. We do not find any record of his either doing anything memorable or having so much as a single audience with the Most High. Learn from this, that if we once forsake the track of simple faith, once cease to walk according to the purity which faith approves, we strew our path with thorns, cause God to withhold the light of his countenance from us, and pierce ourselves through with many sorrows.

But mark, beloved, the exceeding grace of God. The way to recover Abram from his backsliding was that the Lord should appear to him; and, consequently, we read in our text that at ninety-nine years of age Abram was favoured with a further visit from the Most High. This brings to my remembrance the words in the book of Revelation, concerning the church in Laodicea: "Though art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth"—a very solemn declaration; but what follows? "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me," which means just this, that for recovery out of a horrible state of languishing and lukewarmness there is no remedy but the coming of Jesus Christ to the soul in near and dear intercourse. Truly it was so with Abram. The Lord would bring him out of his state of distrust and distance into one of high dignity and sanctity, and he does it by manifesting himself to him, for the Lord talked with Abram.

"Midst darkest shades, if he appear,

My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's bright morning star,
And he my rising sun."

Breathe a prayer, my brethren and sisters. "Lord, reveal thyself to my poor backsliding, languishing spirit. Revive me, O Lord, for one smile from thee can make my wilderness blossom as the rose."

On the occasion of this gracious manifestation, God was pleased to do for Abram what I think is to us an admirable and instructive illustration of the consecration of our redeemed spirits entirely to his service. I shall, this morning, as God may help me, first lead you to observe the model of the consecrated life; secondly, the nature of the higher life; and, thirdly, its results.

I. First, then, let us notice in the words of God to Abram, **THE MODEL OF THE SANCTIFIED OR CONSECRATED LIFE.**

Here it is: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." For a man to be thoroughly sanctified to the Master's service, he must first realise the almightiness and all-sufficiency and glory of God. Brethren, the God whom we serve filleth all things, and hath all power and all riches. If we think little of him we shall render little trust to him, and consequently little obedience, but if we have grand conceptions of the glory of God, we shall learn to confide in him most thoroughly, we shall receive mercies from him most plentifully, and we shall be moved to serve him most consistently. Sin at the bottom of it very frequently has its origin in low thoughts of God. Take Abram's sin; he could not see how God could make him the father of many nations when Sarai was old and barren. Hence his error with Hagar. But if he had remembered what God now brings to his recollection, that God is El Shaddai, the allsufficient One, he would have said, "No, I will remain true to Sarai, for God can effect his own purposes without my taking tortuous means to accomplish them. He is allsufficient in himself, and not dependent upon creature strength. I will patiently hope, and quietly wait, to see the fulfilment of the Master's promises." Now, as with Abram, so with you, my brethren and sisters. When a man is in business difficulties, if he believes that God

is allsufficient to carry him through them, he will not practise any of the common tricks of trade, nor degenerate into that shiftiness which is so usual among commercial men. If a man believes, being poor, that God is sufficient portion for him, he will not grow envious of the rich or discontented with his condition. The man who feels that God is an all-sufficient portion for his spirit, will not look for pleasure in the pursuits of vanity; he will not go with the giddy multitude after their vain mirth. "No," saith he, "God hath appeared unto me as God all-sufficient for my comfort and my joy. I am content so long as God is mine. Let others drink of broken cisterns if they will, I dwell by the overflowing fountain, and am perfectly content." O beloved, what glorious names our Lord deservedly wears! Whichever of his names you choose to dwell upon for a moment, what a mine of wealth and meaning it opens up to you! Here is this name, "El Shaddai;" "El," that is, "the strong one," for infinite power dwells in Jehovah. How readily may we who are weak become mighty if we draw upon him! And then, "Shaddai," that is to say, "the unchangeable, the invincible." What a God we have then, who knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning, against whom none can stand! "El," strong; "Shaddai," unchangeable in his strength; always therefore strong in every time of need, ready to defend his people, and able to preserve them from all their foes. Come, Christian, with such a God as this why needest thou abase thyself to win the good word of the wicked man? Why gaddest thou abroad to find earthly pleasures where the roses are always mixed with thorns? Why needest thou to put thy confidence in gold and silver, or in the strength of thy body, or in aught that is beneath the moon? Thou hast El Shaddai to be thine. Thy power to be holy will much depend upon thy grasping with all the intensity of thy faith the cheering fact that this God is thy God for ever and ever, thy daily portion, thine all-sufficient consolation. Thou dares not, canst not, wilt not, wander into the ways of sin when thou knowest that such a God is thy shepherd and guide.

Following up this model of the consecrated life, notice the next words—"walk before me." This is the style of life which characterises true holiness; it is a walking before God. Ah! Brethren, Abram had walked before Sarai; he had paid undue respect to her views and wishes; he had walked, too, in the sight of his own eyes and the inclinations of his own heart when he was allied to Hagar; but now the Lord gently rebukes him

with the exhortation, "Walk before me." It is remarkable that on the former divine visit to the patriarch (which we tried to interpret last Lord's-day), the Lord's message was "Fear not." He was then, as it were, but a child in spiritual things, and the Lord gave him comfort, for he needed it. He is now grown into a man, and the exhortation is practical and full of activity—"walk." The Christian man is to put out and use the strength and grace which he hath received. The pith of the exhortation lies in the last words, "Walk before me," by which I understand an habitual sense of the presence of God, or doing the right thing and shunning the wrong, out of respect to the will of God; a consideration of God in all actions, public and private. Brethren, I deeply regret when I see Christian men, even in religious societies, in their calculations leaving out the greatest item in the whole calculation—namely, the divine element, the divine power and faithfulness. Of the most of mankind I may say, without being censorious, that if there were no God their course of action would not be different from what it is, for they do not feel themselves either restrained or constrained by any sense of the divine presence. "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." But this is the mark of the truly sanctified man of God, that he lives in every place as standing in the presence chamber of the divine Majesty; he acts as knowing that the eye which never sleeps is always fixed on him. His heart's desire is that he may never do the wrong thing, because he has respect to worldly greatness, and may never forget the right thing because he is in evil company, but may reckon that God being everywhere, he is always in company where it would be impudent rebellion to sin. The saint feels that he must not, dare not, transgress, because he is before the very face of God. This is the model of the sanctified character, for a man to realise what the Lord is, and then to act as in the immediate presence of a holy and jealous God.

The next words are, "and be thou perfect." Brethren, does this mean absolute perfection? I shall not controvert the belief of some, that we may be absolutely perfect on earth. Freely do I admit that the model of sanctification is perfection. It were inconsistent with the character of God for him to give us any other than a perfect command, and a perfect standard. No law but that of absolute perfection could come from a perfect God, and to give us a model that were not absolutely perfect, were

to ensure to us superabundant imperfections, and to give us an excuse for them. God sets before his servants no rule of this kind, "Be as good as you can," but this, "Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Hath any man ever attained to it? Truly we have not, but for all that, every Christian man aims at it. I would far rather my child had a perfect copy to write by, though he might never write equal to it, than that he should have an imperfect copy set before him, because then he would never make a good writer at all. Our heavenly Father has given us the perfect image of Christ to be our example, his perfect law to be our rule, and it is for us to aim at this perfection in the power of the Holy Spirit, and, like Abram, to fall upon our faces in shame and confusion of face, when we recollect how far we have come short of it. Perfection is what we wish for, pant after, and shall at the last obtain. We do not want to have the law toned down to our weakness. Blessed be God, we delight in the perfection of that law. We say with Paul, "The law is holy, and just, and good, but I am carnal, sold under sin." The will of God is that which we would be conformed unto; and if we who are believers had but one wish, and it could be granted to us at once, it should be this, to make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight. However, the word "perfect," as I have said, bears commonly the meaning of "upright," or "sincere"—"walk before me, and be thou sincere." No double dealing must the Christian man have, no playing fast and loose with God or man; no hypocritical professions, or false principles. He must be as transparent as glass; he must be a man in whom there is no guile, a man who has cast aside deceit in every shape, who hates it, and loathes it, and walks before God, who sees all things with absolute sincerity, earnestly desiring in all things, both great and small, to commend himself to the conscience of others as in the sight of the Most High.

Brethren, here is the model of the consecrated life. Do you not long to attain to it? I am sure every soul that is moved by God's grace will do so. But if your feeling about it is like mine, it will be just that of Abram in the text, "Abram fell on his face before the Lord." For oh, how far short we have come of this! We have not always thought of God as all-sufficient; we have been unbelieving. We have doubted him here, and doubted him there. We have not gone to work in this world as if we believed the

promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." We have not been satisfied to suffer, or to be poor, and we have not been content to do his will without asking questions. We might often have had addressed to us the rebuke, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Is his arm shortened at all? Is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear?" Brethren, we have not always walked before the Lord. If one may speak for the rest, we do not always feel the presence of God as a check to us. There are angry words perhaps at the table; there is wrong-doing in the place of business; there are carelessness, worldliness, pride, and I know not what beside of evil to mar the day's labour; and when we come back at night we have to confess, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep, I have forgotten my Shepherd's presence. I have not always spoken and acted as if I felt that thou wast always looking upon me." Thus it has come to pass that we have not been perfect. I feel ready to laugh, not the laugh of Abram, but that of thorough ridicule, when I hear people talk about their being absolutely perfect. They must be of very different flesh and blood from us, or rather they must be great fools, full of conceit, and utterly ignorant of themselves; for if they did but look at a single action, they would find specks in it; and if they examined but one single day, they would perceive something in which they fell short, if there were nothing in which they had transgressed. You see your model, brethren, study it in the life of Christ, and then press forward to it with the zeal of the apostle who said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

II. Secondly, THE NATURE OF THIS CONSECRATION as illustrated in this chapter. On each point briefly.

Genuine spiritual consecration begins with communion with God. Note the third verse:—"Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him." By looking at Christ Jesus, his image is photographed upon our mind, and we are changed from glory to glory, as by the presence of the Lord. Distance from God's presence always means sin: holy familiarity with

God engenders holiness. The more you think of God, the more you meditate upon his works, the more you praise him, the more you pray to him, the more constantly you talk with him, and he with you, by the Holy Ghost, the more surely are you upon the road to thorough consecration to his cause.

The next point in the nature of this consecration is that it is fostered by enlarged views of the covenant of grace. Read on: "As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations." This is said to help Abram to walk before God and to be perfect; from which we conclude that to grow in sanctification a man should increase in knowledge, and also in the tenacity of the faith which grasps the covenant which God has made with Christ for his people, which is "Ordered in all things and sure." With your Bibles open, notice attentively that Abram was refreshed as to his own personal interest in the covenant. Note the second personal pronoun, how it is repeated: "As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations." Take the sixth verse, "I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee . . . to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Thus Abram has the covenant brought home to himself; he is made to feel that he has a part and a lot therein. If you are ever to be sanctified unto God's service, you must get a full assurance of your interest in all the covenant provisions. Doubts are like wild boars of the wood, which tear up the flowers of sanctification in the garden of the heart; but when you have in your soul a God-given assurance of your interest in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, then shall the foxes which spoil the vines be hunted to death, and your tender grapes shall give a good smell. Cry to God, beloved brethren and sisters, for strong faith to "Read your title clear to mansions in the skies." Great holiness must spring from great faith. Faith is the root, obedience the branch; and if the root decays the branch cannot flourish. Ask to know that Christ is yours, and that you are his; for here you will find a fountain to water your consecration and make it yield fruit to Christ's service. Some professors act as if this were not the case. They foment their doubts and fears in order to perfect holiness. I have known Christians, when they are conscious that they have not lived as they ought to live, begin to doubt

their interest in Christ, and, as they say, humble themselves in order to reach after fuller sanctification of life. That is to say, they starve themselves in order to grow strong; they throw their gold out of window in order to become rich; they pull up the very foundation-stone of their house to make it stand secure. Beloved believer, sinner as thou art, backslider as thou art, still believe in Jesus, let not a sense of sin weaken thy faith in him. He died for sinners, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Cling to that cross still: the more furious the storm the more need of the life-buoy—never leave it, but make your hold the firmer. Confide alone in the virtue of that precious blood, for thus only will you slay your sins and advance in holiness. If you say within your heart, "Jesus cannot save such a one as I am; if I had marks and evidences of being God's child, I could then trust in compense of reward; you have cast away your shield, and the darts of the tempter will wound you terribly. Cling to Jesus even when it is a question whether you have a grain of grace in your hearts. Believe that he died for you, not because you are consecrated or sanctified, but died for you as sinners, and saves you as sinners. Never lose your simple trust in the Crucified, for only by the blood of the Lamb can you overcome sin and be made fit for the Lord's work.

Note, in reading these words, how this covenant is revealed to Abram peculiarly as a work of divine power. Note the run of the passage, "I will make my covenant between me and thee." "I will make thee fruitful." "I will establish my covenant." "I will give unto thee." "I will be thy God," and so on. Oh! those glorious "wills" and "shalls." Brethren, ye cannot serve the Lord with a perfect heart until first your faith gets a grip of the divine "will" and "shall." If my salvation rests upon this poor, puny arm, upon my resolves, my integrity, and my faithfulness, it is shipwrecked for ever; but if my eternal salvation rests upon the great arm which bears up the universe, if my soul's safety is altogether in that hand that wheels the stars along, then blessed be his name, it is safe and well; and now out of love to such a Saviour I will serve him with all my heart. I will spend and be spent for him who has thus graciously undertaken for me. Mark this, brethren, be very clear about it, and ask to have the divine working made apparent to your soul, for that will help you to be consecrated to God.

Further, Abraham had a view of the covenant in its everlastingness. I do not remember that the word "everlasting" had been used before in reference to that covenant, but in this chapter we have it over and over again. "I will establish my covenant for an everlasting covenant." Here is one of those grand truths which many of the babes in grace have not as yet learned, namely, that the blessings of grace are blessings not given to-day to be taken back to-morrow, but eternal blessings. The salvation which is in Christ Jesus is not a salvation which will belong to us for a few hours, while we are faithful to it, and will then be taken away, so that we shall be left to perish. God forbid, "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." "I am God," saith he, "I change not: therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." When we put ourselves into the hands of Christ, we do not confide in a Saviour who might suffer us to be destroyed, but we rest in one who hath said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Instead of the doctrine of the security of the saints leading to negligence of life, you will find that, on the contrary, where it is thoroughly well received in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, it begets such a holy confidence in God, such a flaming gratitude to him, that it is one of the best incentives to consecration. Treasure up these thoughts, dear brethren, and if you would grow in grace and in conformity to Christ, endeavour to perceive your personal interest in the covenant, the divine power which guarantees its fulfilment, and the everlastingness of its character.

In considering the nature of this consecration, I would observe next, that they who are consecrated to God are regarded as new men. The new manhood is indicated by the change of name—he is called no longer Abram, but Abraham, and his wife is no longer Sarai, but Sarah. Ye, beloved, are new creatures in Christ Jesus. The root and source of all consecration to God lies in regeneration. We are "born again," a new and incorruptible seed is placed within us which "liveth and abideth for ever." The name of Christ is named upon us: we are no longer called sinners and unjust, but we become the children of God by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Note further that the nature of this consecration was set forth to

Abraham by the rite of circumcision. It would not be at all fitting or decorous for us to enter into any detail as to that mysterious rite, but it will suffice to say that the rite of circumcision signified the taking away of the filthiness of the flesh. We have the apostle Paul's own interpretation of circumcision in the verses which we read just now in his epistle to the Colossians. Circumcision indicated to the seed of Abraham that there was a defilement of the flesh in man which must for ever be taken away, or man would remain impure, and out of covenant with God. Now, beloved, there must be, in order to our sanctification to Christ, a giving up, a painful relinquishing of things as dear to us as right eyes and right hands. There must be a denying of the flesh with its affections and lusts. We must mortify our members. There must be self-denial if we are to enter upon the service of God. The Holy Spirit must pass sentence of death and cutting away upon the passions and tendencies of corrupt humanity. Much must perish which nature would cherish, but die it must, because grace abhors it.

Notice, with regard to circumcision, that it was peremptorily ordained that it should be practised on every male of the race of Abraham, and if it were neglected, death followed. So the giving up of sin, the giving up of the body of the filth of the flesh is necessary to every believer. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Even the babe in Christ is as much to see death written upon the body of the filth of the flesh as a man who, like Abraham, has reached advanced years and come to maturity in spiritual things. There is not distinction here between the one and the other. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and where a supposed grace does not take away from us a love of sin, it is not the grace of God at all, but the presumptuous conceit of our own vain natures.

It is often said that the ordinance of baptism is analagous to the ordinance of circumcision. I will not controvert that point, although the statement may be questioned. But supposing it to be, let me urge upon every believer here to see to it that in his own soul he realises the spiritual meaning both of circumcision and baptism, and then consider the outward rites; for the thing signified is vastly more important than the sign. Baptism sets forth far more than circumcision. Circumcision is putting away of the filth of the flesh, but baptism is the burial of the flesh

altogether. Baptism does not say, "Here is something to be taken away," but everything is dead, and must be buried with Christ in his tomb, and the man must rise anew with Christ. Baptism teaches us that by death we pass into the new life. As Noah's ark, passing through the death of the old world, emerged into a new world, even so, by a like figure, baptism sets forth our salvation by the resurrection of Christ: a baptism of which Peter says, it is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." In baptism, the man avows to himself and others that he comes by death into newness of life, according to the words of the Holy Spirit, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." The most valuable point is the spiritual meaning, and on that we experience what it is to be dead to the world, to be dead and buried with Christ, and then to be risen with him. Still, brethren, Abraham was not allowed to say, "If I get the spiritual meaning, I can do without the outward rite." He might have objected to that rite on a thousand grounds a great deal more strong than any which the hesitating have urged against baptism, but he first accepted the rite, as well as the thing which it intended, and straightway was circumcised; and so I exhort you, men and brethren, to be obedient to the precept upon baptism, as well as attentive to the truth which it signifies. If you be indeed buried with Christ, and risen with him, despise not the outward and instructive sign by which this is set forth. "Well," saith one, "a difficulty suggests itself as to your views," for an argument is often drawn from this chapter, "that inasmuch as Abraham must circumcise all his seed, we ought to baptise all our children." Now, observe the type and interpret it not according to prejudice, but according to Scripture. In the type the seed of Abraham are circumcised; you draw the inference that all typified by the seed of Abraham ought to be baptised, and I do not cavil at the conclusion; but I ask you, who are the true seed of Abraham? Paul answers in Romans ix. 8, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." As many as believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, are Abraham's seed. Whether eight days old in grace, or more or less, every one of Abraham's seed has a right to baptism. But I deny that the unregenerate, whether children or adults, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. The Lord will, we trust, call many of them by

his grace, but as yet they are "heirs of wrath, even as others." At such time as the Spirit of God shall sow the good seed in their hearts, they are of Abraham's believing seed, but they are not so while they live in ungodliness and unbelief, or are as yet incapable of faith or repentance. The answering person in type to the seed of Abraham is, by the confession of everybody, the believer; and the believer ought, seeing he is buried with Christ spiritually, to avow that fact, by his public baptism in water, according to the Saviour's own precept and example. "Thus," said Christ, "it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," as he went down to the river Jordan. At the Jordan was he sprinkled? Why go down to a river to be sprinkled? Why went he down into the water to be sprinkled? "Us." Did he mean babes? Was he a babe? Was not he, when he said "us," speaking of the faithful who are in him? "And thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," that is, all his saints. But how does baptism fulfil all righteousness? Typically thus:—It is the picture of the whole work of Christ. There is his immersion in suffering; his death and burial; his coming up out of the water represents his resurrection; his coming up the banks of Jordan represents his ascension. It is a typical representation of how he fulfilled all righteousness, and how the saints fulfilled it in him. But, brethren, I did not intend to go so far into the outward sign, because my soul's deepest desire is this, that like as Abraham by the outward sign was taught that there was a putting away of the filth of flesh, which must be, or death must follow, so are we taught by baptism that there is an actual death to the world, and a resurrection with Christ, which must be to every believer, however old or however young, or he hath not part or lot in the matter of consecration to God, or, indeed, in salvation itself.

III. I have a third head, but my time is gone, and, therefore, just these hints. THE RESULTS OF SUCH A CONSECRATION.

Immediately after God's appearing to Abraham, his consecration was manifest, first, in his prayer for his family. "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Men of God, if you are indeed the Lord's, and feel that you are his, begin now to intercede for all who belong to you. Never be satisfied unless they are saved too; and if you have a son, an Ishmael, concerning whom you have many fears and much anxiety, as you are saved yourself, never cease to groan out that cry, "O that Ishmael might

live before thee!"

The next result of Abraham's consecration was, that he was most hospitable to his fellow men. Look at the next chapter. He sits at the tent door, and three men come to him. The Christian is the best servant of humanity in a spiritual sense. I mean that for his Master's sake he endeavours to do good to the sons of men. He is of all men the first to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, and as much as lieth in him to do good unto all men, especially unto such as be of the household of faith.

The third result was, Abraham entertained the Lord himself, for amongst those three angels who came to his house was the King of kings, the infinite One. Every believer who serves his God doth, as it were, give refreshment to the divine mind. I mean this, God took an infinite delight in the work of his dear Son. He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and he takes a delight also in the holiness of all his people. Jesus sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied by the works of the faithful,; and you, brethren, as Abraham entertained the Lord, do entertain the Lord Jesus with your patience and your faith, with your love and your zeal, when you are thoroughly consecrated to him.

Once more, Abraham became the great intercessor for others. The next chapter is full of his pleadings for Sodom. He had not been able to plead before, but after circumcision, after consecration, he becomes the King's remembrancer, he is installed into the office of a priest, and he stands there crying, "Wilt thou not save the city? Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?" O beloved, if we do but become consecrated to God, thoroughly so, as I have attempted feebly to describe, we shall become mighty with God in our pleadings. I believe one holy man is a greater blessing to a nation than a whole regiment of soldiers. Did not they fear more the prayers of John Knox than the arms of ten thousand men? A man who lives habitually near to God is like a great cloud for ever dropping with fertilising showers. This is the man who can say, "The earth is dissolved, I bear up the pillars thereof." France had never seen so bloody a revolution had there been men of prayer to preserve her. England, amidst the commotions which make her rock to and fro, is held fast because prayer is put up incessantly by the faithful. The flag of old

England is nailed to her mast, not by the hands of her sailors, but by the prayers of the people of God. These, as they intercede day and night, and as they go about their spiritual ministry, these are they for whom God spareth nations, for whom he permitteth the earth still to exist; and when their time is over, and they are taken away, the salt being taken from the earth, then shall the elements dissolve with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up; but not until he hath caught away the saints with Christ into the air shall this world pass away. He will spare it for the righteous' sake. Seek after the highest degree of sanctity, my dear brethren and sisters, seek for it, labour for it; and while you rest in faith alone for justification, be not slack concerning growth in grace, that the highest attainments be your ambition, and God grant them to you, for his Son's sake. Amen.

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Contentment

"For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."—
Philippians 4:11.

The Apostle Paul was a very learned man, but not the least among his manifold acquisitions in science was this—he had learned to be content. Such learning is far better than much that is acquired in the schools. Their learning may look studiously back on the past, but too often those who cull the relics of antiquity with enthusiasm, are thoughtless about the present, and neglect the practical duties of daily life. Their learning may open up dead languages to those who will never derive any living benefit from them. Far better the learning of the apostle. It was a thing of ever-present utility, and alike serviceable for all generations, one of the rarest, but one of the most desirable accomplishments. I put the senior wrangler, and the most learned of our Cambridge men in the lowest form, compared with this learned apostle; for this surely is the highest degree in humanities to which a man can possibly attain, to have learned in whatsoever state he is, to be content. You will see at once from reading the text, upon the very surface, that contentment in all states is not a natural propensity of man. Ill weeds grow apace; covetousness, discontent, and murmuring, are as natural to man as thorns are to the soil. You have no need to sow thistles and brambles; they come up naturally enough, because they are indigenous to earth, upon which rests the curse; so you have no need to teach men to complain, they complain fast enough without any education. But the precious things of the earth must be cultivated. If we would have wheat, we must plough and sow; if we want flowers, there must be the garden, and all the gardener's care. Now, contentment is one of the flowers of heaven, and if we would have it, it must be cultivated. It will not grow in us by nature; it is the new nature alone that can produce it, and even then we must be specially careful and watchful that we maintain and cultivate the grace which God has sown in it. Paul says, "I have learned to be content;" as much as to say he did not know how at one time. It cost him some pains to attain to the mystery of that great truth. No doubt he sometimes thought he had learned, and then broke down. Frequently too, like boys at school, he had

his knuckles rapped; frequently he found that it was not easy learning this task, and when at last he had attained unto it, and could say, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," he was an old grey-headed man upon the borders of the grave, a poor prisoner shut up in Nero's dungeon at Rome.

We, my brethren, might well be willing to endure Paul's infirmities, and share the cold dungeon with him, if we too might by any means attain unto such a degree of contentment. Do not indulge, any of you, the silly notion that you can be contented without learning, or learn without discipline. It is not a power that may be exercised naturally, but a science to be acquired gradually. The very words of the next text might suggest this, even if we did not know it from experience. We need not be taught to murmur, but we must be taught to acquiesce in the will and good pleasure of the Lord our God.

When the apostle had uttered these words, he immediately gave a commentary upon them. Read the 12th verse, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Notice first, that the apostle said he knew how to be abased. A wonderful knowledge this. When all men honour us, then we may very well be content; but when the finger of scorn is pointed, at us, when our character is held in ill repute, and men hiss us by the wayside, it requires much gospel knowledge to be able to endure that with patience and with cheerfulness. When we are increasing, and growing in rank, and honour, and human esteem, it is easy work to be contented; but when we have to say with John the Baptist, "I must decrease," or when we see some other servant advanced to our place, and another man bearing the palm we all had longed to hold, it is not easy to sit still, and without an envious feeling cry with Moses, "Would to God that all the Lord's servants were prophets." To hear another man praised at your own expense, to find your own virtues made as a foil to set forth the superior excellence of some new rival—this, I say, is beyond human nature, to be able to bear it with joy and thankfulness, and to bless God. There must be something

noble in the heart of the man who is able to lay all his honours down as willingly as he took them up, when he can as cheerfully submit himself to Christ to humble him, as to lift him up and seat him upon a throne. And yet, my brethren, we have not any one of us learned what the apostle knew, if we are not as ready to glorify Christ by shame, by ignominy and by reproach, as by honour and by esteem among men. We must be ready to give up everything for him. We must be willing to go downwards, in order that Christ's name may ascend upwards, and be the better known and glorified among men. "I know how to be abased," says the apostle.

His second piece of knowledge is equally valuable, "I know how to abound." There are a great many men that know a little how to be abased, that do not know at all how to abound. When they are put down in the pit with Joseph, they look up and see the starry promise, and the hope for an escape. But when they are put on the top of a pinnacle, their heads grow dizzy, and they are ready to fall. When they were poor they used to battle it, as one of our great national poets has said—

"Yet many things, impossible to thought,
Have been by Need to full perfection brought.
The daring of the soul proceeds from thence,
Sharpness of Wit, and active Diligence;
Prudence at once and Fortitude it gives;
And, if in patience taken, mends our lives."

But mark the same men after success has crowned their struggles. Their troubles are over; they are rich and increased with goods. And have you not often seen a man who has sprung up from nothing to wealth, how purse-proud he becomes, how vain, how intolerant? Nobody would have thought that man ever kept a shop; you would not believe that man at any time ever used to sell a pound of candles, would you? He is so great in his own eyes, that one would have thought the blood of all the Caesars must flow in his veins. He does not know his old acquaintances. The familiar friend of other days he now passes by with scarce a nod of recognition. The man does not know how to abound; he has grown proud; he is exalted above measure. There have been men who have been lifted up for a season to popularity in the Church. They have preached successfully, and done some mighty work. For this the people have honoured them, and rightly so. But then they have become tyrants; they have lusted after

authority; they have looked down contemptuously upon everybody else, as if other men were small pigmies, and they were huge giants. Their conduct has been intolerable, and they have soon been cast down from their high places, because they did not know how to abound. There was once a square piece of paper put up into George Whitfield's pulpit, by way of a notice, to this effect:—"A young man who has lately inherited a large fortune, requests the prayers of the congregation." Right well was the prayer asked, for when we go up the hill we need prayer that we may be kept steady. Going down the hill of fortune there is not half the fear of stumbling. The Christian far oftener disgraces his profession in prosperity than when he is being abased. There is another danger—the danger of growing worldly. When a man finds that his wealth increases, it is wonderful how gold will stick to the fingers. The man who had just enough, thought if he had more than he required he would be exceedingly liberal. With a shilling purse he had a guinea heart, but now with a guinea purse he has a shilling heart. He finds that the money adheres, and he cannot get it off. You have heard of the spider that is called a "money spinner," I do not know why it is called so, except that it is one of the sort of spiders you cannot get off your fingers; it gets on one hand, then on the other hand, then on your sleeve; it is here and there; you cannot get rid of it unless you crush it outright: so it is with many who abound. Gold is a good thing when put to use—the strength, the sinews of commerce and of charity—but it is a bad thing in the heart, and begets "foul-cankering rust." Gold is a good thing to stand on, but a bad thing to have about one's loins, or over one's head. It matters not, though it be precious earth with which a man is buried alive. Oh, how many Christians have there been who seemed as if they were destroyed by their wealth! What leanness of soul and neglect of spiritual things have been brought on through the very mercies and bounties of God! Yet this is not a matter of necessity, for the apostle Paul tells us that he knew how to abound. When he had much, he knew how to use it. He had asked of God that he might be kept humble—that when he had a full sail he might have plenty of ballast—that when his cup ran over he might not let it run to waste—that in his time of plenty he might be ready to give to those that needed—and that as a faithful steward he might hold all he had at the disposal of his Lord. This is divine learning. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." The apostle goes on to say, "everywhere and in all things

I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry." It is a divine lesson, let me say, to know how to be full; for the Israelites were full once, and while the flesh was yet in their mouth the wrath of God came upon them. And there have been many that have asked for mercies, that they might satisfy their own heart's lust; as it is written, "the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Fulness of bread has often made fulness of blood, and that has brought on wantonness of spirit. When men have too much of God's mercies—strange that we should have to say this, and yet it is a great fact—when men have much of God's providential mercies, it often happens that they have but little of God's grace, and little gratitude for the bounties they have received. They are full, and they forget God; satisfied with earth, they are content to do without heaven. Rest assured, my dear hearers, it is harder to know how to be full than it is to know how to be hungry. To know how to be hungry is a sharp lesson, but to know how to be full is the harder lesson after all. So desperate is the tendency of human nature to pride and forgetfulness of God! As soon as ever we have a double stock of manna, and begin to hoard it, it breeds worms and becomes a stench in the nostrils of God. Take care that you ask in your prayers that God would teach you how to be full.

The apostle knew still further how to experience the two extremes of fulness and hunger. What a trial that is! To have one day a path strewn with mercies, and the next day to find the soil beneath you barren of ever comfort. I can readily imagine the poor man being contented in his poverty, for he has been inured to it. He is like a bird that has been born in a cage, and does not know what liberty means. But for a man who has had much of this world's goods, and thus has been full, to be brought to absolute penury, he is like the bird that once soared on highest wing but is now encaged. Those poor larks you sometimes see in the shops, always seem as if they would be looking up, and they are constantly pecking at the wires, fluttering their wings, and wanting to fly away. So will it be with you unless grace prevent it. If you have been rich and are brought down to be poor, you will find it hard to know "how to be hungry." Indeed, my brethren, it must be a sharp lesson. We complain sometimes of the poor, that they murmur. Ah! We should murmur a great deal more than they do, if their lot fell to us. To sit down at the table, where there is nothing to eat, and five or six little children crying for bread, were enough

to break the father's heart. Or for the mother, when her husband has been carried to the tomb, to gaze round on the gloom-stricken home, press her new-born infant to her bosom, and look upon the others, with widowed heart remembering that they are without a father to seek their livelihood. Oh! It must need much grace to know how to be hungry. And for the man who has lost a situation, and has been walking all over London—perhaps a thousand miles—to get a place, and he cannot get one, to come home, and know that when he faces his wife, her first question will be "Have you brought home any bread?" "Have you found anything to do?" and to have to tell her "No; there have been no doors open to me." It is hard to prove hunger, and bear it patiently. I have had to admire, and look with a sort of reverence on some of the members of this Church, when I have happened to hear afterwards of their privations. They would not tell anyone, and they would not come to me; but they endured their pangs in secret, struggled heroically through all their difficulties and dangers, and came out more than conquerors. Ah! Brothers and sisters, it looks an easy lesson when you come to see it in a book, but it is not quite so easy when you come to put it in practice. It is hard to know how to be full, but it is a sharp thing to know how to be hungry. Our apostle had learned both—both how to abound, and to suffer need."

Having thus expounded to you the apostle Paul's own commentary, in enlarging upon the words of my text, let me return to the passage itself. You may now ask by what course of study did he acquire this peaceful frame of mind? And of one thing we may be quite certain, it was by no stoic process of self-government, but simply and exclusively by faith in the Son of God.

You may easily imagine a nobleman whose home is the abode of luxury, travelling through foreign parts for purposes of scientific discovery, or going forth to command some military expedition in the service of his country. In either case he may be well content with his fare, and feel that there is nothing to repine at. And why? Because he had no right to expect anything better; not because it bore any comparison with his rank, his fortune, or his social position at home. So our apostle. He had said "Our conversation or citizenship is in heaven." Travelling through earth as a pilgrim and stranger he was content to take travellers fare. Or entering

the battle field, he had no ground of complaint that perils and distresses should sometimes encircle his path, while at other times a truce gave him some peaceful and pleasing intervals.

Again, adverting to the text, you will notice that the word "herewith" is written in italics. If therefore we do not omit it, we need not lay upon it a heavy stress in the interpretation. There is nothing in hunger, or thirst, or nakedness, or peril, to invite our contentment. If we are content under such circumstances, it must be from higher motives than our condition itself affords. Hunger is a sharp thorn when in the hands of stern necessity. But hunger may be voluntarily endured for many an hour when conscience makes a man willing to fast. Reproach may have a bitter fang, but it can be bravely endured, when I am animated by a sense of the justice of my cause. Now Paul counted that all the ills which befell him were just incident to the service of his Lord. So for the love he bear to the name of Jesus, the hardships of servitude or self-mortification sat lightly on his shoulders, and were brooked cheerily by his heart.

There is yet a third reason why Paul was content, I will illustrate it. Many an old veteran takes great pleasure in recounting the dangers and sufferings of his past life. He looks back with more than contentment, oftentimes with self-gratulation, upon the terrible dangers and distresses of his heroic career. Yet the smile that lights his eye, and the pride that sits on his lofty wrinkled brow as he recounts his stories, were not there when he was in the midst of the scenes he is now describing. It is only since the dangers are past, the fears have subsided, and the issue is complete, that his enthusiasm has been kindled to a flame. But Paul stood on vantage ground here. "In all these things," said he, "we are more than conquerors." Witness his voyage toward Rome. When the ship in which he sailed was caught and driven before a tempestuous wind; when darkness veiled the skies; when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared; when hope failed every heart;—he alone bore up with manly courage. And why? The angel of God stood by him, and said, Fear not. His faith was predestinarian, and as such, he had as much peaceful contentment in his breast while the tribulation lasted as when it had closed.

And now I want to commend the lesson of my text very briefly to the rich, a little more at length to the poor, and then with sympathy and counsel to the sick—those who are sore-tried in their persons by suffering.

First, to the RICH. The apostle Paul says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Now some of you have, as far as your circumstances are concerned, all that the heart can wish. God has placed you in such a position that you have not to toil with your hands, and in the sweat of your face gain a livelihood. You will perhaps think that any exhortation to you to be contented is needless. Alas! my brethren, a man may be very discontented though he be very rich. It is quite as possible for discontent to sit on the throne, as it is to sit on a chair—a poor broken-backed chair in a hovel. Remember that a man's contentment is in his mind, not in the extent of his possessions. Alexander, with all the world at his feet, cries for another world to conquer. He is sorry because there are not other countries into which he may carry his victorious arms, and wade up to his loins in the blood of his fellow man, to slake the thirst of his insatiable ambition. To you who are rich, it is necessary that we give the same exhortation as to the poor: "learn to be content." Many a rich man who has an estate is not satisfied, because there is a little corner-piece of ground that belongs to his neighbour, like Naboth's vineyard that the king of Israel needed that he might make a garden of herbs hard by his palace. "What matters it," says he, "though I have all these acres, unless I can have Naboth's vineyard?" Surely a king should have been ashamed to crave that paltry half-acre of a poor man's patrimony. But yet so it is; men with vast estates, which they are scarcely able to ride over, may have that old horse-leech in their hearts, which always cries, "Give, give! More, more!" They thought when they had but little, that if they had ten thousand pounds it would be enough. They have it: they want twenty thousand pounds. When they have that, they still want more. Yes, and if you had it, it would be "A trifle more!" So would it continually be. As your possessions increased, so would the lust of acquiring property increase. We must, then, press upon the rich this exhortation: "Learn in your state, therewith to be content."

Besides, there is another danger that frequently awaits the rich man. When he has enough wealth and property, he has not always enough

honour. If the queen would but make him a justice of the peace for the country, how glorious would my lord become! That done, he will never be satisfied till he is a knight; and if he were a knight, he would never be content until he became a baron; and my lord would never be satisfied till he was an earl; nor would he even then be quite content unless he could be a duke; nor would he be quite satisfied I trow then, unless there were a kingdom for him somewhere. Men are not easily satisfied with honour. The world may bow down at a man's feet; then he will ask he world to get up and bow again, and so keep on bowing for ever, for the lust of honour is insatiate. Man must be honoured, and though king Ahasuerus make Haman the first man in the empire, yet all this availeth nothing, so long as Mordecai in the gate doth not bow down to my lord Haman. Oh! Learn, brethren, in whatever state you are, therewith to be content.

And here let me speak to the elders and deacons of this church. Brethren, learn to be content with the office you hold, not envious of any superior honour to exalt yourselves. I turn to myself, I turn to the ministry, I turn to all of us in our ranks and degrees in Christ's Church; we must be content with the honour, but to content to give it all up, knowing that it is but a puff of breath after all. Let us be willing to be the servants of the Church, and to serve them for nought, if need be even without the reward of their thanks, may we but receive at last the right good sentence from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must learn, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content.

At a little more length I have to counsel the POOR. "I have learned," says the apostle, "in whatever state I am, therewith to be content."

A very large number of my present congregation belong to those who labour hard, and who, perhaps, without any unkindly reflection, may be put down in this catalogue of the poor. They have enough—barely enough, and sometimes they are even reduced to straitness. Now remember, my dear friends, you who are poor, there are two sorts of poor people in the world. There are the Lord's poor, and there are the devil's poor. As for the devil's poor: they become pauperized by their own idleness, their own vice, their own extravagance. I have nothing to say to them to-night. There is another class, the Lord's poor. They are poor

through trying providences, poor, but industrious,—labouring to find all things honest in the sight of all men, but yet they still continue through an inscrutable providence to be numbered with the poor and needy. You will excuse me, brothers and sisters, in exhorting you to be contented; and yet why should I ask excuse, since it is but a part of my office to stir you up to everything that is pure and lovely, and of good report? I beseech you, in your humble sphere, cultivate contentment. Be not idle. Seek, if you can, by superior skill, steady perseverance, and temperate thriftiness, to raise your position. Be not so extravagant as to live entirely without care or carefulness; for he that provideth not for his own household with careful fore-thought, is worse than a heathen man and a publican; but at the same time, be contented; and where God has placed you, strive to adorn that position, be thankful to him, and bless his name. And shall I give you some reasons for so doing?

Remember, that if you are poor in this world so was your Lord. A Christian is a believer who hath fellowship with Christ; but a poor Christian hath in his poverty a special vein of fellowship with Christ opened up to him. Your Master wore a peasant's garb, and spoke a peasant's brogue. His companions were the toiling fishermen. He was not one who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. He knew what it was to be hungry and thirsty, nay, he was poorer than you, for he had not where to lay his head. Let this console you. Why should a disciple be above his Master, or a servant above his Lord? In your poverty, moreover, you are capable of communion with Christ. You can say, "Was Christ poor? Now can I sympathize with him in his poverty. Was he weary, and did he sit thus on the well? I am weary too, and I can have fellowship with Christ in that sweat which he wiped from his brow." Some of you brethren cannot go the length you can; it were wrong of them to attempt to do it, for voluntary poverty is voluntary wickedness. But inasmuch as God hath made you poor, you have a facility for walking with Christ, where others cannot. You can go with him through all the depths of care and woe, and follow him almost into the wilderness of temptation, when you are in your straits and difficulties for lack of bread. Let this always cheer and comfort you, and make you happy in your poverty, because your Lord and Master is able to sympathize as well as to succour.

Permit me to remind you again, that you should be contented, because otherwise you will belie your own prayers. You kneel down in the morning, and you say, "Thy will be done!" Suppose you get up and want your own will, and rebel against the dispensation of your heavenly Father, have you not made yourself out to be a hypocrite? The language of your prayer is at variance with the feeling of your heart. Let it always be sufficient for you to think that you are where God put you. Have you not heard the story of the heroic boy on board the burning ship? When his father told him to stand in a certain part of the vessel, he would not move till his father bade him, but stood still when the ship was on fire. Though warned of his danger he held his ground. Until his father told him to move, there would he stay. The ship was blown up, and he perished in his fidelity. And shall a child be more faithful to an earthly parent than we are to our Father, who is in heaven? He has ordered everything for our good, and can he be forgetful of us? Let us believe that whatever he appoints is best; let us choose rather his will than our own. If there were two places, one a place of poverty, and another a place of riches and honour, if I could have my choice, it should be my privilege to say, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Another reflection suggests itself. If you are poor you should be well content with your position, because, depend upon it, it is the fittest for you. Unerring wisdom cast your lot. If you were rich, you would not have so much grace as you have now. Perhaps God knew, that did he not make you poor, he would never get you to heaven at all; and so he has kept you where you are, that he may conduct you thither. Suppose there is a ship of large tonnage to be brought up a river, and in one part of the river there is a shallow, should some one ask, "Why does the captain steer his vessel through the deep part of the channel?" His answer would be, "Because I should not get it into harbour at all if I did not take it by this course." So, it may be, you would remain aground and suffer shipwreck, if your Divine Captain did not always make you trace the deepest part of the water, and make you go where the current ran with the greatest speed. Some plants die if they are too much exposed; it may be that you are planted in some sheltered part of the garden where you do not get so much sun as you would like, but you are put there as a plant of his own

righteous planting, that you may bring forth fruit unto perfection. Remember this, had any other condition been better for you than the one in which you are, God would have put you there. You are put by him in the most suitable place, and if you had had the picking of your lot half-an-hour afterwards, you would have come back and said, "Lord, choose for me, for I have not chosen the best after all." You have heard, perhaps, the old fable in Aesop, of the men that complained to Jupiter, of their burdens, and the god in anger bade them every one get rid of his burden, and take the one he would like best. They all came and proposed to do so. There was a man who had a lame leg, and he thought he could do better if he had a blind eye; the man who had a blind eye thought he could do better if he had to bear poverty and not blindness, while the man who was poor thought poverty the worst of ills; he would not mind taking the sickness of the rich man if he could but have his riches. So they all made a change. But the fable saith that within an hour they were all back again, asking that they might have their own burdens, they found the original burdens so much lighter than the one that was taken by their own selection. So would you find it. Then be content; you cannot better your lot. Take up your cross; you could not have a better trial than you have got; it is the best for you; it sifts you the most; it will do you the most good, and prove the most effective means of making you perfect in every good word and work to the glory of God.

And surely, my dear brethren, if I need to add another argument why you should be content, it were this: whatever your trouble, it is not for long; you may have no estate on earth, but you have a large one in heaven, and perhaps that estate in heaven will be all the larger by reason of the poverty you have had to endure here below. You may have scarcely a house to cover your head, but you have a mansion in heaven,—a house not made with hands. Your head may often lie without a pillow, but it shall one day wear a crown. Your hands may be blistered with toil, but they shall sweep the strings of golden harps. You may have to go home often to dinner of herbs, but there you shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, and sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long,

So we'll smooth it with hope and cheer it with song."

Yet a little while, the painful conflict will be over. Courage, comrades,

courage,—glittering robes for conquerors. Courage, my brother, courage, thou mayest sooner become rich than thou dreamest of; perhaps there is e'en now, but a step between thee and thine inheritance. Thou mayest go home, peradventure, shivering in the cold March wind; but ere morning dawneth thou mayest be in thy Master's bosom. Bear up with thy lot then, bear up with it. Let not the child of a king, who has an estate beyond the stars, murmur as others. You are not so poor after all, as they are who have no hope; though you may seem poor, you are rich. Do not let your poor neighbours see you disconsolate, but let them see in you that holy calmness, that sweet resignation, that gracious submission, which makes the poor man more glorious than he that wears a coronet, and lifts the son of the soil up from his rustic habitation, and sets him among the princes of the blood-royal of heaven. Be happy, brethren, be satisfied and content. God will have you to learn, in whatever state you may be, therewith to be content.

And now just one or two words to SUFFERERS. All men are born to sorrow, but some men are born to a double portion of it. As among trees, so among men, there are different classes. The cypress seems to have been created specially to stand at the grave's head and be a weeper; and there are some men, and some women, that seem to have been made on purpose that they might weep. There are the Jeremiahs of our race; they do not often know an hour free from pain. Their poor weary bodies have dragged along through a miserable life, diseased, perhaps, even from their birth, suffering some sorrowful infirmity that will not let them know even the gaiety and the frolic of youth. They grow up to mourning, and each year's suffering drives its ploughshare deeper into their brows, and they are apt—and who can blame them?—they are apt to murmur, and they say, "Why am I thus? I cannot enjoy the pleasures of life as others can; why is it?" "Oh!" says some poor sister, "consumption has looked on me; that fell disease has blanched my cheek. Why should I have to come, scarcely able to breathe, up to the house of God, and after sitting here, exhausted with the heat of this crowded sanctuary, to retire to my home, and prepare to engage in daily labour much too heavy for me; my very bed not yielding me repose, and my nights scared with visions and affrighted with dreams?—why is this?" I say it these brothers and sisters mourn, we are not men to blame them, because, when we are sick, we

brook it ill, and murmur more than they. I do admire patience, because I feel myself so incapable of it. When I see a man suffering, and suffering bravely, I often feel small in his presence. I wonder, yes, I admire and love this man who can bear pain, and say so little about it. We who are naturally healthy and strong, when we do suffer, we can hardly endure it. Caesar pules like a sick girl, and so do some of the strongest when they are brought down; while those who are always enduring suffering bear it like heroes,—martyrs to pain, and yet not uttering a complaint. There was good John Calvin, all his life long a victim of sickness; he was a complication of diseases. His visage, when he was a young man, as may be judged of from the different portraits of him, exhibited the signs of decay; and though he lived a long while, he seemed as if he was always going to die to-morrow. In the deepest of his agony, suffering from severe spinal pains and acute disease, the only cry he was ever known to utter was, "Domine usquequo? How long, Lord? How long, Lord?" A more repining expression than that he never used. Ah! but we get kicking against the pricks, murmuring and complaining. Brothers and sisters, the exhortation to you is to be content. Your pains are sharp, yet "his strokes are fewer than your crimes, and lighter than your guilt." From the pains of hell Christ has delivered you. Why should a living man complain? As long as you are out of hell, gratitude may mingle with your groans.

Besides, remember that all these sufferings are less than his sufferings. "Canst thou not watch with thy Lord one hour?" He hangs upon the tree with a world's miseries in his bowels; cannot you bear these lesser miseries that fall on you? Remember that all these chastenings work for your good; they are all making you ready; every stroke of your Father's rod is bringing you nearer to perfection. The flame doth not hurt thee; it only refines thee, and takes away thy dross. Remember too, that thy pain and sickness have been so greatly blessed to thee already, that thou never oughtest to rebel. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word." You have seen more of heaven through your sickness, than you ever could have seen if you had been well. When we are well, we are like men in a clay hut, we cannot see much light; but when disease comes and shakes the hut, and dashes down the mud, and makes the wattles in the wall tremble, and there is a crevice or two, the sunlight of heaven shines through. Sick men can see a great deal more of glory than

men do when they are in health. This hard heart of ours, when it is undisturbed, waxes gross. When the strings of our harp are all unstrung, they make better music than when they are best wound up. There are some heaven-notes that never come to us but when we are shut up in the darkened chamber. Grapes must be pressed before the wine can be distilled. Furnace work is necessary to make us of any use in the world. We should be just the poorest things that can be, if we did not sometimes get sick. Perhaps, you that are frequently tried and frequently pained, would have been scarcely worth anything in the vineyard of Christ, if it had not been for this trial of your faith. You have a sharp filing, but if you had not been well filed, you would not have been an instrument fit for the Master's use, you would have grown so rusty. If he had kept you always free from suffering, you would have been often lacking those sweet cordials which the Physician of souls administers to his fainting patients.

Be content then; but I feel as if I hardly must say it, because I am not sick myself. When I came to you once, from the chamber of suffering, pale, and thin, and sick, and ill, I remember addressing you from that text, that was blessed to some far away in America,—“If needs be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” Then I think I might very justly have said to you, “In whatsoever state you are, be content;” but now that I am not suffering myself, I do not feel as if I can say it so boldly as I could then. But nevertheless, be it so, brothers and sisters; try if you can and imitate this beloved apostle Paul. “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

Before I dismiss you there is this one other sentence. You that love not Christ, recollect that you are the most miserable people in the world. Though you may think yourselves happy, there is no one of us that would change places with the best of you. When we are very sick, very poor, and on the borders of the grave, if you were to step in and say to us “Come, I will change places with you; you shall have my gold, and my silver, my riches, and my health,” and the like, there is not one living Christian that would change places with you. We would not stop to deliberate, we would give you at once our answer—“No, go your way, and delight in what you have; but all your treasures are transient, they will soon pass away. We will keep our sufferings, and you shall keep your gaudy toys.” Saints have

no hell but what they suffer here on earth; sinners will have no heaven but what they have here in his poor troublesome world. We have our sufferings here and our glory afterwards; you may have your glory here, but you will have your sufferings for ever and ever. God grant you new hearts, and right spirits, a living faith in a living Jesus, and then I would say to you as I have said to the rest—man, in whatsoever state you are, be content. Amen.

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Christian Conversation

They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power. -
Psalm 145:11

You have only to look at the preceding verse, and you will discover, in a single moment, who are the people here spoken of who shall speak of the glory of God's kingdom, and talk of his power. They are the saints: "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." A saint will often be discovered by his conversation. He is a saint long before he knows it; he is a saint as being set apart unto salvation by God the Father in the covenant decree of election from all eternity; and he is a saint as being sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called. But he is more especially a saint as being sanctified by the quickening influence of the Holy Ghost, which renders him truly sanctified by making him holy, and bringing him into conformity with the image of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Yet it is not at all times easy to discern a saint except by Scriptural marks and evidences. There is nothing particular about the countenance or dress of a saint to distinguish him from his fellows. The saints have faces like other

men; sometimes, they are sadly marred and furrowed by cares and troubles which worldlings do not know. They wear the same kind of garments as other men wear; they may be rich or they may be poor; but, still, there are some marks whereby we can discern them, and one of the special ways of discovering a saint is by his conversation. As I often tell you, you may know the quality of the water in a well by that which is brought up in the bucket; so may we tell a Christian by his conversation.

It is, however, much to be regretted that true children of the Lord often talk too little of him. What is the conversation of half the professors of the present day? Honesty compels us to say that, in many cases, it is a mass of froth and falsehood, and, in many more cases it is altogether objectionable; if it is not light and frivolous, it is utterly apart from the gospel, and does not minister grace unto the bearers. I consider that one of the great lacks of the Church, nowadays, is not so much Christian preaching as Christian talking,—not so much Christian prayer in the prayer-meeting, as Christian conversation in the parlour. How little do we hear concerning Christ! You might go in and out of the houses of half the professors of religion, and you would never hear of their Master at all. You might talk with them from the first of January to the last of December; and if they happened to mention their Master's name, it would be, perhaps, merely as a compliment to him, or possibly by accident. Beloved, such things ought not to be. You and I, I am sure, are guilty in this matter; we all have need to reproach ourselves that we do not sufficiently remember the words of Malachi, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name."

Possibly some will ask, "Well, sir, how can we talk about religion? Upon what topic shall we converse? How are we to introduce it? It would not be polite, for instance, in the company with which we associate, to begin to say anything about the doctrines of grace, or about religious matters at all." Then, beloved, do not be polite; that is all I have to say in reply to such a remark as that. If it would be accounted contrary to etiquette to begin talking of the Saviour, cast etiquette to the winds, and speak about Christ somehow or other. The Christian is the aristocrat of the world; it is

his place to make rules for society to obey,—not to stoop down, and conform to the regulations of society when they are contrary to the commands of his Master. He is the great Maker of laws; the King of kings, and Lord of lords; and he makes his people also to be kings. Kings make rules for ordinary men to obey; so must Christians do. They are not to submit to others; they must make others, by the worth of their principles, and the dignity of their character, submit to them. It is speaking too lightly of a Christian's dignity when we say that he dare not do the right, because it would not be fashionable. We care nothing for that, for "the fashion of this world passeth away," "but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Another says, "What could I speak of? There are so few topics that would be suitable. I must not speak upon doctrinal subjects, for it would offend one of the party. They might hold different views; one might be a Wesleyan, one might be a Baptist, one might be an Independent, one a Calvinist, one an Arminian;—how could I talk so as to please all? If I spoke of election, most of them would attack me at once; if I began to speak of redemption, we should soon differ on that subject, and I would not like to engender controversy." Beloved, engender controversy rather than have wrong conversation; better dispute over truth than agree about lies. Better, I say, is it to dispute concerning good doctrine, far more profitable is it to talk of the Word of God, even in a controversial manner, than to turn utterly away from it, and neglect it.

But, let me tell you, there is one point on which all Christians agree, and that is concerning the person, the work, and the blessed offices of our Saviour. Go where you will, professors, if they are genuine Christians, will always agree with you if you begin to talk about your Saviour; so you need not be afraid that you will provoke controversy; but supposing the mention of your Saviour's name does provoke dispute, then let it be provoked. And if your Master's truth offends the gentlemen to whom you speak of it let them be offended. His name we must confess; of his glory we will continually talk, for it is written in our text, "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power."

Now, then, first, here is a subject for conversation: "they shall speak of

the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy power." Secondly, we will try to find out some causes why Christians must speak concerning this blessed subject and then, thirdly, I will very briefly refer to the effect of our talking more of Christ's kingdom and power.

I. First, here is A SUBJECT FOR CONVERSATION: "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." Here are two subjects; for God, when he puts grace into the heart, does not lack a subject upon which we shall converse.

First, we are to converse concerning the glory of Christ's kingdom. The glory of Christ's kingdom should ever be a subject of discourse to a Christian; he should always be speaking, not merely of Christ's priesthood or his prophesying, but also of his kingdom, which has lasted from all eternity; and especially of that glorious kingdom of grace in which we now live, and of that brighter kingdom of millennial glory, which soon shall come upon this world, to conquer all other kingdoms, and break them in pieces.

The psalmist furnishes us with some divisions of this subject, all of which illustrate the glory of Christ's kingdom. In the 12th verse he says, "To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts." The glory of a kingdom depends very much on the achievements of that kingdom; so, in speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, we are to make known his mighty acts. We think that the glory of Old England—at least, our historians would say so,—rests upon the great battles she has fought, and the victories she has won. We turn over the records of the past, and we see her, in one place, vanquishing thousands of Frenchmen at Agincourt; at another period, we see the fleets of the Spanish Armada scattered by the breath of God. We turn to different battles, and we trace victory after victory, dotted along the page of history, and we say that this is the glory of our kingdom. Now, Christian, when you speak of the glory of your Master's kingdom, you must tell something of his great victories;—how he routed Pharaoh, and cut the Egyptian Rahab, and wounded the dragon of the Nile; how he slew all the firstborn in one night; how, at his command, the Red Sea was divided; how the children of Israel crossed over in safety, and the chivalry of Egypt was drowned in the flood. Talk ye also of how God overcame

Amalek, and smote Moab; how he utterly cut off those nations that warred against Israel, and caused them to pass away for ever. Tell how Babylon and Nineveh were made to rue the day when God smote them with his iron hand. Tell ye to the world how God hath crushed great nations and overcome proud monarchs; how Sennacherib's hosts were left dead within their camp, and how those that have risen up in rebellion against God have found his arm too mighty for their strength and prowess. Tell of the terrible acts of our Saviour's kingdom; record his victories in this world; nor cease there. Tell how our Saviour routed the devil in the wilderness when he came to tempt him. Tell how he—

"All his foes to ruin hurled,
Sin, Satan, earth, death, hell, the world.

Tell how he hath bruised the head of Satan. Tell how death has lost his prey. Tell how hell's deepest dungeons have been visited, and the power of the prince of darkness utterly cut off. Tell ye how antichrist himself shall sink like a millstone in the flood. Tell how false systems of superstition shall flee away, like birds of night when the sun rises too brightly for their dim sight to bear. Tell ye all this, tell it in Ascalon and in Gath; tell it the wide world over, that the Lord of hosts is the God of battles; he is the conqueror of men and of devils; he is Master in his own dominions. Tell ye the glory of his kingdom, and rehearse "his mighty acts." Christian, exhaust that theme if thou canst.

Then, in speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, the next thing we talk of is its glorious majesty. The psalmist further says, in the 12th verse, that the saints shall not only "make known God's mighty acts, but also the glorious majesty of his kingdom." Part of the glory of England consists, not in her achievements, but in the state and majesty which surround her. In ancient times especially, monarchs were noted for the great pomp with which they were surrounded. Thousands of houses must be razed to the ground to find a site for one dwelling for a king. His palace must be gorgeous with riches; its halls must be paved with marble, and its walls set with jewels; fountains must sparkle there; there must be beds of eider on which monarchs may recline; music, such as other ears do not hear, wines from the uttermost regions of the earth, and all manner of delights,

are reserved for kings; precious stones and gems adorn their crowns; and everything that is rich and rare must be brought to deck the monarch, and increase the majesty of his kingdom.

Well, Christian, when speaking of Christ's kingdom, you are to talk of its majesty. Tell of your Saviour's glorious majesty; speak of the many crowns that he wears upon his head. Tell of the crown of grace which he wears continually; tell of the crown of victory which perpetually proclaims the triumphs he has won over the foe; tell of the crown of love wherewith his Father crowned him in the day of his espousals to his Church,—the crown which he has won by ten thousand hearts which he has broken, and untold myriads of spirits which he has bound up. Tell to all mankind that the glory of your Saviour's majesty far exceeds the glories of the ancient kings of Assyria and India. Tell that, before his throne above, there stand, in glorious state, not princes, but angels; not servants in gorgeous liveries, but cherubs, with wings of fire, waiting to obey his mighty behests. Tell that his palace is floored with gold, and that he has no need of lamps, or even of the sun, to enlighten it, for he himself is the light thereof. Tell ye to the whole world what is the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

But once more, Christians, in speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, you must talk of its duration, for much of the honour of the kingdom depends upon the time it has lasted. In verse 13, the psalmist says, "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." If one should say to you, concerning an earthly monarch, "Our king sits upon a throne which his ancestors have occupied for many generations;" tell him that a thousand years are to your King but as one day. If another tells you that his king has crowns which were worn by kings a thousand years ago, smile in his face, and tell him that a thousand years are as nothing in Christ's sight. When they speak of the antiquity of churches, tell them that you belong to a very ancient Church. If they talk to you of the venerable character of the religion which they profess, tell them that you believe in a very venerable religion, for yours is a religion which was from everlasting. Christ's kingdom was set up long before this world was brought forth; when as yet neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, had been created, Christ's kingdom was

firmly established. I wish Christians would more often talk about the glory of their Master's kingdom with regard to the time it has lasted. If you would begin to talk of the past history of God's Church, you would never have to exclaim, "I have said all that can be said about it, and I have nothing more to say." You would need eternity to keep on going back, back, back, until you came to God alone; and then you might say,—

"In his mighty breast I see,
Eternal thoughts of love to me."

Then you may speak concerning the future duration of your Master's kingdom. I suppose, if you were to talk much about the second coming of Christ, you would be laughed at, you would be thought diseased in your brain; for there are so few nowadays who receive that great truth, that, if we speak of it with much enthusiasm, people turn away, and say, "Ah! we do not know much about that subject, but Mr. So-and-so has turned his brain through thinking so much about it." Men are, therefore, half-afraid to speak of such a subject; but, beloved, we are not afraid to talk of it, for Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and we may talk of the glory of the future as well as of the past. Some say that Christ's Church is in danger. There are many churches that are in danger; and the sooner they tumble down, the better; but the Church of Christ has a future that shall never end; it has a future that shall never become dim; it has a future which shall eternally progress in glory. Her glory now is the glory of the morning twilight; it soon shall be the glory of the blazing noon. Her riches now are but the riches of the newly-opened mine; soon she shall have riches much more abundant and far more valuable than any she has at present. She is now young; by-and-by, she will come, not to her dotage, but to her maturity. She is like a fruit that is ripening, a star that is rising, a sun that is shining more and more unto the perfect day; and soon she will blaze forth in all her glory, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners." O Christian, here is a topic worthy of thy conversation! Talk of the glory of thy Master's kingdom. Often speak of it while others amuse themselves with stories of sieges and battles; while they are speaking of this or that or the other event in history, tell them the history of the monarchy of the King of kings; speak to them concerning the fifth great monarchy in which Jesus Christ shall reign for

ever and ever.

But I must not forget briefly to hint at the other subject of the saints' conversation: "and shall talk of thy power." It is not simply of Christ's kingdom of which we are to speak, but also of his power. Here, again, the psalmist gives us something which will help us to a division of our subject. In the 14th and 15th verses, mention is made of three kinds of power of which we ought to speak: "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season."

First, the Christian should speak of Christ's upholding power. What a strange expression this is, "The Lord upholdeth all that fall"! Yet remember John Bunyan's quaint old saying,—

"He that is down needs fear no fall;
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble, ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

So David says, "The Lord upholdeth all that fall." What a singular expression! How can he hold up those that fall? Yet those that fall, in this sense, are the only persons that stand. It is a remarkable paradox; but it is true. The man who stands on his feet, and says, "I am mighty,—I am strong enough to stand alone;"—down he will go; but he who falls into Christ's arms, he who says,—

"But, oh! for this no power have I,
My strength is at thy feet to lie;"—

that man shall not fall. We may well talk, then, of Christ's upholding power. Tell it to Christians; tell how he kept you when your feet were going swift to hell; how, when fierce temptations did beset you, your Master drove them all away; how, when the enemy was watching, he compassed you with his mighty strength; how, when the arrows fell thickly around you, his mighty arm did hold the shield before you, and so preserved you from them all. Tell how he saved you from death, and

delivered your feet from falling by making you, first of all, fall down prostrate before him.

Next, talk of his exalting power: "He raiseth up all those that be bowed down." Oh, how sweet it is, beloved, sometimes to talk of God's exalting power after we have been hewed down! I love to come into this pulpit, and talk to you as I would in my own room. I make no pretensions to preaching at all, but simply tell you what I happen to feel just now. Oh, how sweet it is to feel the praisings of God's grace when you have been bowed down! Cannot some of us tell that, when we have been bowed down beneath a load of affliction, so that we could not even move, the everlasting arms have been around us, and have lifted us up? When Satan has put his foot on our back, and we have said, "We shall never be raised up any more," the Lord has come to our rescue. If we were only to talk on that subject in our conversation with one another, no Christian need have spiritless conversation in his parlour. But, nowadays, you are so afraid to speak of your own experience, and the mercy of God to you, that you will talk any stuff and nonsense rather than that. But, I beseech you, if you would do good in the world, rehearse God's deeds of raising up those that be bowed down.

Moreover, talk of God's providing power: "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season." We ought often to speak of how God provides for his creatures in providence. Why should we not tell how God has taken us out of poverty, and made us rich; or, if he has not done that for us, how he has supplied our wants day by day in an almost miraculous manner! Some persons object to such a book as Huntington's "Bank of Faith," and I have heard some respectable people call it "The Bank of Nonsense." Ah! if they had ever been brought into Huntington's condition, they would see that it was indeed a bank of faith, and not a bank of nonsense; the nonsense was in those who read it, in their unbelieving hearts, not in the book itself. And he who has been brought into many straits and trials, and has been divinely delivered out of them, would find that he could write a "Bank of Faith" as good as Huntington's if he liked to do so; for he has had as many deliverances, and he could rehearse the mighty acts of God, who has opened his hands, and supplied the wants of his needy child. Many of you have been out of a

situation, and you have cried to God to furnish you with one, and you have had it. Have you not sometimes been brought so low, through painful affliction, that you could not rest? And could you not afterwards say, "I was brought low, and he helped me"? Yes; "I was brought low, and he helped me out of my distress"? Yes; I see some of you nodding your heads, as much as to say, "We are the men who have passed through that experience; we have been brought into great straits, but the Lord has delivered us out of them all." Then do not be ashamed to tell the story. Let the world hear that God provides for his people. Go, speak of your Father. Do as the child does, who, when he has a little cake given to him, will take it out, and say, "Father gave me this." Do so with all your mercies; go and tell all the world that you have a good Father, a gracious Father, a heavenly Provider; and though he gives you a hand-basket portion, and you only live from hand to mouth, yet tell how graciously he gives it, and that you would not change your blest estate for all the world calls good or great.

II. I must be brief in speaking upon THE CAUSES WHICH WILL MAKE CHRISTIANS TALK OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND HIS POWER.

One cause is, that it is the kingdom of their own King. We do not expect French people to talk much about the victories of the English; and I suppose there is no Russian who would pay very many compliments to the prowess of our arms; but they will all talk about their own monarchs. Well, that is the reason why a Christian should speak of the glory of his Master's kingdom, and tell of his power, because it is the kingdom of his own King. Jesus Christ may be or may not be another man's King; but, certainly he is mine; he is the Monarch to whom I yield absolute submission. I am no longer an alien and a stranger, but I am one of his subjects; and I will talk concerning him, because he is my King.

Secondly, the Christian must talk of the King's victories, because all those victories were won for him; he recollects that his Master never fought a battle for himself,—never slew an enemy for himself. He slew them all for his people. And if for me,—a poor abject worm,—my Saviour did this, shall I not talk of the glory of his kingdom, when he won all that glory for

me? Will I not speak of his power, when all that power was exercised for me? It was all for me. When he died, he died for me; when he suffered, he suffered for me; and when he led captivity captive, he did it for me. Therefore, I must and will speak of his dear name. I cannot help testifying to the glory of his grace in whatever company I may be.

Again, the Christian must talk of it, because he himself has had a good share in fighting some of the battles. You know how old soldiers will "shoulder their crutch, and tell how fields were won." The soldier, home from the Crimea, when he reads the accounts of the war, says, "Ah! I know that trench; I worked in it myself. I know the Redan; I was one of the men who attacked it." He is interested because he had a share in the battle. "Quorum pars magna fui," said the old soldier, in the days of Virgil; so we, if we have had a part in the battle, like to talk concerning it. And, beloved, it is this which makes our battles dear to us; we help to fight them. Though there was one battle which our great Captain fought alone, and "of the people there was none with him," yet, in other victories, he has permitted his people to help to crush the dragon's head. Recollect that you have been a soldier in the army of the Lord; and that, in the last day, when he gives away the medals in heaven, you will have one; when he gives away the crowns, you will have one. We can talk about the battles, for we were in them; we can speak of the victories, for we helped to win them. It is to our own praise as well as to our Master's when we talk of his wondrous acts.

But the best reason why the Christian should talk of his Master is this, if he has Christ in his heart, the truth must come out; he cannot help it. The best reason in all the world is the woman's reason, who said she should do it because she would do it. So it often happens that the Christian cannot give us much reason why he must talk about his Saviour, except that he cannot help it, and he will not try to help it. It is in him, and it must come out. If God has put a fire inside a man's heart, do you think it can be kept down? If we have grace in our souls, will it never come out in conversation! God does not put his candles in lanterns through which they cannot be seen, but he sets them on candlesticks; he does not build his cities in valleys, but he puts them on hills, so that they cannot be hid. So he will not allow his grace to be concealed. A Christian man cannot

help being discovered. None of you ever knew a secret believer,—a secret Christian. "Oh!" you say, "I am sure I have known such a man." But, look you, he could not have been a secret believer if you knew him, he could not be wholly secret; the fact that you knew him proves that he could not have been a secret Christian. If a man says that nobody knows a thing, and yet he knows it, he contradicts himself. You cannot, then, know a secret believer, and you never will. There may be, indeed, some who are secret for a time, but they always have to come out, like Joseph of Arimathaea, when he went and begged the body of Jesus. Ah! there are some of you sitting in your pews who fancy I shall never discover you; but I shall see you in the vestry by-and-by. Some of you keep on coming Sunday after Sunday, and you say, "Well, I must go by-and-by, and make a profession of faith." Yes, you will not be able to sit there long; if you have the grace of God within you, you will be obliged to come out, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ by being baptized in his name. Why not do so without further delay? If you love your Lord's name, come out at once, and own it.

III. Lastly, WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT OF OUR TALKING MORE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND POWER?

The first effect would be that the world would believe us more. The world says, "What a parcel of hypocrites Christian people are!" And they are about right concerning a good many of you. The world says, "Why, just look at them! They profess a deal of religion; but if you hear them talk, they do not speak differently from other people. They sing loudly enough, it is true, when they go to church or chapel; but when do you hear them sing at home? They go to the prayer-meeting; but have they a prayer-meeting at their own family altar? Believe them to be Christians? No! Their lives give the lie to their doctrines, and we do not believe them." If we oftener talked of Christ, I am sure the world would think us to be better Christians, and they would, no doubt, say so.

Again, if our conversations were more concerning Christ, we, as Christian men, should grow faster, and be more happy. What is the reason of the bickerings and jealousies between Christians? It is this, because they do not know one another. Mr. Jay used to tell a story about a man going out,

one foggy morning, and seeing something coming in the fog; he thought it was a monster. But, by-and-by, as he came nearer, he exclaimed, "Oh, dear me! that's my brother John!" So it often happens, when we see people at a distance, and hold no spiritual conversation with them, we think they are monsters. But when we begin to talk together, and get near to one another, we say, "Why, it is brother John, after all!" There are more true brethren about us than we dream of. Then, I say, let your conversation, in all companies, wherever you may be, be so seasoned with salt that a man may know you to be a Christian. In this way, you would remove bickerings better than by all the sermons that could be preached, and be promoting a true Evangelical Alliance far more excellent and efficient than all the alliances which man can form.

Again, if we oftener talked of Christ like this, how useful we might be in the salvation of souls! O beloved, how few souls have some of you won to Christ! It says, in the Canticles, "There is not one barren among them;" but are not some of you barren,—without spiritual children? It was pronounced as a curse upon one of old that he should die childless. Oh! methinks that, though the Christian is always blessed, it is half a curse to die spiritually childless. There are some of you who are childless to-night. You never were the means of the conversion of a soul in all your lives. You hardly remember having tried to win anyone for the Saviour. You are good religious people so far as your outward conduct is concerned. You go to the house of God, but you never concern yourselves about winning souls for Jesus. O my God, let me die when I can no longer be the means of saving souls! If I can be kept out of heaven a thousand years, if thou wilt give me souls as my wages, let me still speak for thee; but if there be no more sinners to be converted,—no more to be brought in by my ministry,—then let me depart, and be "with Christ, which is far better."

Oh, think of the crowns that are in heaven! "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." So many souls, so many gems! Have you ever thought what it would be to wear in heaven a starless crown? All the saints will have crowns, but those who win souls will have a star in their crown for every soul. Some of you, my friends, will wear a crown without a star; would you like that? You will be happy, you

will be blessed, you will be satisfied, I know, when you will be there; but can you bear the thought of dying childless,—of having none in heaven who shall be begotten unto Christ by you,—never having travailed in birth for souls,—never having brought any to Christ? How can you bear to think of it? Then, if you would win souls, beloved, talk about Jesus. There is nothing like talking of him, to lead others to him. I read of the conversion of a servant, the other day. She was asked how she came to know the Lord, "Well," she said, "my master, at dinner, happened to make some simple observation to his sister across the table." The remark certainly was not addressed to the servant; and her master had no notion that she was listening; yet his word was blessed to her. It is well to talk behind the door that which you do not mind hearing afterwards in the street; it is good to speak that in the closet which you are not ashamed to listen to from the housetop, for you will have to listen to it from the housetop by-and-by, when God shall come and call you to account for every idle word you have spoken.

Souls are often converted through godly conversation. Simple words frequently do more good than long sermons. Disjointed, unconnected sentences are often of more use than the most finely polished periods or rounded sentences. If you would be useful, let the praises of Christ be ever on your tongue; let him live on your lips. Speak of him always; when thou walkest by the way, when thou sittest in thy house, when thou risest up, and even when thou liest down, it may be that thou hast someone to whom it is possible that thou mayest yet whisper the gospel of the grace of God. Many a sister has been brought to know the Saviour by a sister's pleadings that were only heard in the silence of the night. God give you, beloved, to fulfil our text! "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." They shall do it, mark you; God will make you do it if you are his people. Go and do it willingly. Begin, from this time forth, and keep on doing it for ever. Say, concerning other conversation, "Begone far hence! avaunt! Thus shall be my constant and only theme." Be like the harp of old Anacreon, which would never sound any other note but that of love. The harpist wished to sing of Cadmus, and of mighty men of wisdom, but his harp would resound of love alone. Be, then, like Anacreon's harp,—sing of Christ alone! Christ alone! Christ alone! Jesus, Jesus only! Make him the theme of your conversation, for

"they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." God give you grace so to do, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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The Need and Nature of Conversion

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—Isaiah 55:7.

Some years ago, (sermon "Abundant Pardon") I preached from the last four words of this verse, laying special stress upon the abundant pardon which is given to repenting sinners through the rich mercy of our God. On this occasion, I am going to put the emphasis upon the first part of the verse, speaking more upon the necessity of the sinner forsaking his evil way, and of the unrighteous man abandoning his evil thoughts. There is urgent necessity for us continually to insist upon this course of action. This chapter, as we noticed in our reading, is full of gospel teaching, and it expresses, under the most striking and cheering metaphors, both the fullness and the freeness of the gospel. But the prophet also insists most clearly that the wicked man must forsake his way, and the unrighteous man must turn from his thoughts, and return to the Lord, that he may obtain the mercy and pardon that God is waiting and willing to bestow.

This is not a merely legal demand; it is a gospel demand, found in the centre of a gospel chapter in the writings of the most evangelical of all the prophets. The chapter begins with a number of gracious and wide invitations, and so naturally leads on to the promise of the coming Saviour. Only God himself could find a Saviour for our ruined race, and none but God's own Son could be that Saviour. Then there follows, in due order, the promise of a people to be saved. The Saviour shall not come to the earth in vain. He shall call a people unto himself, and "nations" shall run unto him. Then, following the promise of a Saviour, and the declaration of the certainty that many shall be saved by him, there comes in this loving invitation, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye

upon him while he is near." Since he is to have a people who shall be his for ever, put in your claim to be amongst them; and since, as a Saviour, he is near to you, call upon him, and he will hear your call.

This brings us to our text, which is consistent with the rest of the chapter, even though some people think it is not. Here we are told, first, that the wicked must forsake his way. There is no Saviour for the man who will not forsake his sin. Such a man can never be among the people who shall run to Christ, for how can he run to Christ while he continues in the way of sin? Such a man shall seek sin, he cannot embrace the Saviour who hates sin with a perfect hatred. This is the theme upon which I am going to speak now, and I want to do it in the spirit of the Master, of whom Malachi wrote, "For who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." May the Master bless his own searching word, and he shall have all the praise.

I. First, then, let us meditate a while upon THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION. If a man is to be saved, he must turn from his sins. "Right about face!" is the marching order for every sinner. There is no hope of forgiveness for him if he will continue with his face as it now is. He must turn from his sin if he would be saved.

This will be at once evident to you when I ask,—How would it be consistent with the holiness of God for him to put aside our past sin, and then to allow us to go on sinning as we did before? How could he be thought to be just and pure if he should remit the punishment for past transgressions, without seeing in us any determination to abstain from such sin in the future? Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, but he never came here to spare their sins. God would never have sent his Son to this earth to be the messenger of sin, yet Christ would be nothing better than the messenger of sin if he had come, and said to men, "You may continue in your sin, yet I will forgive you. You may live as you like, yet you shall find mercy with the Lord at the last." It must strike you, in a moment, that such a course as this would be inconsistent with the

character of the Judge of all the earth, who must do right. There is no such teaching as that in the whole of the Scriptures; and he who dares to believe it, believes a lie. Nowhere, in the whole compass of revelation, is there a promise of forgiveness to the man who continues in his iniquity. There is a promise of pardon to the sinner who forsakes his wicked way, and turns from his evil thoughts; there are many promises of forgiveness to those who confess their sins in humble penitence, and who seek to live new lives under the power of the Holy Spirit. Possibly, someone would remind me that the greatest promises are given to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is quite true; but the faith which believes in Jesus is a living and active faith, which works in the soul a hatred of sin; and if a man says, "I believe in Christ," and yet continues to delight in sin, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him, for "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." That faith alone will save us which is proved to be a vital and real faith by bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance." It is no use wanting or trying to be saved without a change of heart, and a change of life. "Ye must be born again," is Christ's own word to all unregenerate sinners. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There has never been any revocation of these truths, and again I repeat that, in the whole compass of the Word of God, there is no promise of pardon to the man who continues in his iniquities.

Neither, dear friends, is there a single case in fact, nor one emblem in parable, that would lead any man to hope that he could keep his sins, and yet be saved. If you remind me of the woman in the city who was a sinner, I also remind you that her life had been completely changed, else our Saviour would not have permitted her to wash his feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. Saul of Tarsus was guilty of the great sin of persecuting the saints; but see what a changed man was Paul the apostle of the Gentiles. Zaccheus, the rich tax-gatherer, offered to make full restitution and recompense to any whom he might have wronged. So is it evermore where the grace of God works effectually. When the Lord Jesus Christ saves a sinner from the punishment of sin, he also saves him from the love of sin;—he makes him holy as well as makes him happy and safe. The same lesson is taught in our Lord's parables. For instance, there was no rejoicing over the lost sheep while it

was still wandering away from the fold; the joy began when that lost sheep was found, and was brought home on the shepherd's shoulder. A more striking example is that of the prodigal son. There was no joy over him while he was in the far country, and no kiss for him from his father while he was feeding the swine. He must come back, he must say, "Father, I have sinned," there must be the forsaking of his former evil ways, or else there could be no enjoyment of his father's forgiveness. We must ever say, as plainly as we can possibly say it,—If thou wilt keep thy sins, thou shalt go to hell; but if thou wouldst go to heaven, thou must part company with thy sins. He who would be married to Christ must first be divorced from sin. There is no possibility of walking in the way of the Lord and, at the same time, treading the pathway of evil. "No man can serve two masters." No one can, at the same time, be a servant of the Saviour and a servant of Satan.

Besides, dear friends, our common sense tells us that it would be highly dangerous to society if men were to be pardoned, and yet were not to be renewed in character and life. If Christ should meet with a man, and say to him, "I forgive thee because of the precious blood I shed for thee on Calvary; go and be a drunkard still, go and be unchaste, go and be a thief," this would be the way to undermine the very pillars of society, and, very soon, we should not be safe in our beds. If there were no laws, or if the laws had no system of punishment for the guilty, human society would cease to be endurable. He who ruleth all things righteously will never set up such a scheme as this. The Judge of all the earth must punish sin; he will by no means clear the guilty.

Moreover, it would be a serious injury to the man himself if he could be pardoned, and yet not be changed. For God to forgive us without renewing us, would be a frightful peril to ourselves. A man, finding himself so easily forgiven, and having no change of heart, would plunge into sin worse than ever; and, so far as my observation is concerned, I have come to the conclusion that the very worst form of character is produced in a man who, for some reason or other, thinks himself to be a favourite of heaven, and yet continues to indulge in sin. I recollect the thrill of horror, which passed through me, in my youthful days, when I heard a man, who was accustomed to be drunk, boast that he could say

what none of his pot companions could say, namely, that he was one of the elect of God. I felt, child as I was, that he was one of the devil's chosen followers, and I do not doubt that he really was. If a man once gets into his head such a perverted notion of the free grace of God as to imagine that it is compatible with the love of sin, and a life of sin, he is on the high road to being made into the worst conceivable character; and if such a man as that could be delivered from all the consequences of his sin, from all such consequences as might be looked upon as arbitrarily fixed by the punishing hand of God, (I know that I am talking of an impossibility,) even then he must be miserable. Such a man must go on from bad to worse; and sin, whatever we may think of it, is misery. The worm that never dies is sin; the fire that is never quenched is sin; and hell is sin fully developed. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," and that second death is hell. O sirs, if you could get rid of the disease, the pain, the headaches, the qualms of conscience which follow upon indulgence in sin, it would be a mischievous riddance for you, for the very pain that is caused by sin is part of God's way of calling to you to come back to him. As long as you are in this world, the consequences that follow after certain forms of sin are really, with all their bitterness,—and they are bitter,—but a healthful tonic that should make you give up sin, and turn to God.

If you go on sinning, you cannot be saved. If you continue to love sin, and to practise it, you cannot be saved. Think, for a moment, what any other result would involve; if it were possible for a man to live in sin, and yet be forgiven, what would be the value of the work of the Holy Ghost? He has come in order that we may be born again, and have new hearts and right spirits; but if men could be forgiven without having new hearts and right spirits, of what service would the Holy Spirit be? This would be contrary, also, to the whole design of Christ in our salvation. The angel said to Joseph, before our Saviour's birth, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins;" but if they can be saved in their sins, where is the meaning of his name? When he hung upon the cross, and one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, "forthwith came there out blood and water;" but what is the use of the purifying water if we need not be purified, and can be pardoned without being cleansed? Paul wrote to Titus that Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem

us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" but how can that purpose be accomplished if men can be pardoned, and yet continue to live in sin?

Beside that, the very character of heaven prevents such a thing being done; we know that the unholy cannot enter there, nothing that defileth can pass the watchers at the pearly portals; therefore, be ye sure of this,— that you can never enter heaven, and you can never have forgiveness, if you continue to cling to your sins. You must forsake them, or mercy cannot be yours.

II. Having spoken thus upon the necessity of conversion, I turn, for a little while, to the second part of our subject, THE NATURE OF THIS CONVERSION. How is it described here?

First, it deals with the life: "Let the wicked forsake his way." Observe that it is "his way" that he is to forsake; that is, his natural way, the way in which he says he was brought up, the way that his natural affections, and propensities, and passions lead him. He must forsake this way, even though it is the way in which he has walked these thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or even eighty years; he will have to get out of this way, however much he may delight in it. Possibly, he has now got to love sin so much that he says he could not give it up. There are some sins which men roll under their tongues as dainty morsels; but if you are to be saved, you will have to give them up. If you would have mercy of God, you must give them all up. You must give up your old sins, your sweet sins, your pet sins; the sins of the flesh, with all their pleasure, and the sins of the mind, with all their pride, must be given up; for notice that word "forsake." "Let the wicked forsake his way." It does not say, "Let him own that his way is bad." There are some who will say, 'Oh, yes, I know that my way is very wrong;' and there they stop. Such an admission as that will not save you, my friend; you must forsake your way as well as own that it is wrong. To know that it is wrong, and yet to go on in it, will double your sin. This kind of confession will not help you in the least; on the contrary, it will only increase your guilt. You must forsake your wicked way if you are to be forgiven. "Oh, sir," you say, "I am very sorry for all the sin that I have committed!" I am glad that you are, and I hope that you will be still more

so; but that sorrow alone will never save you. It is not saying, "I am sorry," nor yet your being sorry for your sin that will save you; that is right as far as it goes, but you must forsake the sin as well as be sorry for it. "I must forsake it; well, I resolve that I will do so." Yet that resolve by itself will not save you, for there are plenty of good resolutions that are good for nothing. You have actually to forsake your wicked way before you have complied with the requirements of our text. I know how the devil will try to deceive you, when you have made a good resolution. He will say, "Ah, you are a fine fellow; and that is a splendid resolution of yours!" Yet mere resolutions are not worth a penny a thousand; we must act, not simply resolve what we mean to do. We must not be like the man who owes a lot of money, and has not a penny to pay, yet who keeps on saying to his creditors, "I hope I shall be able to pay you tomorrow." Then, when that day comes, he says he is very sorry, but he missed the friend he expected to see, so he must postpone the payment for a few days; yet, when the few days have passed, there is still nothing forthcoming. So it is with many who resolve to forsake sin; they are like those who promise, but never pay. This will not do; you must forsake your sin if it is to be forgiven.

"I will tell you what I will do," says one; "I will still keep to my old way, but I will not travel quite so rapidly in it; I will not live such a fast life as I have done." I tell thee, friend, that thou must forsake that old way of thine altogether if thou wouldst be saved. If thou standest still in it, if thou art decent and respectable in it, all that will avail thee nothing. Thou must clear right out of it, for so our text puts it, "Let the wicked forsake his way." In plain terms, the prophet means just this. Is your way the way of the drunkard? Now, no drunkard can ever inherit the kingdom of God as long as he continues a drunkard, so you cannot be saved if you remain in that condition. Are you a thief? Do you privately cheat in business? All that kind of thing must be given up. It is no use for you to say, "I will do it, and yet go to heaven." You will be damned unless that sin, as well as others, be given up. Or have you been a blasphemer? Do you talk profanely or filthily? You must wash all that foulness out of your mouth if you would be saved: "Let the wicked forsake his way." Am I addressing any who have practised vice in unmentionable forms? Oh, how many there are who do that, and yet are not ashamed! You must forsake all

that, young man, or old man either; it is no use mincing matters with you. If you mean to go to hell, go on with your wickedness; but if you would be forgiven for the past, you must cut all connection with these evil things for the future. I most solemnly assure you, in the name of God, that there can be no compromise about this and every other sin. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, a fleshly way, a way of lust, a way of self-indulgence, any way of sin,—it must be forsaken. You must abandon it, or else you must abandon all hope of ever getting to heaven.

"That is pretty strong language," says someone. Do you think so? I shall have to use still stronger expressions presently, for the next point concerning the nature of this repentance is that it deals with the man's thoughts: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." "But thoughts are free," says some unthinking person; "I shall never be hanged for my thoughts." No, perhaps not; but have you never heard that old saying, "A man may not be hanged for his thoughts, but he may be damned for his thoughts;" for, in thought, is often the very essence of sin. A deed might in itself be colourless; but the motive for doing it—the thought at the back of it—puts the venom, and virus, and guilt into the deed.

As that is the case, what sort of thoughts must the unrighteous man give up? He must give up a great many fine opinions of which he is very proud;—his opinion about God, for instance. It is possible that he has thought nothing of him; or if he has thought of him at all, he has dared even to judge his Creator, and to find fault with what God does. Ah, sir! You must give up all such thoughts of God, and you must come to reverence him, and to regard him as so great that you are less than nothing in comparison with him. You will also have to give up your opinion concerning God's law. You thought it was too severe, too stringent, and that you could improve it a great deal. You will have to confess, with the apostle Paul, that the law is spiritual, and that you are "carnal, sold under sin." You will have to change your mind upon a great many subjects if you really wish to be saved. You will have to forsake your old thoughts concerning sin. You said, "Oh, it is a mere trifle,—a peccadillo! Poor helpless creatures as we are, God won't be angry with us for such a little thing as that." You will have to feel that sin is exceedingly

sinful, a great and deadly evil, or you will never be likely to seek and to find peace with God. You will also have to change your mind about the Lord Jesus Christ. He is nothing to you now; but he will have to be everything to you if you are to be saved by him. You will have to change your mind about yourself; you fancy that you are a fine fellow now, but you will have to regard yourself as less than nothing before you come to your right position before God. If ever you are to find mercy at his hands, you will have to forsake your present thoughts on all these matters.

Do you ask, "What other thoughts shall we have to forsake?" I reply,—A whole set of thoughts in which many people indulge. To the ungodly man, it is often quite a treat to sit down, and think of what he calls the jolly days of his youth when he sowed his wild oats. He wishes that he had a handful or two of them left. Ah, sir! You will have to give up all thoughts of that sort; but you will have to think of those past days with bitter tears of sorrow over the sins that you then committed. The ungodly man often pictures to himself scenes of carnal delight; and if he cannot have a share in such scenes, he often wishes that he could. I would remind any of you, who have ever done so, that you may commit every sin forbidden in the Decalogue, without having actually committed any one of them, by simply revelling in them in your thoughts. Remember that solemn affirmation of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the seventh commandment, "I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;" and learn from it how our Lord meant his interpretation to apply to the whole law, so that we should understand that the very thought of evil is sin; and to suck it down as a sweet morsel to think upon, even though we never dared to perpetrate the act, is still a gross evil; and if we would be forgiven, we must forsake all these vile, flesh-delighting thoughts.

We must also forsake our thoughts in the sense of turning from all purposes of evil. That, indeed, is the main meaning of the Hebrew word used here: "Let the unrighteous man forsake his purposes." You say that you will do this or that, without any thought of whether God would have it so or not. Possibly it is your purpose, as you express it, "to have your fling." You have come up from the country, young man, you are pleased that you have got away from your mother's apron strings, and now you

are going to have your own way. Forsake all such thoughts, I implore you; and, if any, whom I am now addressing, have formed any purpose of sin, —if you have resolved to indulge in this or that evil, whatever it may be, I charge you, if you desire to have eternal life, to hate all such purposes and thoughts of sin. The garment spotted by the flesh must be flung away from us, and the very thought of evil must be banished from our minds as far as it is possible for us to do so.

Nor is this all, for the text further says, "and let him return unto the Lord," so that this conversion deals with the sinner in his relation to God. He who would find mercy must return to God to obtain it. Do you ask how you are to do so? Well, first, you must begin to think about God. I really believe that some of you do not think half as much about God as you do about the Sultan of Turkey; and with some of you, almost anybody is a greater factor in your life than God is. With some of you, it would not make any difference if there were no God at all, except that you would be rather glad if that could be proved to be the case, for you would feel easier in your mind, and could, in such a case, go on in your sin without any of the compunction that you now feel. Yet, is it not a singular state of mind for a man, who knows that he is a creature made by God, but who really cares so little about him that, if he could be assured that there were no such being, he would be better pleased than he is now? Oh, what a wretched state your heart must be in if it feels like that! It will have to be greatly altered if you are ever to be saved.

So, first, you must begin to think of God; and then, thinking of him, you must yield to him, give up your will to his will; and, doing that, you must pray to him, cry to him for mercy; and then you must trust him. Especially, you must accept his way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ; and when you do that, then you will be sure to love him. When you get as far as that, you will be a new creature altogether. Then, God will delight in you; then, it will be misery to you to be out of his presence, and it will be the highest joy of your life to have constant communion with him.

III. Now I finish with the third part of our subject, that is, THE GOSPEL OF THIS CONVERSION.

Possibly, somebody says, "You have been preaching to us the law, sir." No, I have not. The law says nothing about repentance. The law curses you from the very first moment when you have broken it. That gracious message, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," is not the utterance of law, but of the gospel.

I will try briefly to show you the gospel of it. It lies, first, in the fact that God has promised that he will abundantly pardon those who turn from their evil ways: "Let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." To the man who confesses his guilt, the law says, "Yes, you are guilty, and you must suffer the penalty attached to your crime." If a person pleads "guilty" in a court of law, the judge does not say to him, "If you will promise amendment, you may go free." No, he pronounces sentence upon him, and God, the righteous Judge, might justly have done the same to us; but, instead of doing so, he says, "Forsake your wicked way, and your evil thoughts, and turn to me, and I will abundantly pardon you. Only repent of your iniquity, and abandon it, and it shall all be blotted out. All the evil of your past life shall be forgiven and forgotten; and your sins and your transgressions I will not remember against you any more for ever." Oh, precious gospel message! Who would not turn from his sin when such a gracious promise awaits him in the turning?

Yet there is more even than that, a great deal; for not only does God bid men turn to him, but he enables them to turn to him; so the gospel of this passage is, that God the Holy Ghost is freely given to sinners to turn them, first in their hearts, and then in their lives. What you cannot do of yourself, the Holy Spirit will enable you to do, or will do for you. There is no form of sin which you cannot conquer by the power of the Spirit of God, and that Spirit is freely given to all who sincerely seek his aid. He is here on earth still. On the day of Pentecost, he descended from heaven, and he has never gone back again. "But," says someone, "the Holy Spirit was given to the saints." Yes, I know he was; but he was also given to sinners like yourself, for Peter said to those who were awakened on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to

all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." I wish that many of you would pray the prayer, "Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned." You must be turned, by sovereign grace, if you would really turn unto the Lord; and you must forsake your wicked way, and your evil thoughts, if you are to be saved, and you cannot do this of yourself; but the Holy Spirit has been given on purpose to enable you to do it.

There is a further gospel message in the fact that Jesus Christ himself came into the world on purpose that this Divine Spirit might be given in connection with the exercise, by men, of faith in him. One of the simplest declarations of the gospel is, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" and one of the last sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ before he went back to heaven was, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is to trust; and whosoever trusts Christ Jesus, depends upon the merit of his death, relies upon the excellence of his atoning sacrifice, and proves the reality of his faith by confessing it in the Scriptural way, such a man shall assuredly be saved; and, in order to his being saved, he shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by whose almighty power he shall be enabled to conquer the sin that still dwells within him.

Once more,—and this is the part of the gospel that is the best of all,—in order that you might be able to believe that God can have mercy on the guilty, and in order that you might be saved, God gave his Son, Jesus Christ, to offer a full and complete atonement for sin. I never weary of preaching that glorious truth to you, but I long that, when I have done so, you may close in with Christ, and that Christ may close in with you, that you may be eternally saved. According to the righteous law of God, sin must be punished. Conscience tells you that it is not possible that guilt should go without its due penalty. Therefore it was that Jesus came, and bore the dread penalty that was due to sin. The lash of the law must fall on someone, so he bared his shoulders to its terrible blows. The sword of divine justice was unsheathed, and it must smite someone; so Jesus gave his heart to that sword's point, and quenched the flaming blade in the crimson fountain of his own blood. Now that this has been done, God can be just, and yet the Justifier of everyone who believes in Jesus; and the effect of that atoning sacrifice upon everyone who truly trusts to it is that he finds himself so changed that he hates the sin he formerly loved, he

rushes out of the wicked way in which he once delighted, he abhors the thoughts that once charmed him, and he turns to the Saviour whom once he despised.

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Conversion

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth; and one convert him; Let him know that he which converteth sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."—James 5:19-20.

The true believer is always pleased to hear of anything which concerns the salvation of his own soul. He rejoices to hear of the covenant plan drawn up for him from all eternity, of the great fulfillment on the cross at Calvary, of all the stipulations of the Savior, of the application of them by the Holy Spirit, of the security which the believer has in the person of Christ, and of those gifts and graces which accompany salvation to all those who are heirs thereof: But I feel certain that, deeply pleased as we are when we hear of things touching our own salvation and deliverance from hell, we, as preachers of God, and as new creatures in Christ, being made like unto him, have true benevolence of spirit, and therefore are always delighted when we hear, speak, or think, concerning the salvation of others. Next to our own salvation, I am sure, as Christians, we shall always prize the salvation of other people; we shall always desire that what has been so sweet to our own taste, may also be tasted by others; and what has been of so inestimably precious a value to our own souls, may also become the property of all those whom God may please to shall unto everlasting life. I am sure, beloved, now that I am about to preach concerning the conversion of the ungodly, you will take as deep an interest in it as if it were something that immediately concerned your own souls, for, after all, such were some of you once. You were unconverted and ungodly; and had not God taken thought for you, and set his people to strive for your souls, where had you been? Seek, then, to exercise that charity and benevolence towards others which God and God's people first

exercised towards you.

Our text has in it, first of all, a principle involved—that of instrumentality. —"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death." Secondly, here is a general fact stated:—"He who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." And thirdly, there is a particular application of this fact made. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth and one convert him,"—that is the same principle as when a sinner is converted "from the error of his way."

I. First, then, here is a great principle involved—a very important one—that of INSTRUMENTALITY. God has been pleased in his inscrutable wisdom and intelligence to work the conversion of others by instrumentality. True, he does not in all cases SO do, but it is his general way. Instrumentality is the plan of the universe. In the new creation it is almost always God's invariable rule to convert by means of instruments. Now we will make one or two brief remarks upon this first principle.

First, then, we say that instrumentality is not necessary with God. God can, if he pleases, convert souls without any instruments whatsoever. The mighty Maker who chooses to use the sword sometimes, can, if he pleases, slay without it. He who uses the workman, the trowel, and the hammer, can, if he so sees fit, build the house in a moment, and from the foundation-stone even to the topstone thereof, can complete it by the words of his own mouth. We never hear of any instrument used in the conversion of Abraham. He lived in a far-off land in the midst of idolaters, but he was called Ur of the Cheldees, and thence God called him and brought him to Canaan by an immediate voice, doubtless from above, by God's own agency, without the employment of any prophet; for we read of none who could, as far as we can see, have preached to Abraham and taught him the truth. Then in modern times we have a mighty instance of the power of God, in converting without human might. Saul, on his journey towards Damascus, upon his horse, fiery and full of fury against the children of God, is hastening to hail men and women and cast them into prison; to bring them bound unto Jerusalem; but on a

sudden, a voice is heard from heaven, "Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou me?" and Saul was a new man. No minister was his spiritual parent, no book could claim him as its convert; no human voice, but the immediate utterance of Jesus Christ himself, at once, there and then, and upon the spot, brought Saul to know the truth. Moreover, there are some men who seem never to need conversion at all; for we have one instance in Scripture of John the Baptist, of whom it is said, "He was filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." And I do not know but what there are some who very early in life have a change of heart. It is quite certain that all infants, (who, doubtless, being each of them elect, do ascend to heaven,) undergo a change of heart without instrumentality; and so there may be some, concerning whom it maybe written that though they were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, yet they were so early taught to know the Lord, so soon brought to his name, that it must have been almost without instrument at all. God can if he pleases cast the instrument aside. The mighty Maker of the world who used no angels to beat out the great mass of nature and fashion it into a round globe, he who without hammer or anvil fashioned this glorious world, can if he pleases, speak, and it is done; command, and it shall stand fast. He needs not instruments, though he uses them.

Secondly, we make another remark, which is, that instrumentality is very honorable to God, and not dishonorable. One would think, perhaps, at first sight, that it would reflect more glory to God, if he effected all conversions himself, without the use of men; but that is a great mistake. It is as honorable to God to convert by means of Christians and others, as it would be if he should effect it alone. Suppose a workman has power and skill with his hands alone to fashion a certain article, but you put into his hands the worst of tools you can find; you know he can do it well with his hands, but these tools are so badly made, that they will be the greatest impediment you could lay in his way. Well now, I say, if a man with these bad instruments, or these poor tools—things without edges—that are broken, that are weak and frail, is able to make some beauteous fabric, he has more credit from the use of those tools, than he would have had if he had done it simply with his hands because the tools, so far from being an advantage, were a disadvantage to him; so far from being a help, are of my supposition, even a detriment to him in his work. So with regard to

human instrumentality. So far from being any assistance to God, we are all hindrances to him. What is a minister? He is made by God a means of salvation, but it is a wonderful thing that any one so faulty, so imperfect so little skilled, should yet be blessed of God to bringing forth children for the Lord Jesus. It seems as marvellous as if a man should fashion rain from fire, or if he should fabricate some precious alabaster vase out of the refuse of the dunghill. God in his mercy does more than make Christians without means; he takes bad means to make good men with, and so he even reflects credit on himself because his instruments are all of them such poor things. They are all such earthen vessels, that they do but set of the glory of the gold which they hold, like the foil that setteth forth the jewel, or like the dark spot in the painting that makes the light more brilliant; and yet the dark spot and the foil are not in themselves costly or valuable. So God uses instruments to set forth his own glory; and to exalt himself.

This brings us to the other remark, that usually God does employ instruments. Perhaps in one case out of a thousand, men are converted by the immediate agency of God—and so indeed are all in one sense,—but usually, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, God is pleased to use the instrumentality of his ministering servants, of his Word, of Christian men, or some other means to bring us to the Savior. I have heard of some—I remember them now—who were called like Saul, at once from heaven. We can remember the history of the brother who in the darkness of the night was called to know the Savior by what he believed to be a vision from heaven or some effect on his imagination. On one side he saw a black tablet of his guilt, and his soul was delighted to see Christ cast a white tablet over it; and he thought he heard a voice that said, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." There was a man converted almost without instrumentality; but you do not meet with such a case often. Most persons have been convinced by the pious conversation of sisters, by the holy example of mothers, by the minister, by the Sabbath-school, or by the reading of tracts or perusing Scripture. Let us not therefore believe that God will often work without instruments; let us not sit down silently and say, "God will do his own work." It is quite true he will; but then he does his work by using his children as instruments. He does not say to the

Christian man when he is converted, "Sit thee down; I have nought for thee to do, but I will do all myself and have all the glory." No; he says, "Thou art a poor weak instrument; thou canst do nothing; but lo! I will strengthen thee, and I will make thee thrash the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff: and so shall I get more honor through thy having done it than I should had mine own strong arm smitten the mountains and broken them in pieces."

Now another thought, and that is—If God sees fit to make use of any of us for the conversion of others, we must not therefore be too sure that we are converted ourselves. It is a most solemn thought, that God makes use of ungodly men as instruments for the conversion of sinners. And it is strange that some most terrible acts of wickedness have been the means of the conversion of men. When Charles II ordered the Book of Sports to be read in churches, and after the service the clergyman was required to read to all the people to spend the afternoon in what are called harmless diversions and games that I will not mention here—even that was made the means of conversion; for one man said within himself, "I have always disported myself thus on the Sabbath-day; but now to hear this read in church! how wicked we must have become! how the whole land must be corrupt." It led him to think of his own corruption, and brought him to the Savior. There have been words proceeding, I had almost said from devils, which have been the means of conversion. Grace is not spoiled by the rotten wooden spout it runs through. God did once speak by an ass to Balaam, but that did not spoil his words. So he speaks, not simply by an ass, which he often does, but by something worse than that. He can fill the mouths of ravens with food for an Elijah, and yet the raven is a raven still. We must not suppose because God has made us useful that we are therefore converted ourselves.

But then another thing. If God in his mercy does not make us useful to the conversion of sinners, we are not therefore to say we are sure we are not the children of God. I believe there are some ministers who have had the painful labor of toiling from year to year without seeing a single soul regenerated. Yet those men have been faithful to their charge, and have well discharged their ministry. I do not say that such cases often occur, but I believe they have occurred sometimes. Yet, mark you, the end of

their ministry has been answered after all. For what is the end of the gospel ministry? Some will say it is to convert sinners. That is a collateral end. Others will say it is to convert the saints. That is true. But the proper answer to give is—it is to glorify God, and, God is glorified even in the damnation of sinners. If I testify to them the truth of God and they reject his gospel; if I faithfully preach his truth, and they scorn it, my ministry is not therefore void. It has not returned to God void, for even in the punishment of those rebels he will be glorified, even in their destruction he will get himself honor; and if he cannot get praise from their songs, he will at last get honor from their condemnation and overthrow, when he shall cast them into the fire for ever. The true motive for which we should always labor, is the glory of God in the conversion of souls; and building up of God's people; but let us never lose sight of the great end. Let God be glorified; and he will be, if we preach his truth faithfully and honestly. So, therefore, while we should seek for souls, if God denies them unto us, let us not say, "I will not have other mercies that he has given;" but let us comfort ourselves with the thought—that though they be not saved, though Israel be not gathered in, God will glorify and honor us at last.

One thought more upon this subject—God by using us as instruments confers upon us the highest honor which men can receive. O beloved! I dare not dilate upon this. It should make our hearts burn at the thought of it. It makes us feel thrice honored that God should use us to convert souls; and it is only the grace of God which teaches us on the other hand, that it is grace and grace alone which makes us useful; which can keep us humble under the thought, that we are bringing souls to the Savior. It is a work which he who has once entered if God has blessed him cannot renounce. He will be impatient; he will long to win more souls to Jesus; he will account that; he will think that labor is but ease, so that by any means he may save some, and bring men to Jesus. Glory and honor, praise and power, be unto God, that he thus honors his people. But when he exalts us most, we will still conclude with, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory for ever and ever."

II. Secondly, we come to the GENERAL FACT. "He who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." The choicest happiness which mortal breast can

know is the happiness of benevolence,—of doing good to our fellow-creatures. To save a body from death, is that which gives us almost heaven on earth. Some men can boast that they have sent so many souls to perdition; that they have hurled many of their fellows out of the world. We meet, now and then a soldier who can glory that in battle he struck down so many foemen; that his swift and cruel sword reached the heart of so many of his enemies; but I count not that glory. If I thought I had been the means of the death of a single individual, methinks I should scarce rest at night, for the uneasy ghost of that murdered wretch would stare me in mine eyes. I should remember I had slain him, and perhaps sent his soul unshaven and unwashed into the presence of his Maker. It seems to me wonderful that men can be found to be soldiers. I say not if it be right or wrong; still I wonder where they can find the men. I know not how after a battle they can wash their hands of blood, wipe their swords and put them by, and then lie down to slumber, and their dreams be undisturbed. Methinks the tears would fall hot and scalding on my cheek at night, and the shrieks of the dying, and the groans of those approaching eternity would torture mine ear. I know not how others can endure it. To me it would be the very portal of hell, if I could think I had been a destroyer of my fellow-creatures. But what bliss is it to be the instrument of saving bodies from death! Those monks on Mount St. Bernard, surely, must feel happiness when they rescue men from death. The dog comes to the door, and they know what it means; he has discovered some poor weary traveler who has lain him down to sleep in the snow, and is dying from cold and exhaustion. Up rise the monks from their cheerful fire, intent to act the good Samaritan to the lost one. At last they see him, they speak to him, but he answers not. They try to discover if there is breath in his body, and they think he is dead. They take him up, give him remedies; and hastening to their hostel, they lay him by the fire, and warm and chafe him, looking into his face with kindly anxiety, as much as to say, "Poor creature! art thou dead?" When, at last, they perceive some heavings of the lungs, what joy is in the breast of those brethren, as they say, "His life is not extinct." Methinks if there could be happiness on earth, it would be the privilege to help to chafe one hand of that poor, almost dying man, and be the means of bringing him to life again. Or, suppose another case. A house is in flames, and in it is a woman with her children, who cannot by any means escape. In vain she

attempts to come down stairs; the flames prevent her. She has lost all presence of mind and knows not how to act. The strong man comes, and says, "Make way! make way! I must save that woman!" And cooled by the genial streams of benevolence, he marches through the fire. Though scorched, and almost stifled, he gropes his way. He ascends one staircase, then another, and though the stairs totter, he places the woman beneath his arm, takes a child on his shoulder, and down he comes, twice a giant, having more might than he ever possessed before. He has jeopardized his life, and perhaps an arm may be disabled, or a limb taken away, or a sense lost, or an injury irretrievably done to his body, yet he claps his hands, and says, "I have saved lives from death!" The crowd in the street hail him as a man who has been the deliverer of his fellow-creatures, honoring him more than the monarch who had stormed a city, sacked a town, and murdered myriad's.

But ah! brethren, the body which was saved from death to-day may die tomorrow. Not so the soul that is saved from death: it is saved everlastingly. It is saved beyond the fear of destruction. And if there be joy in the breast of a benevolent man when he saves a body from death, how much more blessed must he be when he is made the means in the hand of God of saving "a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins." Suppose that by some conversation of yours you are made the means of delivering a soul from death. My friends, you are apt to imagine that all conversion is under God done by the minister. You make a great mistake. There are many conversions effected by a very simple observation from the most humble individual. A single word spoken maybe more the means of conversion than a whole sermon. There you sit before me. I thrust at you, but you are too far off. Some brother, however, addresses an observation to you—it is a very stab with a short poignard in your heart. God often blesses a short pithy expression from a friend more than a long discourse from a minister. There was once in a village, where there had been a revival in religion, a man who was a confirmed infidel. Notwithstanding all the efforts of the minister and many Christian people, he had resisted all attempts, and appeared to be more and more confirmed in his sin. At length the people held a prayer meeting specially to intercede for his soul. Afterwards God put it into the heart of one of the elders of the church to spend a night in prayer in behalf of the poor

infidel. In the morning the elder rose from his knees, saddled his horse, and rode down to the man's smithy. He meant to say a great deal to him, but he simply went up to him, took him by the hand, and all he could say was, "O sir! I am deeply concerned for your salvation. I am deeply concerned for your salvation. I have been wrestling with God all this night for your salvation." He could say no more, his heart was too full. He then mounted on his horse and rode away again. Down went the blacksmith's hammer, and he went immediately to see his wife. She said, "What is the matter with you?" "Matter enough," said the man, "I have been attacked with a new argument this time. There is elder B_____ has been here this morning; and he said," I am concerned about your salvation.' Why, now, if he is concerned about my salvation, it is a strange thing that I am not concerned about it." The man's heart was clean captured by that kind word from the elder; he took his own horse and rode to the elder's house. When he arrived there the elder was in his parlor, still in prayer, and they knelt down together. God gave him a contrite spirit and a broken heart, and brought that poor sinner to the feet of the Savior. There was "a soul saved from death, and a multitude of sins covered."

Again, you may be the means of conversion by a letter you may write. Many of you have not the power to speak or say much; but when you sit down alone in your chamber you are able, with God's help, to write a letter to a dear friend of yours. Oh! I think that is a very sweet way to endeavor to be useful. I think I never felt so much earnestness after the souls of my fellow-creatures as when I first loved the Savior's name, and though I could not preach, and never thought I should be able to testify to the multitude, I used to write texts on little scraps of paper and drop them anywhere, that some poor creatures might pick them up, and receive them as messages of mercy to their souls. There is your brother. He is careless and hardened. Sister, sit down and write a letter to him, when he receives it, he will perhaps smile, but he will say, "Ah, well! it is Betsy's letter after all!" And that will have some power. I knew a gentleman, whose dear sister used often to write to him concerning his soul. "I used," said he, "to stand with my back up against a lamp-post, with a cigar in my mouth, perhaps at two o'clock in the morning, to read her letter. I always read them; and I have," said he, "wept floods of tears

after reading my sister's letters. Though I still kept on the error of my ways, they always checked me, they always seemed a hand pulling me away from sin; a voice crying out, "Come back! come back!" And at last a letter from her, in conjunction with a solemn providence, was the means of breaking his heart, and he sought salvation through a Savior.

Again. How many have been converted by the example of true Christians. Many of you feel that you cannot write or preach, and you think you can do nothing. Well, there is one thing you can do for your Master—you can live Christianity. I think there are more people who look at the new life in Christ written out in you, than they will in the old life that is written in the Scriptures. An infidel will use arguments to disprove the Bible, if you set it before him; but, if you do to others as you would that they should do to you, if you give of your bread to the poor and disperse to the needy, living like Jesus, speaking words of kindness and love, and living honestly and uprightly in the world, he will say, "Well, I thought the Bible was all hypocrisy; but I cannot think so now, because there is Mr. So-and-so, see how he lives. I could believe my infidelity if it were not for him. The Bible certainly has an effect upon his life, and therefore I must believe it."

And then how many souls may be converted by what some men are privileged to write and print. There is "Dr. Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion." Though I decidedly object to some things in it, I could wish that everybody had read that book, so many have been the conversions it has produced. I think it more honor to have written "Watts's Psalms and Hymns," than "Milton's Paradise Lost," and more glory to have written that book of old Wilcocks, "A Drop of Honey;" or the tract that God has used so much—"The Sinner's Friend"—than all the books of Homer. I value books for the good they may do to men's souls. Much as I respect the genius of Pope, or Dryden, or Burns, give me the simple lines of Cowper, that God has owned in bringing souls to him. Oh! to think that we may write and print books which shall reach poor sinners' hearts. The other day my soul was gladdened exceedingly by an invitation from a pious woman to go and see her. She told me she had been ten years on her bed, and had not been able to stir from it. "Nine years," she said, "I was dark, and blind, and unthinking; but my husband brought me one of your sermons. I read it, and God blessed it to the opening of my eyes. He

converted my soul with it. And now, all glory to him! I love his name! Each Sabbath morning," she said, "I wait for your sermon. I live on it all the week, as marrow and fatness to my spirit." Ah! thought I, there is something to cheer the printers, and all of us who labor in that good work. One good brother wrote to me this week, "Brother Spurgeon, keep your courage up. You are known in multitudes of households of England, and you are loved too; though we cannot hear you, or see your living form, yet throughout our villages your sermons are scattered. And I know of cases of conversion from them, more than I can tell you." Another friend mentioned to me an instance of a clergyman of the Church of England, a canon of a cathedral, who frequently preaches the sermons on the Sabbath—whether in the cathedral or not, I cannot say, but I hope he does. Oh! who can tell, when these things are printed what hearts they may reach, what good they may effect? Words that I spoke three weeks ago, eyes are now perusing, while tears are gushing from them as they read! "Glory be to God most high!"

But, after all, preaching is the ordained means for the salvation of sinners, and by this ten times as many are brought to the Savior as by any other. Ah! my friends, to have been the means of saving souls from death by preaching—what an honor. There is a young man who has not long commenced his ministerial career. When he enters the pulpit everybody notices what a deep solemnity there is upon him, beyond his years. His face is white, and blanched by an unearthly solemnity, his body is shriveled up by his labor, constant study and midnight lamp have worn him away; but when he speaks he utters wondrous words that lift the soul up to heaven. And the aged saint says, "Well! ne'er did I go so near to heaven as when I listened to his voice!" There comes in some gay young man, who listens and criticizes his aspect. He thinks it is by no means such as to be desired; but he listens. One thought strikes him, then another. See you that man; He has been moral all his life long—but he has never been renewed. Now tear begin to flow down his cheeks. Just put your ear against his breast, and you will hear him groan out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Ah! good reward for a withered frame, or a ruined constitution! Or, take another case. A man is preaching the Word of God. He is standing up to deliver his Master's message, and in steals some poor harlot. Such a case I knew not long ago. A poor harlot

determined she would go and take her life on Blackfriars Bridge. Passing by these doors one Sunday night, she thought she would step in, and for the last time hear something that might prepare her to stand before her Maker. She forced herself into the aisle, and she could not escape until I rose from the pulpit. The text was, "Seest thou this woman?" I dwelt upon Mary Magdalene and her sins; her washing the Savior's feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hair of her head. There stood the woman, melted away with the thought that she should thus hear herself described, and her own life painted. Oh! to think of saving a poor harlot from death, to deliver such an one from going down to the grave, and then, as God pleased, to save her soul from going down to hell! Is it not worth ten thousand lives, if we could sacrifice them all on the altar of God? When I thought of this text yesterday, I could only weep to think that God should have so favored me. Oh! men and women, how can ye better spend your time and wealth than in the cause of the Redeemer? What holier enterprise can ye engage in than this sacred one of saving souls from death, and hiding a multitude of sins? This is a wealth that ye can take with you—the wealth that has been acquired under God, by having saved souls from death, and covered a multitude of sins.

I know there are some now before the throne who first wept the penitential tear in this house of prayer, and who thanked God that they had listened to this voice; and methinks, they have a tender and affectionate love still for him whom God honored thus. Minister of the gospel, if you on earth are privileged to win souls I think when you die those spirits will rejoice to be your guardian angels. They will say, "Father, that man is dying whom we love, may we go and watch him?" "Yea," saith God, "ye may go, and carry heaven with you." Down come the spirits, ministering angels, and oh! how lovingly they look on us. They would, if they could, strike out the furrow from the forehead, and take the cold clammy sweat with their own blessed hands away. They must not do it; but Oh! how tenderly they watch that suffering man who was made the means of doing good to their souls, and when he opens his eyes to immortality he shall see them like guards around his bed, and hear them say, "Come with us, thrice welcome, honored servant of God; come with us." And when he speeds his way upwards towards heaven on strong wings of faith, these spirits who stand by him will clap their wings behind

him, and he will enter heaven with many crowns upon his head, each of which he will delight to cast at the feet of Jesus. Oh, brethren, if ye turn a sinner from the error of his ways, remember ye have saved a soul from death, and hidden a multitude of sins.

III. The APPLICATION, I can only just mention. It is this; that he who is the means of the conversion of a sinner does, under God, "save a soul from death, and bide a multitude of sins," but particular attention ought to be paid to backsliders; for in bringing backsliders into the church there is as much honor to God as in bringing in sinners. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him." Alas! the poor backslider is often the most forgotten. A member of the church has disgraced his profession, the church excommunicated him, and he was accounted "a heathen man and a publican." I know of men of good standing in the gospel ministry, who, ten years ago, fell into sin; and that is thrown in our teeth to this very day. Do you speak of them? you are at once informed, "Why, ten years ago they did so-and-so." Brethren, Christian men ought to be ashamed of themselves for taking notice of such things so long afterwards. True, we may use more caution in our dealings; but to reproach a fallen brother for what he did so long ago, is contrary to the spirit of John, who went after Peter, three days after he had denied his Master with oaths and curses. Now-a-days it is the fashion, if a man falls, to have nothing to do with him. Men say, "he is a bad fellow, we will not go after him." Beloved, suppose he is the worst, is not that the reason why you should go most after him? Suppose he never was a child of God—suppose he never knew the truth, is not that the greater reason why you should go after him? I do not understand your mawkish modesty, your excessive pride, that won't let you after the chief of sinners. The worse the case, the more is the reason why we should go. But suppose the man is a child of God, and you have cast him off—remember, he is your brother; he is one with Christ as much as you are; he is justified, he has the same righteousness that you have; and if, when he has sinned, you despise him, in that you despise him you despise his Master. Take heed! thou thyself mayest be tempted, and mayest one day fall. Like David, thou mayest walk on the top of thine house rather too high, and thou mayest see something which shall bring thee to sin. Then what wilt thou say, if then the brethren pass thee by with a sneer, and take no notice of thee? Oh! if

we have one backslider connected with our church, let us take special care of him. Don't deal hardly with him. Recollect you would have been a backslider too if it were not for the grace of God. I advise you, whenever you see professors living in sin to be very shy of them; but if after a time you see any sign of repentance, or if you do not, go and seek out the lost sheep of the house of Israel; for remember, that if one of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him remember, that "he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

"Backsliders, who your misery feel," I will come after you one moment. Poor backslider, thou wast once a Christian. Dost thou hope thou wast? "No," sayest thou, "I believe I deceived myself and others; I was no child of God." Well, if thou didst, let me tell thee, that if thou wilt acknowledge that God will forgive thee. Suppose you did deceive the church, though art not the first that did it. There are some members of this church, I fear, who have done so, and we have not found them out. I tell you your case is not hopeless. That is not the unpardonable sin. Some who have tried to deceive the very elect have yet been delivered; and my Master says he is able to save to the uttermost (and ye have not gone beyond the uttermost) all who come unto him. Come thou, then, to his feet, cast thyself on his mercy; and though thou didst once enter his came as a spy, he will not hang thee up for it, but will be glad to get thee anyhow as a trophy of mercy. But if thou was a child of God, and canst say honestly, "I know I did love him, and he loved me," I tell thee he loves thee still. If thou hast gone ever so far astray, thou art as much his child as ever. Though thou hast run away from thy Father, come back, come back, he is thy Father still. Think not he has unsheathed the sword to slay thee. Say not, "He has cast me out of the family." He has not. His bowels yearn over thee now. My Father loves thee; come then to his feet, and he will not even remind thee of what thou hast done. The prodigal was going to tell his Father all his sins, and to ask him to make him one of his hired servants, but the Father stopped his mouth He let him say that he was not worthy to be called his son, but he would not let him say, "make me as an hired servant." Come back and thy Father will receive thee gladly; he will put his arms around thee and kiss thee with the kisses of his love, and he will say, "I have found this my son that was lost; I have recovered this sheep

that had gone astray." My Father loved thee without works, he justified thee irrespective of them; thou hast no less merit now than thou hadst then. Come and trust and believe in him.

Lastly, you who believe you are not backsliders, if you are saved, remember that a soul is saved from death, and a multitude of sins hidden. Oh, my friends, if I might but be a hundred-handed man to catch you all, I would love to be so. If aught I could say could win your souls—if by preaching here from now till midnight, I might by any possibility capture some of you to the love of the Savior, I would do it. Some of you are speeding your way to hell blindfolded. My hearers, I do not deceive you, you are going to perdition as fast as time can carry you. Some of you are deceiving yourselves with the thought that you are righteous, and you are not so. Many of you have had solemn warnings, and have never been moved by them. You have admired the way in which the warning has been given, but the thing itself has never entered your heart. Hundreds of you are without God, and without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel: and may I not plead with you? Is a gloomy religious system to hold me captive and never let me speak? Why, poor hearts, do you know your sad condition? Do you know that "God is angry with the wicked every day;" that "the way of transgressors is hard;" that "he that believeth not is condemned already?" Has it never been told you that "he that believeth not shall be damned?" and can you stand damnation? My hearers could you make your bed in hell? Could you lie down in the pit? Do you think it would be an easy portion for your souls to be rocked on waves of flame for ever, and to be tossed about with demons in the place where hope cannot come? You may smile now, but will not smile soon. God sends me as an ambassador now; but if ye listen not to me, he will not send an ambassador next time, but an executioner. There will be no wooing words of mercy soon: the only exhortation thou wilt hear will be the dull cold voice of death, that shall say, "Come with me." Then thou wilt not be in the place where we sing God's praises, and where righteous prayers are daily offered. The only music thou wilt hear will be the sighs of the damned, the shrieks of fiends, and the yellings of the tormented. O may God in his mercy snatch you as brands from the fire, to be trophies of his grace throughout eternity. The way to be saved is to "renounce thy works and ways with grief," and fly to Jesus. And if now thou art a

conscience-stricken sinner, that is all I want. If thou wilt confess that thou art a sinner, that is all God requires of thee, and even that he gives thee. Jesus Christ says "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you hear his wooing words? Will ye turn from his sweet looks of mercy? Has his cross no influence? have his wounds no power to bring you to his feet? Ah! then, what can I say? The arm of the Spirit, which is mightier than man, alone can make hard hearts melt, and bow stubborn wills to the ground. Sinners, if you confess your sins this morning, there is a Christ for you. You need not say, "Oh, that I knew where to find him." The Word is nigh thee, on thy lips, and in thy heart. If thou wilt with thine heart believe, and with thy mouth confess, the Lord Jesus, thou shalt be saved, for "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."

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The New Nature

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."—1 Peter 1:23-25.

Peter had earnestly exhorted the scattered saints to love each other "with a pure heart fervently," and he wisely fetches his argument, not from the law, nor from nature, nor from philosophy, but from that high and divine nature which God hath implanted in his people. Love each other with a pure heart fervently, for ye have been born again, not with corruptible seed, but with incorruptible. I might compare Peter to some judicious tutor of the princes of the blood, who labors to beget and foster a kingly spirit in the king's sons. From their position and descent he brings argument for a dignified behavior: "Do not act foolishly, it would be unseemly in a king; speak not so, ribald language would be unbecoming to a prince; indulge not in these vanities, such folk would be degrading to

the illustrious of the earth." So looking upon God's people, as being heirs of glory, princes of the blood royal, descendants of the King of kings, earth's true and only real aristocracy, Peter saith to them, "See that ye love one another, because of your noble birth, being born of incorruptible seed; because of your pedigree, being descended from God, the Creator of all things; and because of your immortal destiny, for you shall never pass away, though the glory of flesh shall fade, and even its very existence shall cease. I think it would be well, my brethren, if in a spirit of humility, you and I recognized the free dignity of our regenerated nature, and lived up to it. Oh! what is a Christian? If you compare him with a king, he adds priestly sanctity to royal dignity. The king's royalty often lieth only in his crown, but with a Christian it is infused into his very nature. Compare him with a senator, with a mighty warrior, or a master of wisdom, and he far excelleth them all. He is of another race than those who are only born of woman. He is as much above his fellows through his new birth, as man is above the beast that perisheth. As humanity towers in dignity high above the grovelling brute, so doth the regenerate man o'ertop the best of human once-born mortals. Surely he ought to bear himself, and act as one who is not of the multitude, one who has been chosen out of the world, distinguished by sovereign grace, written among "the peculiar people," and who therefore cannot grovel as others grovel, nor own think as others think. Let the dignity of your nature, and the brightness of your prospects, O believers in Christ, make you cleave to holiness, and hate the very appearance of evil.

In the text there are three points which, I think, will well repay our very serious attention. The apostle evidently speaks of two lives, the one, the life which is natural, born, matured, and perfected only by the flesh; the other, the life which is spiritual, born of the spirit, in antagonism with the flesh, surviving it and triumphantly rising to celestial glory. Now, in speaking of these two lives, the apostle brings out, first of all, a comparison and a contrast between the two births, for each life hath its own birth. Then he brings out a contrast between the manifest existence of the two lives; and then lastly, between the glory of the two lives, for each life hath its glory, but the glory of the spiritual life far excelleth the glory of the natural.

I. First, then, the apostle Peter draws A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO BIRTHS WHICH ARE THE DOORWAYS OF THE TWO LIVES.

First, we have said that every life is prefaced by rib birth. It is so naturally—we are born; it is so spiritually—we are born again. Except a man be born he cannot enter into the kingdom of nature; except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Birth is the lowly gateway by which we enter into life, and the lofty portal by which we are admitted into the kingdom of heaven.

Now there is a comparison between the two births; in both there is a solemn mystery. I have read, I have even heard sermons, in which the minister seemed to me rather to play the part of a physician than of a divine, exposing and explaining the mysteries of our natural birth, across which both God in nature and the good man in delicacy must ever throw a veil. It is a hallowed thing to be born, as surely as it is a solemnity to die. Birthdays and deathdays are days of awe. Birth is very frequently used in Scripture as one of the most graphic pictures of solemn mystery. Into this, no man may idly pry, and Science herself, when she has dared to look within the veil, has turned back awestricken, from those "lower parts of the earth" in which David declares us to be "curiously wrought." Greater still is the mystery of the new birth. That we are born again we know, but how, we cannot tell. How the Spirit of God openeth upon the mind, how it is that he renews the faculties and imparts fresh desires by which those faculties should be guided, how it is that he enlightens the understanding, subdues the will, purifies the intellect, reverses the desire, lifts up the hope, and puts the fear in its right channel, we cannot tell, we must leave this among the secret things which belong unto God. The Holy Ghost worketh, but the manner of his operation is not to be comprehended. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Oh! my hearers, have you felt this mystery? Explain it you cannot, nor can I, nor ought we to attempt an explanation, for where God is silent it is perhaps profanity, and certainly impertinence for us to speak. The two births then are alike in their solemn mystery.

But, then, we know this much of our natural birth, that in birth there is a life created. Yonder infant is beginning his being, another creature has lifted up its feeble cry to heaven, another mortal has come to tread this theater of action, to breathe, to live, to die. And so in the new birth, there is an absolute creation, we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, there is another spirit born to pray, to believe in Christ to love him here, and to rejoice in him hereafter. As no one doubts but that birth is the manifestation of a creation, so let no one doubt but that regeneration is the manifestation of a creation of God, as divine, as much beyond the power of man, as the creation of the human mind itself.

But we know also that in birth there is not only a life created, but a life communicated. Each child hath its parent. The very flowers trace themselves back to a parental seed. We spring, not from our own loins, we are not self-created, there is a life communicated. We have links between the son and the father, and back till we come to father Adam. So in regeneration there is a life, not merely created, but communicated, even the very life of God, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope. As truly as the father lives in the child, so truly doth the every life and nature of God live in every Swiss born heir of heaven. We are as certainly partakers of the divine nature by the new birth as we were partakers of the human nature by the old birth: so far the comparison holds good.

Equally certain is it, that in the natural and in the spiritual birth there is life entailed. There are certain propensities which we inherit, from which this side the grave we shall not be free. Our temperament brave or gay, our passions slow or hasty, our propensities sensual or aspiring, our faculties contracted or expansive are to a great measure an entailed inheritance as much linked to our future portion as are wings to an eagle or a shed to a snail. No doubt much of our history is born within us, and the infant hath within himself germ of his future actions. If I may so speak, there are those qualities, that composition and disposition of nature which will naturally, if circumstances assist, work out in full development certain results. So is it with us when we are born again: a heavenly nature is entailed upon us. We cannot but be holy; the new nature cannot but serve God, it must, it will pant to be nearer to Christ,

and more like him. It hath aspirations which time cannot satisfy, desires which earth cannot surfeit, longings which heaven itself alone can gratify. There is a life entailed upon us in the moment when we pass from death unto life in the solemn mystery of regeneration.

In the old birth, and in the new birth also, a life is also brought forth which is complete in all its parts and only needs to be developed. Yon infant in the oracle shall never have another limb, or another eye. Its limb hardens, it grows, it gathers strength, its brain also enlarges its sphere, but the faculties are there already, they are not implanted afterward. Verily, so is it in the new-born child of God. Faith love, hope, and every grace are there the moment he believes in Christ. They grow 'tis true, but they were all there in the instant of regeneration. The babe in grace who is just now born to God, hath every part of the spiritual man, it only needs to grow till he becomes a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Thus far, you perceive, that the two births have a very close resemblance to one another. I pray you, now that I have introduced the subject, do not turn from it till you have thought of the reality of the new birth, as you must of the reality of the first. You were not here if you had not been born, you shall never be in heaven unless you are born again, you had not been able to-day to hear, or think, or see, if you had not been born. You are not to-day able to pray or to believe in Christ, unless you are born again. The enjoyments of this world you could never have known, if it had not been for birth, the saved delight of God you do not know to-day, and you never shall know unless you be born again. Do not look upon regeneration as though it were a fancy or a fiction. I do assure you, my hearers, it is as real as is the natural birth; for spiritual is not the same as fanciful, but the spiritual is as real as even nature itself. To be born again is as much a matter of fact to be realised, to be discerned, and to be discovered, as to be born for the first time into this vale of tears.

But now comes the contrast—"being born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." Herein lieth the contrast between the two. That child which has just experienced the first birth has been made partaker of corruptible seed. The depravity of his parent lieth sleeping within him. Could he speak, he might say so. David did,— "Behold, I was born in sin

and shaped in iniquity." He receiveth the evil virus which was first infused into us by the fall. Not so, however, is it when we are born again. No sin is then sown within us. This sin of the old flesh remains but there is no sin in the newborn nature, it cannot sin because it is born of God himself; it is as impossible for that new nature to sin as for the Deity itself to be defiled. It is a part of the divine nature—a spark struck off from the rental orb of light and life, and dead or dark it cannot be, because it would be contrary to its nature to be either the one or the other. Oh, what a difference! In the first birth—born to sin, in the next—born to holiness; in the first—partakers of corruption, in the next—heirs of incorruption in the first—depravity, in the second—perfection. What broader contrast could there be! What should make us more thoroughly long for this new birth than the glorious fact that we are by its means consciously lifted up from the ruins of the fall, and made perfect in Christ Jesus.

In the birth of the flesh too, what dread uncertainties attend it! What shall become of yonder child? It may live to curse the day in which it was born, as did the poor troubled patriarch of old. What sorrow may drive its ploughshares along its yet unwrinkled brow? Ah! child, thou shalt be gray-headed one day, but ere that comes thou shalt have felt a thousand storms beating about thine heart and head. Little dost thou know thy destiny, but assuredly thou shalt be of few days and full of trouble. Not so in the regeneration, we shall never rue the day in which we are born again, never look back upon that with sorrow, but always with ecstasy and delight, for we are ushered then, not into the hovel of humanity, but into the palace of Deity. We are not then born into a valley of tears, but into an inheritance in the Canaan of God.

That child too, so fondly the object of its mother's love may one day vex or break its parent's heart. Are not children doubtful mercies? Bring they not with them sad forebodings of what they yet may be? Alas for the pretty prattlers who have grown up to be convicted criminals! But blessed be God, they who are sons of God shalt never break their father's heart. Their new nature shall be worthy of Him that gave it existence. They shall live to honor him, they shall die to be perfectly like him, and shall rise to glorify him for ever. We have sometimes said that God her a very naughty family, but surely the naughtiness is in the old Adam nature, and not in

Jehovah's gracious work. There is no naughtiness in the new creature. In that new creature there is no taint of sin. God's child as descended from his loins, can never sin. The new nature which God hath put into it doth never wander, death never transgress. It were not the new nature if it did, it were not God's offspring, if it all, for that which cometh of God is like Him, holy, pure, and undefiled, separate from sin. In this indeed lieth a strange difference. We know not to what that first nature tendeth, who can tell what bitterness it shall bring forth? But we know whither the new nature tendeth, for it ripeneth towards the perfect image of Him that created us in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps without my endeavoring to enlarge further you could yourselves muse upon this theme. It remains but for me upon this first head to return with earnestness to that point upon which I fear the greatest difficulty lies—the realisation of this birth—for we repeat it, we are speaking of a fact and not a dream, a reality and not metaphor.

Some tell you that the child is regenerated when the drops fall from priestly fingers. My brethren, a more fond and foul delusion was never perpetrated upon earth. Rome itself did never discourse upon a wilder error than this. Dream not of it. O think not that it is so. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Lord himself addresses this sentence not to an infant but to a fullgrown man. Nicodemus—one who was circumcised according to the Jewish law, but who yet, though he had received the seal of that covenant, needed as a man to be born again. We all without exception must know this change. Your life may have been moral, but it will not suffice. The most moralised human nature can never attain to the divine nature. You may cleanse and purge the fruit of the first birth, but still the inevitable decree demands the second birth for all. If from your youth up you have been so trained that you have scarcely known the vices of the people; so tended, hedged in, and kept from contamination with sin, that you have not known temptation, yet you must be born again, and this birth, I repeat it, must be as much a fact, as true, as real, and as sure as was that first birth in which you were ushered into this world. What do you know of this, my hearer? What do you know of this? It is a thing you cannot perform for yourself. You cannot regenerate yourself any more than you could cause

yourself to be born. It is a matter out of the range of human power it is supernatural, it is divine. Have you partaken of it? Do not merely look back to some hour in which you felt mysterious feelings. No, but judge by the fruits. Have your fears and hopes changed places? Do you love the things you once hated, and hate the things you once loved? Are old things passed away? Have all things become new? Christian brethren, I put the query to you as well as to the rest. It is so easy to be deceived here. We shall find it no trifle to be born again. It is a solemn, it is a momentous matter. Let us not take it for granted because we have given up drunkenness that we are therefore converted, because we do not swear, because now we attend a place of worship. There is more wanted than this. Do not think you are saved because you have some good feelings, some good thoughts. There is more required than this—ye must be born again. And oh, Christian parents, train up your children in the fear of God, but do not be content with your training—they must be born again. And Christian husbands, and Christian wives, be not satisfied with merely praying that your partner's characters may become moral and honest; ask that something may be done for them which they cannot do for themselves. And you, philanthropists, who think that building new cottages, using fresh plans for drainage, teaching the poor economy, will be the means of emparadising the world; I pray you go further than such schemes as these. You must change the heart. It is but little use to alter the outward till you have renewed the inward. It is not the bark of the tree that is wrong so much as the sap. It is not the skin—it is the blood—nay, deeper than the blood—the very essence of the nature must be altered. The man must be as much made anew as if he never had an existence. Nay, a greater miracle than this, these must be two miracles combined—the old things must pass away, and new things must be created by the Holy Ghost. I tremble while I speak upon this theme, lest I, your minister, should know in theory but not in experience a mystery so sublime as this. What shall we do but together offer a prayer like this—"O God, if we be not regenerate let us know the worst of our state, and if we be, let us never cease to plead and pray for others till they too shall be renewed by the Holy Ghost." That which is born of the flesh is flesh; its best endeavors go no higher than flesh, and the flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God. That which is born of the Spirit alone is spirit, and only the Spirit can enter into spiritual things, inherit the spiritual portion

which God has provided for his people. I have thus passed through the somewhat delicate and extremely difficult task of bringing out the apostle's meaning—the comparison between the two births, which are the door-steps of the two lives.

II. I now come to the second point—THE MANIFEST DIFFERENCE OF THE TWO LIVES RESULTING FROM THE TWO BIRTHS.

Brethren, look around you. To what shall we compare this immense assembly? As I look upon the many colors, and the varied faces, even if it were not in the text, I am certain that a meadow thickly besprinkled with flowers would rise up before my imagination. Look at the mass of people gathered together, and doth it not remind you of the field in its full summer glory, when the king-cups, daisies, cloves, and grass blooms, are sunning themselves in countless varieties of beauty? Ay, but not only in the poet's eye is there a resemblance, but in the mind of God, and in the experience of man. "All flesh is grass;" all that is born of the first birth, if we compare it to grass in poetry, may be compared to it also in fact, from the frailty and shortness of its existence. We passed the meadows but a month ago, and they were moved in verdant billows by the breeze like waves of ocean when they are softly stirred with the evening gale. We looked upon the whole scene, and it was exceeding fair. We passed it yesterday and the mower's scythe had cut asunder beauty from its roots, and there it lay in heaps ready to be gathered when fully dry. The grass is cut down so soon, but if it stood, it would wither, and handfuls of dust would take the place of the green and coloured leaves, for doth not the grass wither and the flowers thereof fall avidly? Such is mortal life. We are not living, brethren, we are dying. We begin to breathe, and we make the number of our breaths the less. Our pulse is "beating funeral marches to the tomb." The sand runs down from the upper bulb of the glass, and it is emptying fast. Death is written upon every brow. Man, know that thou art mortal, for thou all art born of woman. Thy first birth gave thee life and death together. Thou dost only breathe awhile to keep thee from the jaws of the grave, when that breath is spent, into the dust of death thou tallest there and then. Everything, especially during the last few weeks, has taught us the frailty of human life. The senator who guided the affairs of nations and beheld the rise of a free kingdom, lived not to see it fully

organized, but expired with many a weighty secret unspoken. The judge who has sentenced many, receives his own sentence at the last. From this earth, since last we met together, master-minds have been taken away, and even the monarch on his throne has owned the monarchy of Death. How many of the masses too have fallen, and have been carried to their long home! There have been funerals, some of them funerals of honored men who perished doing their Master's will in saving human life, and alas, there have been unhonoured burials of others who did the will of Satan, and have inherited the flame. There have been deaths abundant on the right hand and on the left, and well have Peter's words been proved—"All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away."

Now, brethren, let us look at the other side of the question. The second birth gave us a nature too—Will that also die? Is it like grass, and its glory like the flower of the field? No, most certainly not. The first nature dies because the seed was corruptible. But the second nature was not created by corruptible seed, but with incorruptible, even the Word of God into which God has infused his own life, so that it quickens us by the Spirit. That incorruptible word produces an incorruptible life. The child of God in his new nature never dies. He can never see death. Christ, who is in him, is the immortality and the life. "He that liveth and believeth in Christ shall never die." And yet again, "Though he were dead yet shall he live." When we are born again, we receive a nature which is indestructible by accident, which is not to be consumed by fire, drowned by riveter, weakened by old age, or smitten down by blast of pestilence; a nature invulnerable to poison; a nature which shall not be destroyed by the sword; a nature which can never die till the God that gave it should himself expire and Deity die out. Think of this, my brethren, and surely you will find reason to rejoice. But perhaps, you ask me, why it is the new nature can never die? I am sure the text teaches it never can. "But not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." If that does not teach that the spiritual nature which is given us by the new birth never dies, it does not teach anything at all; and if it does teach that, where goes Arminian doctrine of falling from grace; where go your Arminian fears of perishing after all? But let me show you why it is that this nature never dies. First, from the

fact of its nature. It is in itself incorruptible. Every like produces in like. Man, dying man, produces dying man; God, eternal God, produces everlasting nature when he begets again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy:" the earthy dies, we who are earthy die too. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly," the heavenly never dies, and if we are born as the heavenly, the heavenly nature dieth neither. "The first Adam was made a living soul." We are made living souls too, but that soul at last is separated from the body. "The second Adam is made a quickening spirit," and that spirit is not only alive but quickening. Do you not perceive it?—the first was a quickened soul—quickened, receiving life full a season; the second is a quickening spirit, giving out life, rather than receiving it; like that angel whom some poet pictures, who perpetually shot forth sparklers of fire, having within himself an undying flame, the fountain of perpetual floods of light and heat. So is it with the new nature within us, it is not merely a quickened thing which may die, but a quickening thing which cannot die, being Snide like unto Christ the quickening Spirit. But then, more than this, the new nature cannot die, because the Holy Spirit perpetually supplies it with life. "He giveth more grace"—grace upon grace. You know the apostle puts it thus: "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." Is not the Holy Spirit the divine agent by whom the life of Christ is infused into us? Now, the life-floods which the Holy Spirit sends into us, co-work with the immortality of the new-born spirit, and so doubly preserve the eternity of our bliss. But then, again, we are in vital union with Christ, and to suppose that the new nature could die out, were to imagine that a member of Christ would die, that a finger, a hand, an arm, could rot from the person of Jesus, that he could be maimed and divided. Doth not the apostle say, "Is Christ divided?" And was it not written, "Not a bone of him shall be broken?" and how were this true, if we were broken from him, or rolled from his body? My brethren, we receive the divine sap through Christ the stem that divine sap keeps us alive but more the very fact that we are joined to Christ preserves our life, "Because I live ye shall live also." The new life cannot die, because God is pledged to keep it alive. "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "My Father which gave them me is

greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." And yet again, "The water which I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." And yet again, "He that believeth in me shall never hunger and never thirst." And so might we repeat multitudes of passages where the divine promise engages omnipotence and divine wisdom, to preserve the new life. So then, let us gather these all up in one. As a man born of the flesh, I shall die, as a new man born of the Spirit, I shall never die. Thou, O flesh, the offspring of flesh thou shalt see corruption. Thou, O spirit, new-created spirit, offspring of the Lord corruption thou shalt never see. With our glorious Covenant Head we may exclaim "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." I shall die, yet never die. My life shall flee, yet never flee. I shall pass away, and yet abide; I shall be carried to the tomb, and yet, soaring upward, the tomb can ne'er contain the quickened Spirit. Oh, children of God, I know not any subject that ought more thoroughly to lift you out of yourselves than this. Now let the divine nature live in you; come, put down the animal for a moment, put down the mere mental faculty; let the living spark blaze up; come, let the divine element, the newborn nature that God has given to you, let that now speak, and let its voice be praise; let it look up and let it breathe its own atmosphere, the heaven of God, in which it shall shortly rejoice. O God, our Father, help us to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, seeing that we have by thine own self been quickened to an immortal life.

III. I now come to the last, and perhaps the most interesting point of all. **THE GLORY OF THE TWO NATURES IS CONTRASTED.** Every nature has its glory. Brethren, look at the field again. There is not only the grass but there is the flower which is the glory of the field. Sometimes many coloured hues begem the pastures with beauty. Now, the painted flower is the glory of the verdant field. It conies up later than the grass, and it dies sooner, for the grass is up a long while before the flower blooms, and when the flower is dead, the stalk of the grass still retains vitality. It is precisely so with us. Our nature has its glory, but that glory does not arrive for years. The babe has not yet the glory of full manhood, and when that glory does come, it dies before our nature dies, for "they that look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders cease because they are few." The man loses his glory and becomes a tottering imbecile before life

becomes extinct. The flower comes up last and dies first, our glory comes last and dies first, too. O flesh! O flesh! what contempt is passed upon thee! Thy very existence is frail and feeble, but thy glory more frail and feeble still. It grows but late and then it dies, alas how soon! But what is the glory of the flesh? Give me your attention for a moment while I tell you briefly. In some, the glory of the flesh is BEAUTY. Their face is fair to look upon, and as the handiwork of the Great Worker, it should be admired. When a person becometh vain of it, beauty becomes shame; but to have well-proportioned features is, doubtless, no mean endowment. There is a glory in the beauty of the flesh, but how late it is developed, and how soon it fades! How soon do the cheeks become hollow! how frequently does the complexion grow sallow, and the bright eyes are dimmed, and the comely visage is marred! A part, too, of the glory of the flesh is physical strength. To be a strong man, to have the bones well set and the muscles well braced,—to have good muscular vigor is no small thing. Many men take delight in the legs of a man, and in the strength of his arm. Well, as God made him, he is a wonderful creature, and 'twere wrong for us not to admire the masterpiece of God. But how late does muscular strength arrive! There are the days of infancy, and there are the days of youth, when as yet the strong man is but feeble; and then, when he has had his little hey-day of strength, how doth the stalwart frame begin to rock and reel! and the rotting teeth and the whitened hair show that death has begun to claim the heriot clay, and will soon take possession of it for himself "The glory thereof falleth away." To others, the glory of the flesh lies rather in the mind. They have eloquence, they can so speak as to enchant the ears of the multitude. The bees of eloquence have made their hives between the lips of the orator, and honey distils with every word. Yes, but how late is this a coming! How many years before the child speaks articulately, and before the young man is able to deliver himself with courage! And then, how soon it goes!—till, mumbling from between his toothless jaws, the poor man would speak the words of wisdom, but the lips of age deny him utterance. Or, let the glory be wisdom. There is a man whose glory is his masterly power over others. He can foresee and look further than other men, he can match craft by craft: he is so wise that his fellows put confidence in him. This is the glory of the flesh; how late is it in coming!—from the puking child, what a distance up to the wise man! And then how soon it is gone!

How often, while yet the man himself in his flesh is in vigor has the mind strewn symptoms of decay! Well, take what ye will to be the glory of the flesh, I will still pronounce over it "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." If the flesh be frail, the glory of the flesh is frailer still, if the grass wither, certainly the flower of the grass withereth before it.

But is this true of the new nature? Brethren, is this true of that which was implanted at the second birth? I have just shown you, I think, that the existence of the new nature is eternal, because it was not born of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. I have tried to show that it can never perish and can never die. But your unbelief suggests, "Perhaps its glory may." No, its glory never can. And what is the glory of the new-born nature? Why, its glory first of all is beauty. But what is its beauty? It is to be like the Lord Jesus. We are, when we shall see him as he is, to be like him. But that beauty shall never fade, eternity itself shall not hollow the cheeks of this seraphic comeliness, nor dim the brilliant eye of this celestial radiance. We shall be like Christ, but the likeness shall ne'er be marred by time, nor consumed by decay. I said just now that the glory of the flesh consisted sometimes in its strength, so does the glory of the Spirit consist in its vigor, but then it is a force that never shall be expended. The strength of the new-born nature is the Holy Ghost himself, and while Deity remains omnipotent, our new nature shall go on increasing in vigor till we come first to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, and next come to be glorified men standing before his throne. The flower of the new nature you cannot see much of yet, you see through a glass darkly. That flower of glory consists perhaps, too, in eloquence. "Eloquence," say you, "how can that be?" I said the glory of the old nature might be eloquence, so with the new, but this is the eloquence—"Abba Father." This is an eloquence you can use now. It is one which when you cannot speak a word which might move an audience, shall still remain upon your tongue to move the courts of heaven. You shall be able to say, "Abba Father," in the very pangs of death, and waking from your beds of dust and silent clay, more eloquent still you shall cry, "Hallelujah," you shall join the eternal chorus, swell the divine symphony of cherubim and seraphim, and through eternity your glory shall never part awry. And then, if wisdom be glory, your wisdom, the wisdom which you inherit in the new nature, which is none other than Christ's who is

made of God unto us, wisdom shall never fade, in fact it shall grow, for there you shall know even as you are known. While here you see through a glass darkly, there you shall see face to face. You sip the brook to-day, you shall bathe in the ocean tomorrow; you see afar off now, you shall lie in the arms of wisdom by-and-bye; for the glory of the Spirit never dies, but throughout eternity expanding, enlarging, blazing, gloryfying itself through God, it shall go on never, never to fail. Brethren, whatever it may be which you are expecting as the glory of your new nature, you have not yet an idea of what it will be. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But though he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, yet, I fear we have not fully learned them. However, we will say of this glory, whatever it may be, it is incorruptible, undefiled, and it fadeth not away. The only question we have to ask, and with that we wish, is—are we born again? Brethren, it is impossible for you to possess the existence of the new life without the new birth, and the glory of the new birth you cannot know without the new heart. I say—are you born again? Do not stand up and say, "I am a Churchman, I was baptized and confirmed." That you may be, and yet not be born again. Do not say, "I am a Baptist, I have professed my faith and was immersed." That you may be, and not be born again Do not any, "I am of Christian parents." That you may be, and yet be an heir of wrath, even as others. Are you born again be Oh! souls, may God the Holy Ghost reveal Christ to you, and when you come to see Christ with the tearful eyes of a penitential faith, then be it known unto you that you are born again and that you have passed from death unto life, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." God help you to believe!

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The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

"And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."—Acts 26:14.

How marvelous the condescension which induced the Saviour to take

notice of such a wretch as Saul! Enthroned in the highest heavens, amidst the eternal melodies of the redeemed, and the seraphic sonnets of the cherubim and all the angelic hosts, it was strange that the Saviour should stoop himself from his dignity to speak to a persecutor. Engaged as he is both day and night in pleading the cause of his own church before his Father's throne, it is condescension indeed which could induce him, as it were, to suspend his intercessions, in order that he might speak personally to one who had sworn himself his enemy. And what grace was it that could lead the Saviour's heart to speak to such a man as Saul, who had breathed out threatenings against his church? Had he not haled men and women to prison; had he not compelled them in every synagogue to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ? and now Jesus himself must interpose to bring him to his senses! Ah, had it been a thunderbolt which quivered in its haste to reach the heart of man, we should not have marvelled, or had the lips of the Saviour been heaving with a curse we should not have been astonished. Had he not himself in his own lifetime cursed the persecutor? Did he not say, whosoever shall offend one of the least of these my little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast in the sea? But now the man that is cursed by that language, is yet to be blessed by him whom he had persecuted; who though he had stained his hand in blood, and had now the commission in his hands to drag others to prison, though he had kept the clothes of those who had stoned Stephen, yet the Master, the King of heaven, must himself speak from the upper skies to bring him to feel the need of a Saviour, and to make him partaker of precious faith. I say this is marvellous condescension and matchless grace. But, beloved, when we come to recollect the Saviour's character it is but little wonderful that he should do this for he has done far more than this. Did he not in person leave the starry thrones of heaven, and come down to earth to suffer, and bleed and die? But when I think of Bethlehem's manger, of the cruel garden of Gethsemane, and the yet more shameful Calvary, I do not wonder that the Saviour should do any act of grace or condescension. That being done, what can be greater? If he hath stooped from heaven into hades, what greater stoop can he accomplish? If his own throne must be left empty, if his own crown must be relinquished, if his Godhead must be veiled in flesh, and the splendours of his deity clothed in the rags of manhood, what wonder, I say, that he should stoop to speak even to Saul

of Tarsus, to bring his heart to himself? Beloved, some of us do not wonder either, for although we have not had greater grace than the apostle himself we have had no less. The Saviour did not speak out of heaven to us with a voice that others might hear, but he spoke with a voice that our conscience heard. We were not blood-thirsty, it may be, against his children, but we had sins both black and heinous; yet he stopped us. Not content with wooing us or with threatening us, not content with sending his ministers to us and giving us his word to warn us of duty, he would come himself. And you and I, beloved, who have tasted of this grace, can say it was matchless love that saved Paul, but not love unexampled; for he hath saved us also, and made us partakers of the same grace.

I intend, this morning, to address myself more particularly to those who fear not the Lord Jesus Christ, but on the contrary, oppose him. I think I may be quite certain that I have none here who go the length of desiring to see the old persecution of the church revived. I do not think there is an Englishman, however much he may hate religion, who would wish to see the stake again in Smithfield, and the burning pile consuming the saints. There may be some who hate them as much, but still not in that fashion; the common sense of the age reviles against the gibbet, the sword, and the dungeon. The children of God, in this country at least, are quite safe from any political persecution of that kind, but it is highly probable that I have here this morning some who go to the full length of their tether, and who endeavor as much as lieth in them to provoke the Lord to anger by opposing his cause. You will perhaps recognize yourselves if I try to paint a picture. It is seldom that you ever go into the house of God, in fact you have a contempt for all the gatherings of the righteous; you have a notion that all saints are hypocrites, that all professors are cants, and you do not at times blush to say so. However, you have a wife, and that wife of yours has been impressed under the sound of the ministry; she loves to go to the house of God, and heaven and her heart alone know what grief and agony of mind you have caused her. How often have you taunted and jeered her on account of her profession! You cannot deny but that she is a better woman for it; you are obliged to confess that although she cannot go with you in all your sports and merriments, yet as far as she can go she is a loving and affectionate wife to you. If any one should find fault with

her, you would right manfully defend her character; but it is her religion that you hate; and it is but lately that you threatened to lock her up on Sunday. You say it is impossible for you to live in the house with her if she will go up to the house of God. Moreover there is a little child of yours, you had no objection to that child going to the Sunday-school, because she was out of your way on the Sunday when you were smoking your pipe in your shirt sleeves; you did not want to be bothered with your children, you said, and therefore you were glad to pack them off to the Sunday-school, but that child has had her heart touched; and you cannot help seeing that the religion of Christ is in her heart, therefore you do not like it, you love the child, but you would give anything if she were not what she is; you would give anything if you could crush the last spark of religion out of her. But perhaps I can put your case yet. You are a master; you occupy a respectable position, you have many men under you, you cannot bear a man to make a profession of religion. Other masters you know have said to their men, "Do as you like, so long as you are a good servant, I do not care about your religious views." But mayhap you are a little the reverse; although you would not turn a man away because of his religion you give him a jeer every now and then, and if you trip him up in a little fault, you say, "Ah! that is your religion, I suppose you learned that at chapel;" grieving the poor man's soul, while he endeavors as far as he can to discharge his duty to you. Or, you are a young man, employed in a warehouse or a shop, and there is one of your shopmates who has lately taken to religion, he is to be found on his knees in prayer—what fine fun you have made of him lately, haven't you? You and others have joined in like a pack of hounds after a poor hare and he being of rather a timid turn of mind, perhaps is silent before you, or if he speaks, the tear is in his eye, because you have wounded his spirit. Now this is the selfsame spirit that kindled the firebrand of old; that stretched the saint upon the rack; that cut his body in pieces, and sent him to wander about in sheep skins and in goat skins. If I have not exactly hit your character yet, I may do it before I have done. I wish to address myself especially to those of you, who in word or deed or in any other manner, persecute the children of God; or if you do not like so hard a word as "persecute," laugh at them, opposing them, and endeavor to put an end to the good work in their hearts.

I shall in the name of Christ, first put the question to you, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" In the second place, I shall in Christ's name expostulate with you, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;" and then if God shall bless what is said to the touching of your heart, it may be that the Master shall give you a few words of comfort, as he did the apostle Paul, when he said, "Rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."

I. In the first place, then, we will consider THE QUESTION, WHICH JESUS CHRIST PUT OUT OF HEAVEN TO PAUL, has been put to you this morning.

First, notice what a personal question it was, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" When I preach to you, I am obliged to address you all as an assembly; it is not possible for me, except on rare occasions, to single out an individual, and describe his character, although under the hand of the Spirit it is sometimes done; but in the main I am obliged to describe the character as a whole, and deal with it in the mass. But not so our Master; he did not say out of heaven. "Saul, why does the synagogue persecute me? Why do the Jews hate my religion?" No; it was put more pertinently than that—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" If it had been put in general terms, it would have glanced off from the heart of the apostle; it could have been like an arrow which had missed the mark, and barely grazed the skin of the man in whose heart it was intended to find a home; but when it came personally—"Why persecutest thou me?"—there was no getting off it. I pray the Lord to make the question personal to some of you. There be many of us here present who have had personal preaching to our souls. Do you not remember, dear brother in Christ, when you were first pricked in the heart, how personal the preacher was? I remember it well. It seemed to me that I was the only person in the whole place, as if a black wall were round about me, and I were shut in with the preacher, something like the prisoners at the Penitentiary, who each sit in their box and can see no one but the chaplain. I thought all he said was meant for me; I felt persuaded that some one knew my character, and had written to him and told him all, and that he had personally picked me out.

Why, I thought he fixed his eyes on me; and I have reason to believe he did, but still he said he knew nothing about my case. Oh, that men would hear the word preached, and that God would so bless them in their hearing, that they might feel it to have a personal application to their own hearts.

But note again—the Apostle received some information as to the persecuted one. If you had asked Saul who it was he persecuted, he would have said, "Some poor fishermen, that had been setting up an impostor; I am determined to put them down. Why, who are they? They are the poorest of the world; the very scum and draff of society; if they were princes and kings we perhaps might let them have their opinion; but these poor miserable ignorant fellows, I do not see why they are to be allowed to carry out their infatuation, and I shall persecute them. Moreover, most of them are women I have been persecuting—poor ignorant creatures. What right have they to set their judgment up above the priests? They have no right to have an opinion of their own, and therefore it is quite right for me to make them turn away from their foolish errors." But see in what a different light Jesus Christ puts it. He does not say, "Saul, Saul, why didst thou persecute Stephen?" or "Why art thou about to drag the people of Damascus to prisons?" No—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Did you ever think of it in that light? You have got a poor man who works for you, who wears a fustian jacket. He is nobody. You may laugh at him. He will not tell anybody, or even if he does, you will not be called to book about it, because he is nobody. You dare not laugh so at a duke or an earl. You would mind your behavior if you were in such company as that; but because this is a poor man, you think you have a license given you to laugh at his religion. But remember, that beneath the fustian jacket there is Jesus Christ himself. Inasmuch as you have done this unto one of the least of his brethren, you have done it unto him. Has the thought ever struck you, that when you laughed you were laughing, not at him, but at his Master? Whether it struck you or not it is a great truth, that Jesus Christ takes all the injuries which are done to his people as if they had been done to him. You locked your wife out the other night, did you, because she would frequent the house of God? When she stood there shivering in the midnight air, or entreating you to let her in, if your eyes had been wide open, you would have seen the Lord of life

and glory shivering there, and he might have said to you, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And then you would have seen it to have been a very much greater sin than you imagine it now to be. You laughed at a little child the other day, because the child sang its simple hymn, and evidently sang it from its heart. Did you know,—or if you did not know it then, know it now,—did you know that you were laughing at Christ; that when you mocked her you were mocking her Master, and that Jesus Christ has set down that laugh in his great book, as an indignation done to his own real person. "Why persecutest thou me?" If ye could see Christ enthroned in heaven, reigning there in the splendours of his majesty, would ye laugh at him? If ye could see him sitting on his great throne coming to judge the world, would ye laugh at him? Oh! as all the rivers run into the sea, so all the streams of the churches suffering ran into Christ. If the clouds be full of rain they empty themselves upon the earth, and if the Christian's heart be full of woes it empties itself into the breast of Jesus. Jesus is the great reservoir of all his people's woes, and by laughing at his people you help to fill that reservoir to its brim. and one day will it burst in the fury of its might and the floods shall sweep you away, and the sand foundation upon which your house is builded shall give way, and then what shall ye do when ye shall stand before the face of him whose person ye have mocked and whose name ye have despised?

We will put the question in another way; it is a very reasonable one, and seems to demand an answer. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Saul," the Master might have said, "what have I done to hurt thee? When I was on earth did I say a word against thy character—did I damage thy reputation—did I injure thy person—did I ever grieve thee—did I ever say a hard word against thee? What hurt have I ever done thee? Why art thou so provoked against me? If I had been thy bitterest enemy, and had spit in thy face, thou couldest not have been more wroth with me than now. But why, man, wilt thou be angry against one who has never hurt thee—who has never done thee a displeasure? Oh! why persecutest thou me? Is there anything in my character that deserves it? Was I not pure, and holy, and separate from sinners? Did I not go about doing good? I raised the dead, I healed the lepers. I fed the hungry. I clothed the naked; for which of these works dost thou hate me? Why persecutest thou me?" The question comes home to you in the same manner this morning. Ah! man,

why dost thou persecute Christ? He puts it to thee. What hurt has he ever done thee? Has Christ ever despoiled you, robbed you, injured you in any way whatever? Has his gospel in any way whatever taken away the comforts of life from you, or done you any damage? You dare not say that. If it were the Mormonism of Joe Smith, I wonder not that you should persecute it, though, even then, you would have no right to do so, for that might take the wife of your bosom from you. If it were a filthy and lustful system that would undermine the foundations of society, you might think yourself right in persecuting it. But has Christ ever taught his disciples to rob you, to cheat you, to curse you? Does not his doctrine teach the very reverse, and are not his followers, when they are true to their Master and themselves, the very reverse of this? Why hate a man who has done you no injury? Why hate a religion that does not interfere with you? If you will not follow Christ yourself, how does it injure you to let others do so? You say it injures your family; prove it, sir. Has it injured your wife? Does she love you less than before? Is she less obedient? You dare not say that. Has it hurt your child? Is your child less reverent to his father because he fears God? Is he less fond of you because he loves his Redeemer best of all? In what respect has Christ ever hurt any of you? He has fed you with the bounties of his providence. The clothes you wear to-day are the gifts of his bounty. The breath in your nostrils he has preserved to you, and will you curse him for this? It was but the other day that an avenging angel seized the axe, and the Master said, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" And Jesus came and put his hand upon the auger's arm, and said, "Stay, stay yet another year until I have digged about it and dinged it." Your life was spared by him, and you curse him for this; you blaspheme him because he has spared your life, and spend the breath which his own grace has given you, in cursing the God that allows you to breathe. You little know from how many dangers Christ in his providence protects you. You can little guess how numerous the mercies which, unseen by you, are poured into your lap every hour. And yet, for mercies innumerable, for grace that cannot be stopped by your iniquity, for love that cannot be overpowered by your injuries, do you curse the Saviour for all this? Base ingratitude! Truly, ye have hated him without a cause; ye have persecuted him, though he has loved you, and has done nought to injure you.

But let me picture the Master to you once more, and methinks you will never, never persecute him again, if you do but see him. Oh, if you could but see the Lord Jesus, you must love him; if you did but know his worth you could not hate him! He was more beautiful than all the sons of men. Persuasion sat upon his lips, as if all the bees of eloquence had brought their honey there, and made his mouth the hive. He spoke and so did he speak, that if a lion had heard him, it would have crouched and licked his feet. Oh, how roving was he in his tenderness! Remember that prayer of his when the iron was piercing his hand—"Father, forgive them." You never heard him, all his life long, once saying an angry word to those who persecuted him. He was reviled, but he reviled not again. Even when he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, he was dumb before his shearers, and he opened not his mouth. But though fairer than the sons of men, both in person and in character, yet he was the Man of Sorrows. Grief had ploughed his brow with her deepest furrows. His cheeks were sunken and hollow with agony. He had fasted many a day, and often had he thirsted. He toiled from morning to night; then spent all night in prayer; then rose again to labour—and all this without reward—with no hope of getting anything from any man. He had no house, no home, no gold, no saver. Foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but he, the Son of Man, had not where to lay his head. He was the persecuted man, hunted by his enemies from place to place, with scarce a friend to help him. Oh, had ye seen him; had ye seen his loveliness and his misery united, had ye seen his kindness, and yet the cruelty of his enemies, your hearts must have melted—you would have said, "No, Jesus, I cannot persecute thee! No, I will stand between thee and the burning sunshine. If I cannot be thy disciple, yet at any rate I will not be thy opposer. If this cloak can shelter thee in thy midnight wrestlings, there it is; and if this waterpot can draw thee water from the well, I will let it down and thou shalt have enough; for if I love thee not, since thou art so poor, so sad and so good, I cannot hate thee. No, I will not persecute thee!" But though I feel certain, if you could see Christ, you must say this, yet have you really persecuted him in his disciples, in the members of his spiritual body, and I therefore put to you the question, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" God help you to answer that question, and the answer must be shame and confusion of face.

II. This shall bring me to the second point—EXPOSTULATION. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." There is a figure here; there is an allusion to the ox goad. When the ox was yoked for ploughing, if he did not move on in as sprightly a manner as was desired, the husbandman pricked him with a long rod that ended with an iron point. Very likely, as soon as the ox felt the goad, instead of going on, he struck out as hard as he could behind him. He kicked against the goad, sending the iron deep into his own flesh. Of course the husbandman who was guiding him kept his goad there still, and the more frequently the ox kicked, the more he was hurt. But go he must. He was in the hand of man, who must and will rule the beast. It was just his own option to kick as long as he pleased, for he did no harm to his driver, but only to himself. You will see that there is a beauty in this figure, if I pull it to pieces, and ask you a question or two.

It is hard for you to kick against the goad; for, in the first place, you do not really accomplish your purpose. When the ox kicks against the goad it is to spite the husbandman for having goaded him onward; but instead of hurting the husbandman it hurts itself. And when you have persecuted Christ in order to stop the progress of his gospel, let me ask you, have you ever stopped it at all? No; and ten thousand like you would not be able to stop the mighty onward rush of the host of God's elect. If thou thinkest, O man, that thou canst stop the progress of Christ's church, go thou and first bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and bid the universe stand still instead of circling round those fair stars! Go, stand by the winds, and bid them cease their wailing, or take thy station upon a hoary cliff, and bid the roaring sea roll back when its tide is marching on the beach; and when thou hast stopped the universe, when sun, moon, and stars have been obedient to thy mandate, when the sea hath heard thee and obeyed thee, then come forth and stop the omnipotent progress of the church of Christ. But thou canst not do it. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." But what said the Almighty? He did not even get up to combat with them. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." The church cares not for all the noise of the world. "God is

our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though waters thereof roar, and be troubled, and though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Ah, in your hosts ye have not prevailed, and think ye, O puny man, that one by one, ye shall be able to conquer? Your wish may be strong enough, but your wish can never be accomplished. You may desire it anxiously, but you shall never attain thereto.

But put it as a personal matter, have you ever succeeded in stopping the work of grace in the heart of any one? You tried to laugh it out of your wife, but if she really was converted, you never would laugh it out of her. You may have tried to vex your little child; but if grace be in that child, I defy you and your master the devil to get it out. Ay, young man, you may laugh at your shopmate, but he will beat you in the long run. He may sometimes be abashed, but you never will turn him. If he is a hypocrite you will, and perhaps there will be no great loss, but if he be a true soldier of Christ, he can bear a great deal more than the laugh of an emptyheaded being like yourself. You need not for a moment flatter yourself that he will be afraid of you. He will have to endure a greater baptism of suffering than that, and he will not be cowed by the first shower of your poor, pitiful, malicious folly. And as for you, sir merchant, you may persecute your man, but see if you will get him to yield. Why, I know a man whose master had tried very hard to make him go against his conscience; but he said, "No, sir." And the master thought, "Well, he is a very valuable servant; but I will beat him if I can." So he threatened that if he did not do as he wished he would turn him away. The man was dependent on his master. and he knew not what he should do for his daily bread. So he said to his master honestly at once, "Sir, I don't know of any other situation, I should be very sorry to leave you, for I have been very comfortable. but if it comes to that, sir, I would sooner starve than submit my conscience to any one." The man left, and the master had to go after him to bring him back again. And so it will be in every case. If Christians are but faithful they must win the day. It is no use your kicking against them; you cannot hurt them. They must, they shall be conquerors through him that hath loved them.

But there is another way of putting it. When the ox kicked against the goad, he got no good by it. Kick as he might, he was never benefited by it. If the ox had stopped and nibbled a blade of grass or a piece of hay, why, then he would have been wise, perhaps, in standing still. but to stand still simply to be goaded and to kick, simply to have iron stuck into your flesh, is a rather foolish thing. Now, I ask you, what have you ever got by opposing Christ? Suppose you say you don't like religion, what have you ever got by hating it? I will tell you what you have got. You have got those red eyes sometimes on the Monday morning, after the drunkenness of the Sunday night. I will tell you what you have got, young man. You have got that shattered constitution, which, even if you had now turned it to the paths of virtue, must hang about you till you leave it in your grave. What have you got? Why, there are some of you who might have been respectable members of society, who have got that old broken hat, that old ragged coat, that drunken, slouched manner about you, and that character that you would like to let down and run away from, for it is no good to you. That is what you have got by opposing Christ. What have you got by opposing him? Why, a house without furniture—for through your drunkenness you have had to sell everything of value you had. You have got your children in rags. and your wife in misery, and your eldest daughter, perhaps, running into shame, and your son rising up to curse the Saviour, as you yourself have done. What have you got by opposing Christ! What man in all the world ever got anything by it? There is a serious loss sustained, but as for gain, there is nothing of the sort.

But you say, though you have opposed Christ, still you are moral. Again I will put it to you—Have you ever got anything even then by opposing Christ? Has it made your family any the happier, do you think? Has it made you any the happier yourself? Do you feel after you have been laughing at your wife, or your child or your man, that you can sleep any the sounder? Do you feel that to be a thing which will quiet your conscience when you come to die? Remember, you must die; and do you think that when you are dying, it will afford you any consolation to think that you did your best to destroy the souls of other people? No. you must confess it is a poor game. You are getting no good by it, but you are doing yourself a positive injury. Ah, drunkard, go on with your drunkenness, remember that every drunken fit leaves a plague behind it—that you will

have to feel one day. It is pleasant to sin to-day, but it will not be pleasant to reap the harvest of it tomorrow the seeds of sin are sweet when we sow them, but the fruit is frightfully bitter when we come to house it at last. The wine of sin tasteth sweet when it goeth down, but it is as gall and vinegar in the bowels. Take heed, ye that hate Christ and oppose his gospel for as certainly as the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and his religion is true, you are heaping on your head a load of injury, instead of deriving good. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

But kick as the ox might, it had to go forward at last. We have seen a horse stand still in the street, and the driver, who had not very much patience with him, has so belaboured him, that we wondered how the poor horse could stand still under such a torrent of blows; but we have observed at last that the horse is obliged to go on, and we wondered what he got by standing still. It is just the same with you. If the Lord means to make a Christian out of you, you may kick against Christianity, but he will have you at last. If Jesus Christ intends your salvation you may curse him, but he will make you preach his gospel one day, if he likes to do so. Ah, if Christ had willed it, Voltaire who cursed him, might have made a second apostle Paul. He could not have resisted sovereign grace, if Christ had so determined. If anyone had told the apostle Paul when he was going to Damascus, that he would one day become a preacher of Christianity, he would no doubt, have laughed at it as ridiculous nonsense; but the Lord had the key of his will, and he wound it up as he pleased. And so it will be with you—if he has determined to have you as one of his followers—

"If, as the eternal mandate ran
Almighty grace arrest that man,"—

Almighty grace will arrest you; and the bloodiest of persecutors will be made the boldest of saints. Then why persecutest thou me? Perhaps you are despising the very Saviour you will one day love; trying to knock down the very thing that you will one day try to build up. Mayhap you are persecuting the men you will call your brothers and sisters. It is always well for a man not to go so far that he cannot go back respectably. Now do not go too far in opposing Christ. for one of these times it may be you will

be very glad to come crouching at his feet. But there is this sad reflection, if Christ does not save you, still you must go on. You may kick against the pricks, but you cannot get away from his dominion; you may kick against Christ, but you cannot cast him from his throne, you cannot drag him out of heaven. You may kick against him, but you cannot prevent his condemning you at last. You may laugh at him, but you cannot laugh away the day of judgment. You may scoff at religion; but all your scoffs cannot put it out. You may jeer at heaven; but all your jeers will not take one single note from the harps of the redeemed. No, the thing is just the same as if you did not kick; it makes no difference except to yourself: Oh how foolish must you be, to persevere in a rebellion which is harmful to none but your own soul, which is not injurious to him whom you hate, but which, if he pleases, he can stop, or if he doth not stop, he can and will revenge.

III. And now I close up by addressing myself to some here, whose hearts are already touched. Do you this morning feel your need of a Saviour? Are you conscious of your guilt in having opposed him, and has the Holy Spirit made you willing now to confess your sins? Are you saying! "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner?" Then I have GOOD NEWS for you. Paul, who persecuted Christ, was forgiven. He says he was the very chief of sinners, but he obtained mercy. So shall you. Nay, more, Paul not only obtained mercy, he obtained honor. He was made an honored minister to preach the gospel of Christ, and so may you. Yes if thou repentest, Christ may make use of you to bring others to him. It strikes me with wonder when I see how many of the very greatest of sinners have become the most useful of men. Do you see John Bunyan yonder? He is cursing God. He goes into the belfry and pulls the bell on Sunday, because he likes the bellringing, but when the church door is open, he is playing bowls upon the village green. There is the village tap, and there is no one that laughs so loud there as John Bunyan. There are some people going to the meeting house; there is no one curses them so much as John. He is a ringleader in all vice. If there is a hen roost to be robbed, Jack's your man. If there is any iniquity to be done, if there be any evil in the parish, you need not guess twice, John Bunyan is at the bottom of it. But who is it stands there in the deck before the magistrate? Who is it I heard just now — "If you let me out of prison today, I will preach the gospel tomorrow, by

the help of God?" Who was it that lay twelve years in prison, and when they said he might go out if he would promise not to preach, replied, "No, I will be here till the moss grows on mine eyelids, but I must and will preach God's gospel as soon as I have liberty?" Why, that is John Bunyan, the very man who cursed Christ the other day. A ringleader in vice has become the glorious dreamer, the very leader of God's hosts. See, what God did for him, and what God did for him he will do for you, if now you repent and seek the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

"He is able, he is willing, doubt no more."

Oh! I trust I have some here who have hated God, but who are nevertheless God's elect; some that have despised him, but who are bought with blood; some that have kicked against the pricks, but yet almighty grace will bring them onward. There are some here, I doubt not, who have cursed God to his face, who shall one day sing hallelujahs before his throne; some that have indulged in lusts all but bestial, who shall one day wear the white robe, and move their fingers along the golden harps of the glorified spirits in heaven. Happy is it to have such a gospel to preach to such sinners! To the persecutor, Christ is preached. Come to Jesus whom thou hast persecuted.

"Come, and welcome, sinner, come."

And now bear with me one moment if I address you yet again. The probability stares me in the face that I may have but very few more opportunities of addressing you upon subjects that concern your soul. My hearer, I shall arrogate nothing to myself, but this one thing—"I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God," and God is my witness with how many sighs, and tears, and prayers, I have labored for your good. Out of this place I believe thousands have been called; among you whom I now see there is a large number of converted persons; according to your own testimony you have had a thorough change, and you are not now what you were. But I am conscious of this fact, that there are many of you who have attended here now almost these two years, who are just what you were when you first came. There are some of you whose hearts are not touched. You sometimes weep, but still your lives have never been changed; you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of

iniquity." Well, sirs, if I never address you again, there is one favor that I would crave of you. If you will not turn to God, if you are determined to be lost, if you will not hear my rebuke nor turn at my exhortation, I ask this one favor at least let me know, and let me have this confidence, that I am clear of your blood. I think you must confess this. I have not shunned to preach of hell with all its horrors, until I have been laughed at, as if I always preached upon it. I have not shunned to preach upon the most sweet and pleasing themes of the gospel, till I have feared lest I should make my preaching effeminate, instead of retaining the masculine vigor of a Boanerges. I have not shunned to preach the law; that great commandment has wrung in your ears, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." I have never feared the great, nor have I courted their smile; I have rebuked nobility as I would rebuke the peasantry, and to everyone of you I have dealt a portion of meat in due season. I know that this much can be said of me—"Here stands one that never feared the face of man yet;" and I hope never wilt. Amidst contumely, and rebuke, and reproach, I have sought to be faithful to you and to my God. If then, you will be damned, let me have this one thing as a consolation for your misery, when I shall think of so frightful a thought—that you are not damned for the want of calling after; you are not lost for the want of weeping after, and not lost, let me add, for the want of praying after. In the name of him who shall judge the quick and dead according to my Gospel, and of him that shall come in the clouds of heaven, and by that fearful day when the pillars of this earth shall totter, and the heavens shall fall about your ears—by that day when "Depart, ye cursed," or "Come, ye blessed," must be the dread alternative, I charge you, lay these things to heart, and as I shall face my God to account for my honesty to you, and my faithfulness to him, so remember, you must stand before his bar, to give an account of how you heard, and how you acted after hearing; and woe unto you if, having been lifted up like Capernaum with privileges, you should be cast down like Sodom and Gomorrah, or lower still than they, because you repented not.

Oh! Master! turn sinners to thyself; for Jesus sake! Amen.

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The Ark of His Covenant

And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament [covenant—R-V.]:, and great hail. - Revelation 11:19

I shall take the passage quite by itself. I do not fully understand its connection, whether it relates to that which goes before or that which comes afterwards; and happily, it is necessary for us to know this, for the passage stands complete in itself, and is full of valuable instruction.

Dear friends, even we who believe have as yet failed to see much of the truth of God. We know enough to save us, to comfort us, and to help us on our way to heaven; but oh, how much of the glory of divine truth has never yet been revealed to our eyes! Some of God's children do not fully know even the common truths as yet, and those who do not know them realize but little of their depth and height. From our text, it appears that there are certain things of God which as yet we have not yet seen there is need that they should be opened to us: "The temple of God was opened in heaven." When our Lord Jesus died, He rent the veil of the temple, and so He laid open the Holy of Holies but such is our dimness of sight, that we need to have the temple opened, and we need to have the Holy of Holies opened, so that we may see what is not really concealed, but what we are not ready to perceive by reason of the slowness of our understandings. The two words for "temple" here may relate not only to the temple itself, but also to the Holy of Holies, the innermost shrine. Both of these, it seems, need to be opened, or else we shall not see what there is in them. Blessed be the Holy Spirit that He does open up one truth after another to us. Our Saviour's promise to His disciples was, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." If we were more teachable, if we were more anxious to be taught, and waited upon Him more, He would, doubtless, lead us into many a truth which at the

present moment we have not fully enjoyed. It is a happy thing for you and for me when at any time we can say, "The temple of God was opened in heaven, so that we saw even that which was in the innermost shrine of the holy temple."

The saints in heaven doubtless behold all the glory of God so far as it can be perceived by created beings; but we who are on the right way thither behold, as in a glass darkly, the glory of the Lord. We know only in part, but the part we do know is not so great as it might be, we might know far more than we do even here. Some suppose that they can know but little, because they say that it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Yes, but why do you stop there? Half a text is often not true; go on to the end of the passage: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God"; and that which your eye cannot see, and your ear cannot hear, and the heart of man cannot imagine, can be revealed to you by the Spirit of the Lord. Oh, that we were more conscious of the power of the Spirit, and that we waited upon Him for yet fuller instruction! Then I am persuaded that, in our measure and degree, it would be true to us, even as to the perfected ones above, "The temple of God was opened in heaven," and they saw that which was in the holiest place.

What did they see when the temple was opened? When the secret place was laid bare to them, what did they see? That is to be my subject now. "There was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant." If we could look into heaven at this moment, this is what we should see, "the ark of his covenant." O sinner, thou thinkest that thou wouldst see an angry God, but thou wouldst see the ark of His covenant! O child of God, perhaps thou dreamest of many things that might distress thee in the glory of that sight; but rest thou content, this would be the main sight that thou wouldst see, Jesus, the incarnate God, the great covenant Surety! Thou wouldst see there, where, the Godhead shines resplendent, the ark of His covenant.

I. I shall begin by noticing. first, that THE ARK OF HIS COVENANT IS

ALWAYS NEAR TO GOD: "There was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant."

Of course, the outward symbol is gone; we are not now speaking of a temple made with hands, that is to say, of this building. We speak of the spiritual temple above; we speak of the spiritual Holy of Holies. If we could look in there, we should see the ark of the covenant; and we should see the covenant itself always near to God. The covenant is always there. God never forgets it; it is ever before Him: "There was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant."

Why is this? Is it not because the covenant is always standing? The Lord said concerning His people of old. "I will make with them an everlasting covenant," of which David said, "Yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." If God has made a covenant with you, it is not simply for today and tomorrow, nor merely for this life, but for the ages of ages, even forever and ever. If He has struck hands with you through the great Surety, and He has pledged Himself to you, remember, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Jehovah hath said, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." What He hath said He will stand to forever. He will keep His Word. He said to His Son, "I will preserve thee. .and give thee for a covenant of the people"; and He will never revoke the gift. This covenant stands secure. Though earth's old columns bow, and though my spirits sink, and flesh and heart fail me, yet this covenant shall bear me up even to the end.

The covenant of grace is forever the same, because, first, the God who made it changes not. There can be no change in God. The supposition is inconsistent with a belief in His deity. Hear what He says: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." The sun hath his changes, but the Father of lights is without variableness, or shadow of turning. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" God has never to alter His purposes; why should He? Those purposes are always infinitely wise. He

knoweth the end from the beginning; so His covenant, which He made with such deliberation in the councils of eternity, that covenant which is sealed with the most precious things He ever had, even with the blood of His only-begotten Son, that covenant upon which He stakes His eternal honor, for His glory and honor are wrapped up with the covenant of grace—that covenant cannot be changed because God Himself changeth not.

Then, next, the Christ who is its Surety and Substance changes not. Christ, the great Sacrifice by whose death the covenant was ratified, Christ, the Surety, who has sworn to carry out our part of the covenant, Christ, who is the very sum and substance of the covenant, never alters. "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." If we had a variable Saviour, brethren, we should have a changeable covenant. Look at Adam; he could change, and therefore he was a poor representative of the human race. Our first federal head soon fell because he was a mere man; but the Surety of the new covenant is the Son of God, who, like His Father, faileth not, and changeth not. Though He is of the substance of His mother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and therefore can stand as man's Representative, yet is he Light of Light, very God of very God, and so He standeth fast and firm, like the unchanging God Himself. In this great truth we do and we will rejoice. The covenant is always before God, for Christ is always there. He, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, makes the covenant always to be close to the heart of God.

And, beloved, note you this. The covenant must always be near to God because the love which suggested it changes not. The Lord loves His people with a love which has no beginning, no end, no boundary, no change. He says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-Kindness have I drawn thee." When the love of God's heart goeth forth toward the believer, it is not changeful like the love of man, sometimes high and sometimes low, sometimes strong and sometimes weak; but, as it is said of our Saviour, "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end," so can it be said of the great Father that His love is evermore the same; and if the love which dictated the covenant is always in the heart of God, depend upon it that the covenant which comes of that love is always there in the secret place of

the Most High.

Reflect also, beloved brethren, that the promises contained in the covenant change not. I quoted to you, just now, one passage about the promises, and that is enough: "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen." Not one single promise of God shall ever fall to the ground unfulfilled. His Word in the form of promises, as well as in the form of the gospel, shall not return unto Him void. O souls, you may hang your whole weight upon any promise of God! You need not fear that it will break. Though all the vessels of the King's house were hung on one nail made by Him, that nail would bear them all up, as well as the fagons as the vessels of smaller measure. Heaven and earth may hang upon a single promise of God. The voice that rolls the stars along, and keeps them all in their orbits, is that voice which spoke even the least of the promises, and therefore every promise of God stands secure forever.

And once more, not only the promises, but the force and binding power of the covenant change not. All God's acts are done with a reference to His covenant, and all His covenant has a reference to His covenanted ones. Remember what Moses said of old, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." Everything that He does follows the line and rule of His covenant. If He chastens and afflicts, it is not in anger, but in His dear covenant love. When first that covenant came into full action with the redeemed, it was all powerful; but it is just as powerful still. All that God doeth is still guided and directed by His eternal purpose and His covenant pledges to His people. Stand still, then, and when thou lookest up, if thou canst not see that temple because thine eye of faith is dim, if thou scarcely darest to look within into the secret place which is the holiest of all, yet know thou of a surety that the covenant is still there, and always there, whether thou seest it or seest it not.

I will tell thee when perhaps, thou wilt best know that the covenant is there; that is, when the storm-clouds gather the most thickly. When thou shalt see the black masses come rolling up, then remember that the Lord said to Noah, "I do set my bow in the loud, and it shall be for a token of a

covenant between me and the earth." Then shalt thou know that Jehovah remembereth His covenant; thou mayest even be half glad of a black cloud, that the sun of the divine love may paint upon it the many-colored bow, that God may look on it, and remember His covenant. It is good for thee to look on it; but what must it be for Him to look on it, and to remember His covenant? Be thou glad that the covenant is always near to God, as out text declares, "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant."

II. Now, secondly, THE COVENANT IS SEEN OF SAINTS: There was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant."

First, we see it when, by faith, we believe in Jesus as our Covenant-head.

By faith we know that God has entered into covenant with us. He that believeth in Christ Jesus is in covenant with God. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "He that believeth on Him is not condemned." He that believeth in Him is at peace with God, he has passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. Thou art in covenant with God, believer. Wipe thy weeping eyes, ask God to take the dust out of them, that thou mayest see that there is an unchanging covenant made with thee tonight and forever.

Next, we see this covenant when, by faith, we perceive it in God's actions toward us. Faith may see the covenant of God in all His actions. Do you not remember how the old Scotch woman blessed God for her porridge, but she blessed Him most of all because the porridge was in the covenant? God had promised bread and water, and therefore it was sure to come to her. God sent her bread to her in the form of porridge, and she blessed the Lord that it was in the covenant. Now, I thank God that food is in the covenant, and that raiment is in the covenant. It is written, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass," so they are in the covenant Life is in the covenant and death is in the covenant: "To die is gain." Everything that is to happen to us is in the covenant; and when faith sees it so, it makes like a happy one. Am I chastened? I say to myself "Well, the rod was in the covenant, for the Lord said that, if His children disobeyed Him, He would chasten them with the rod of men. If I never had the rod, I should be

afraid I was not in the covenant." Is it not written, "In the world ye shall have tribulation?" That is a part of the covenant, you see; so that, when you get it, say to yourself, "The God who is evidently keeping this part of His covenant will keep the rest of it to me, His child."

Brethren, we get, perhaps, the best sight of the covenant when by prayer we plead it. In that hour of our wrestling, in the time of our inward craving of mercies from the hand of God, we come at last to this. "Lord, thou hast promised; do as thou hast said." I love to put my finger on a promise, and then to plead it with the Lord, saying, "This is thy Word, my Father; and I know that thou wilt not run back from it. O God, I believe in the inspiration of this Book, and I take very word of it as coming from thy lips. Wilt thou not seal it to my conscience, my heart, my experience, by proving it to be true?" Have you ever found the Lord's promises fail you? I remember one who had put in the margin of her Bible in several places, "I and P"; and when she was asked what those letters meant, she said, "That they mean, 'Tried and Proved.' As I go through life, I keep trying and proving the promises of God, and then I put a mark in the margin of my Bible against every one I have tested, that I may not forget it the next time I have to plead it." That is the way to see the covenant at the right hand of God, when you plead it in prayer.

And there are some of us, I think, who can say that our experience up till now proves that God does not forget His covenant. We have wandered, but we have been able to say, "He restoreth my soul." for He has restored us. We have needed many things, and we have gone to Him in prayer, and pleaded that word, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," and He has listened to the cries of His servants. He said He would do so: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." He has remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endureth forever; and some of us who are no longer young can set to our seal that God is true because of many experiences of His faithfulness. If they tell us that there is nothing in the Bible, and nothing in God, and nothing in the gospel of Christ, we laugh them to scorn. We have now for many a year lived upon the faithfulness of God, and we cannot be driven into a distrust of Him. He is faithful, and His mercy endureth forever.

Do you not also think that, when we arrive in heaven, we shall have a wonderful retrospect, and that retrospect will all come to this: "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant?" Miss Hannah More very prettily puts it that, often, we do not see the right side of things here. She went into a carpet manufactory, and she looked at what the workmen were doing, and she could see nothing that looked like beauty of design. 'There were tags and ends hanging out, and she said to the men, "I cannot perceive any design here," and they answered, "No, madam, for you are on the wrong side of the carpet"; but when she went round to the other side, she saw the beauty of the workmanship. Alas! we are at present on the wrong side of God's work; we must get to heaven to see it perfectly, and when we get there, we shall—

Sing, with wonder and surprise,
His loving-kindness in the skies.

and we shall say, It was all right; it could not have been better.

Every dark and bending line
Meets in the centre of his love.

God hath not erred. He has not gone about the longest way to do His work, but He has done in the wisest and most prudent manner all that was for the best and highest interests of His dear covenanted ones.

Thus, I have shown you that sometimes, and it should be always, God's people do see that glorious covenant of grace which is in the temple above.

III. Now I want to have your attention while I say briefly, in the third place, that **THE COVENANT CONTAINS MUCH THAT IS WORTH SEEING**. Let us think of what was in the ancient ark of the covenant, for all that was in that ark as a type is to be seen in Christ our heavenly covenant ark above.

In that ark, if you and I could have gone into the holy place, and have had our eyes strengthened to look. we should have seen, first, God dwelling among men. What a wonderful thing! Over the top of the lid of that sacred coffer which was called the ark, there shone an amazing light which was the index of the presence of God. He was in the midst of the camp of Israel. He that filleth heaven and earth, the infinite Jehovah, deigned to make that place His special dwelling-place, so that He is addressed as, "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims." Here is a part of the new covenant: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." It is marvelous that God does speak with men. He whom you heard thundering, last night, as He drove His chariot through the sky, that God in infinite condescension speaks with us, and has come down to us, and taken us into relationship with Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at once the fellow of the Almighty, and the brother of the sons of men. O beloved, rejoice in the covenant, that God is no longer divided from men! The chasm made by sin is filled, the gulf is bridged, and God now dwells with me, and manifests Himself to them; and "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

Next, in that ark you would have noticed, if you could have seen into it, God reconciled and communing with men upon the mercy-seat. Over the top of that ark, as I have told you, was a golden lid, which fitted it, and covered it exactly, and that golden lid was called the mercy-seat, the throne of grace. There God spoke with men. He sat there, as it were, enthroned as the Friend of men. Now, it is a part of the covenant that God hears prayer, that God answers our petitions, that He meets us in a way of reconciled love, that He speaks to us in tones which the spirit can hear though the ear cannot. Thank God for a blood-besprinkled mercy-seat. What should we do if we had not that as our meeting-place with the thrice-holy Jehovah?

Then, within the ark, underneath the lid, if we could have looked in, we should have seen the law, the two tables of stone, which represent law fulfilled in Christ, and henceforth laid up in His heart, and laid up in our hearts, too, if we delight in the law of God after the inward man. Now, this is our joy, that the law of God has nothing against the believer. It is fulfilled in Christ, and we see it laid up in Christ, not to be a stone to fall

upon us to grind us to powder, but beautiful and fair to look upon as it is in the heart of Christ, and fulfilled in the life of Christ. I rejoice in the covenant which contains in it stipulations all fulfilled, and commands all executed, by our great Representative.

Together with those tables of the law there was laid up a rod, a rod which had originally been a dry stick in the hands of Aaron, but when it was laid up before the Lord it budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds. So, in the covenant of grace, we see the kingdom established and flourishing in Christ, and we rejoice in it. Oh how pleased we are to bow before His fruitful sceptre! What wonderful fruit we gather from that blessed rod! Reign, reign, Jesus, reign! The more Thou dost rule us, the more Thou art absolute Sovereign of our hearts, the happier shall we be, and the more shall we delight ourselves in Thee. There is no liberty like complete subjection beneath the sway of Jesus who is our Prophet, Priest, and King.

Then, by the side of that rod there was laid up the golden pot full of manna, the provision made for the wilderness. Let us rejoice that there is in the covenant all the provision that we need. God has laid up for us in Christ all our spiritual meat, all the food that we shall ever need between here and heaven. "Feed me till I want no more," we cry to our blessed covenant Representative, and He will do so.

Then, over the top off the ark, sat the cherubim with outstretched wings, as, I think, representing how the angels are in league with us, and with the angels all the forces and powers of the universe. This day, the beasts of the field are our friends, and the stones of the field have ceased to be our foes. Child of God, you may travel by land or sea; you may go where you will; for everywhere you are in your Father's house. All that you see about you is a friend to you, since you are a friend to God. I often wonder that the earth bears up ungodly men. It must groan beneath the weight of a swearer; it must want to open and swallow him up. But with the gracious man, the man who fears God, all things are at peace; and we may know it to be so. "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." We do not often enough

realize, I think, the friendship of all God's creatures to those who are His children. St. Francis, thought he was a Romish monk, yet had a true idea when he used to regard the sparrows and other birds of the air, and even the dogs in the street, as his friends and his brothers, and talked to them as such. And Luther was much of the same mind when he opened His window, and listened to the chirpings of the robins in the early spring, and felt that they had come to teach the theological doctor some lesson which he had not learned. Oh yes, oh yes, we are quite at home anywhere, now that God is our God! True, the earth travaileth, and is in pain, and the creation suffers and will suffer till Christ comes again; but still her travail is our travail, and we are in sympathy with her, and when she doth reflect the glory of her God she is our looking-glass in which we see our Father's face.

Thus, I think, I have shown you that there is much to be seen in the ark of the covenant. God give us grace, like the angels, to fix our eyes upon it! "Which things the angels desire to look into." We have more to do with the ark of His covenant than they have; let us be more desirous even than they are to look therein.

IV. I close with this fourth point. THE COVENANT HAS SOLEMN SURROUNDINGS. Listen: "There were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail."

When the people entered into covenant with God on Sinai, the Lord came down upon the top of the mount, and there were thunderings, and lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake. There were all these tokens of His presence, and God will not leave the covenant of his grace without the sanctions of His power; that thunder, that lightning, that storm—all these are engaged to keep His covenant. When they are wanted, the God who smote Egypt with great hailstones, the God who made the Kishon to sweep his enemies away, the God who made the stars in heaven to fight against Sisera, will bring all the overwhelming forces that are at His command to the help of His people, and the fulfilling of the covenant which He has made with them. O you who are His people, fall back in confidence upon the God who has treasures of snow, and hail, and the dread artillery of storms and tempest! Most of you, my hearers, have

never seen a great storm yet, nor heard in its majesty the thunder of God's power. You must be in the tropics to know what these can be, and even then you would have to say, "These are but parts of His ways." Oh, how the Lord can shake the earth, and make it tremble even to its deep foundations when He pleases! He can make what we call "the solid earth" to be as weak as water when He doth but lift up His finger. But all the power that God hath—and it is boundless—is all in that right hand which has been lifted high to heaven in the solemn oath that He will save His people. Wherefore, lean upon God without the shadow of a doubt. He may well put all your fears to rest even by the thunder of His power.

Then reflect that there is another side to this truth. You who are not in covenant with God, you who have not believed that Jesus is the Christ, you who have never fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you, you who refuse the divine mercy which comes to you through the bleeding person of the suffering Christ, do remember that there will be for you the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voices, and the earthquake, and the great hail, for these set forth the terrors of eternal law, overthrowing God's adversaries. You have no conception of what God will do with the ungodly. False teachers may smooth it down as much as they like, but that Book is full of thunderbolts to you who refuse God's mercy. Listen to this one text: "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Can you sport with that? Listen to another: "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies!" What will you say to that, or to this? "And again they said Alleluia. And her smoke rose up forever and ever." "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark; of his name." That they talk as if we invented these terrible words, but we do not; we merely quote the Scriptures of truth, and they are terrible indeed to the wicked. That they should make men start in their sleep, and never rest until they find a Saviour. A Universalist once said to a Christian man that, whatever he did, God would not punish him, and the other replied, "If I

spit on your god, I suppose he will not punish me. If I curse him, if I defy him, it will all come right at last?" "Yes," said the Universalist. "Well," answered the other, "that may be the character of your god; but don't you try that kind of thing with my God, the God of the Scriptures, or else you will find that because He is love He cannot, and He will not, suffer this world to be in anarchy, but he will rule it, ;and govern it, and He will punish those that refuse His infinite compassion." So I beseech you, my hearers, fly to Jesus at once; weary, and heavy-laden, look to Him, for He saith especially to you, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." The Lord add His blessing to the truth I have tried to preach to you, the sweet and the terrible alike, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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Christ in the Covenant

I will give thee for a covenant of the people. - Isaiah 49:8

We all believe that our Saviour has very much to do with the covenant of eternal salvation. We have been accustomed to regard him as the Mediator of the covenant, as the surety of the covenant, and as the scope or substance of the covenant. We have considered him to be the Mediator of the covenant, for we were certain that God could make no covenant with man unless there were a mediator—a days-man, who should stand between the both. And we have hailed him as the Mediator, who, with mercy in his hands, came down to tell to sinful man the news that grace was promised in the eternal counsel of the Most High. We have also loved our Saviour as the Surety of the covenant, who, on our behalf, undertook to pay our debts; and on his Father's behalf, undertook, also, to see that all our souls should be secure and safe, and ultimately presented unblemished and complete before him. And I doubt not, we have also rejoiced in the thought that Christ is the *sum and substance* of the covenant; we believe that if we would sum up all spiritual blessings, we must say, "Christ is all." He is the matter, he is the substance of it; and although much might be said concerning the glories of the covenant, yet

nothing could be said which is not to be found in that one word, "Christ." But this morning I shall dwell on Christ, not as the Mediator, nor as the surety, nor as the scope of the covenant, but as one great and glorious article of the covenant which God has given to his children. It is our firm belief that Christ is ours, and is given to us of God; we know that "he freely delivered him up for us all," and we, therefore, believe that he will, "with him, freely give us all things." We can say, with the spouse, "My beloved is mine." We feel that we have a personal property in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and it will therefore delight us for a while, this morning, in the simplest manner possible, without the garnishings of eloquence or the trappings of oratory, just to mediate upon this great thought, that Jesus Christ in the covenant is the property of every believer.

First, we shall *examine this property*; secondly, we shall notice the purpose for which it was conveyed to us; and thirdly, we shall give *one precept*, which may well be affixed upon so great a blessing as this, and is indeed an inference from it.

I. In the first place, then, here is a GREAT POSSESSION—Jesus Christ by the covenant is the property of every believer. By this we must understand Jesus Christ in many different senses; and we will begin, first of all, by declaring that Jesus Christ is ours, *in all his attributes*. He has a double set of attributes, seeing that there are two natures joined in glorious union in one person. He has the attributes of very God, and he has the attributes of perfect man; and whatever these may be, they are each one of them the perpetual property of every believing child of God. I need not dwell on his attributes as God; you all know how infinite is his love, how vast his grace, how firm his faithfulness, how unswerving his veracity; you know that he is omniscient; you know that he is omnipresent; you know that he is omnipotent, and it will console you if you will but think that all these great and glorious attributes which belong to God are all yours. Has he power? That power is yours—yours to support and strengthen you; yours to overcome your enemies, yours to keep you immutably secure. Has he love? Well, there is not a particle of his love in his great heart, which is not yours; all his love belongs to you; you may dive into the immense, bottomless ocean of his love, and you

may say of it all, "it is mine." Hath he justice? It may seem a stern attribute; but even that is yours, for he will by his justice see to it, that all which is covenanted to you by the oath and promise of God shall be most certainly secured to you. Mention whatever you please which is a characteristic of Christ as the ever glorious Son of God, and O faithful one, thou mayest put thine hand upon it and say, "it is mine." Thine arm, O Jesus, upon which the pillars of the earth do hang, is mine. Those eyes, O Jesus, which pierce through the thick darkness and behold futurity—thine eyes are mine, to look on me with love. Those lips, O Christ, which sometimes speak words louder than ten thousand thunders, or whisper syllables sweeter than the music of the harps of the glorified—those lips are mine. And that great heart which beateth high with such disinterested, pure, and unaffected love—that heart is mine. The whole of Christ, in all his glorious nature as the Son of God, as God over all, blessed for ever, is yours, positively, actually, without metaphor, in reality yours.

Consider him as man too. All that he has as perfect man is yours. As a perfect man he stood before his Father, "full of grace and truth," full of favour; and accepted by God as a perfect being. O believer, God's acceptance of Christ is thine acceptance; for knowest thou not, that that love which the Father set on a perfect Christ, he sets on thee now? For all that Christ did is thine. That perfect righteousness which Jesus wrought out, when through his stainless life he kept the law and made it honorable, is thine. There is not a virtue which Christ ever had, that is not thine; there is not a holy deed which he ever did which is not thine; there is not a prayer he ever sent to heaven that is not thine; there is not one solitary thought towards God which it was his duty to think, and which he thought as man serving his God, which is not thine. All his righteousness, in its vast extent, and in all the perfection of his character, is imputed to thee. Oh! canst thou think what thou hast gotten in the word "Christ?" Come, believer, consider that word "God," and think how mighty it is; and then meditate upon that word "perfect man," for all that the Man-God, Christ, and the glorious God-man, Christ, ever had, or ever can have as the characteristic of either of his natures, all that is thine. It all belongs to thee; it is out of pure free favour, beyond the fear of revocation, passed over to thee to be thine actual property—and that for ever.

2. Then, consider believer, that not only is Christ thine in all his attributes, but he is thine *in all his offices*. Great and glorious these offices are; we have scarce time to mention them all. Is he a prophet? Then he is *thy* prophet. Is he a priest? Then he is *thy* priest. Is he a king? Then he is *thy* king. Is he a redeemer? Then he is *thy* redeemer. Is he an advocate? Then he is *thy* advocate. Is he a forerunner? Then he is *thy* forerunner. Is he a surety of the covenant? The he is *thy* surety. In every name he bears, in every crown he wears, in every vestment in which he is arrayed, he is the believer's own. Oh! child of God, if thou hadst grace to gather up this thought into thy soul it would comfort thee marvellously, to think that in all Christ is in office, he is most assuredly thine. Dost thou see him yonder, interceding before his Father, with outstretched arms? Dost thou mark his ephod—his golden mitre on his brow, inscribed with "holiness unto the Lord?" Dost see him as he lifts up his hands to pray? Hearest thou not that marvellous intercession such as man never prayed on earth; that authoritative intercession such as he himself could not use in the agonies of the garden? For

"With sighs and groans, he offered up
His humble suit below;
*But with authority he pleads,
Enthroned I glory now.*"

Dost see how he asks, and how he received, as soon as his petition is put up? And canst thou, darest thou believe that that intercession is all thine own, that on his breast thy name is written, that in his heart thy name is stamped in marks of indellible grace, and that all the majesty of that marvellous, that surpassing intercession is thine own, and would all be expended for thee if thou didst require it; that he has not any authority with his Father, that he will not use on thy behalf, if thou dost need it; that he has no power to intercede that he would not employ for thee in all times of necessity? Come now, words cannot set this forth; it is only your thoughts that can teach you this; it is only God the Holy Spirit bringing home the truth that can set this ravishing, this transporting thought in its proper position in your heart; that Christ is yours in all he is and has. Seest thou him on earth? There he stands, the priest offering his bloody

sacrifice; see him on the tree, his hands are pierced, his feet are gushing gore! Oh! dost thou see that pallid countenance, and those languid eyes flowing with compassion? Dost thou mark that crown of thorns? Dost thou behold that mightiest of sacrifices, the sum and substance of them all? Believer, that is *thine*, those precious drops plead and claim *thy* peace with God; that open side is *thy* refuge, those pierced hands are thy redemption; that groan he groans for thee; that cry of a forsaken heart he utters for thee; that death he dies for thee. Come, I beseech thee, consider Christ in any one of his various offices; but when thou dost consider him lay hold of this thought, that in all these things he is THY Christ, given unto thee to be one article in the eternal covenant—thy possession for ever.

3. Then mark next, Christ is the believer's in every one of his *works*. Whether they be works of suffering or of duty, they are the property of the believer. As a child, he was circumcised, and is that bloody rite mine? Ay, "Circumcised in Christ." As a believer he is buried, and is that watery sign of baptism mine? Yes; "Buried with Christ in baptism unto death." Jesus' baptism I share when I lie interred with my best friend in the selfsame watery tomb. See there, he dies, and it is a master work to die. But is his death mine? Yes, I die in Christ. He rises. Mark him startling his guards, and rising from the tomb! And is that resurrection mine? Yes, we are "risen together with Christ." Mark again, he ascends up on high, and leads captivity captive. Is that ascension mine? Yes, for he hath "raised us up together." And see, he sits on his Father's throne; is that deed mine? Yes, he hath made us, "sit together in heavenly places." All he did is ours. By divine decree, there existed such an union between Christ and his people, that all Christ did his people did: and all Christ has performed, his people did perform in him, for they were in his loins when he descended to the tomb, and in his loins they have ascended up on high; with him they entered into bliss; and with him they sit in heavenly places. Represented by him, their Head, all his people even now are glorified in him—even in him who is the head over all things to his church. In all the deeds of Christ, either in his humiliation or his exaltation, recollect, O believer, thou hast a covenant interest, and all those things are thine.

4. I would for one moment hint at a sweet thought, which is this, you

know that in the person of Christ "dwelleth *all the fulness of the Godhead* bodily." AH! believer, "and of his fulness have we received, and grace for grace." *All the fulness of Christ!* do you know what that is? Do you understand that phrase? I warrant you, you do not know it, and shall not do just yet. But all that fulness of Christ, the abundance of which you may guess of by your own emptiness—all that fulness is thine to supply thy multiplied necessities. All the fulness of Christ to restrain thee, to keep thee and preserve thee; all that fulness of power, of love, of purity, which is stored up in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is thine. Do treasure up that thought, for then thine emptiness need never be a cause of fear; how canst thou be lost whilst thou hast all fulness to fly to?

5. But I come to something sweeter than this; *the very life of Christ* is the property of the believer. Ah! this is a thought into which I cannot dive, and I feel I have outdone myself in only mentioning it. The life of Christ is the property of every believer. Canst thou conceive what Christ's life is? "Sure," you say, "he poured it out upon the tree." He did, and it was his life that he gave to thee then. But he took that life again; even the life of his body was restored; and the life of his great and glorious Godhead had never undergone any change, even at that time. But now, you know he has immortality: "he only hath immortality." Can you conceive what kind of life that is which Christ possesses? Can he ever die? No; far sooner may the harps of heaven be stopped, and the chorus of the redeemed cease for ever; far sooner may the glorious walls of paradise be shaken, and the foundations thereof be removed; than that Christ, the Son of God, should ever die. Immortal as his Father, now he sits, the Great Eternal One. Christian, that life of Christ is thine. Hear what he says: "Because I live ye shall live also." "Ye are dead; and your life"—where is it? It is "hid with Christ in God." The same blow which smites us dead, spiritually, must slay Christ too; the same sword which can take away the spiritual life of a regenerate man, must take away the life of the Redeemer also; for they are linked together—they are not two lives, but one. We are but the rays of the great Sun of Righteousness, our Redeemer,—sparks which must return to the great orb again. If we are indeed the true heirs of heaven, we cannot die until he from whom we take our rise dieth also. We are the stream that cannot stop till the fountain be dry; we are the rays that cannot cease until the sun doth cease to shine. We are the branches, and

we cannot wither until the trunk itself shall die. "Because I live, ye shall live also." The very life of Christ is the property of every one of his brethren.

6. And best of all, *the person of Jesus Christ* is the property of the Christian. I am persuaded, beloved, we think a great deal more of God's gifts than we do of God; and we preach a great deal more about the Holy Spirit's influence than we do about the Holy Spirit. And I am also assured that we talk a great deal more about the offices, and works, and attributes of Christ than we do about the person of Christ. Hence it is that there are few of us who can often understand the figures that are used in Song of Solomon, concerning the person of Christ, because we have seldom sought to see him or desired to know him. But, O believer, thou hast sometimes been able to behold thy Lord. Hast thou not seen *him*, who is white and ruddy, "the chief amongst ten thousand, and the altogether lovely?" Hast thou not been sometimes lost in pleasure when thou hast seen his feet, which are like much fine gold, as if they burned in a furnace? Hast thou not beheld him in the double character, the white and the red, the lily and the rose, the God yet the man, the dying yet the living; the perfect, and yet bearing about with him a body of death? Hast thou ever beheld that Lord with the nail-print in his hands, and the mark still on his side? And hast thou ever been ravished at his loving smile, and been delighted at his voice? Hast thou never had love visits from him? Has he never put his banner over thee? hast thou never walked with him to the villages and the garden of nuts? Hast thou never sat under his shadow? hast thou never found his fruit sweet unto thy taste? Yes, thou hast. His *person* then is thine. The wife loveth her husband; she loveth his house and his property; she loveth him for all that he giveth her, for all the bounty he confers, and all the love he bestows; but his person is the object of her affections. So with the believer: he blesses Christ for all he does and all he is. But oh! it is Christ that is everything. He does not care so much about his office, as he does about *the Man* Christ. See the child on his father's knee—the father is a professor in the university; he is a great man with many titles, and perhaps the child knows that these are honourable titles, and esteems him for them; but he does not care so much about the professors and his dignity, as about the person of his father. It is not the college square cap, or the gown that the child loves;

ay, and if it be a loving child it will not be so much the meal the father provides, or the house in which it lives, as the father which it loves; it is his dear person that has become the object of true and hearty affection. I am sure it is so with you, if you know your Saviour; you love his mercies, you love his offices, you love his deeds, but oh! you love his person best. Reflect, then that the person of Christ is in the covenant conveyed to you: "I will give thee to be a covenant for the people."

II. Now we come to the second: FOR WHAT PURPOSE DOES GOD PUT CHRIST IN THE COVENANT?

1. Well, in the first place, Christ is in the covenant in order *to comfort every coming sinner*. "Oh," says the sinner who is coming to God, "I cannot lay hold on such a great covenant as that, I cannot believe that heaven is provided for me, I cannot conceive that the robe of righteousness and all these wondrous things can be intended for such a wretch as I am." Here comes in the thought that Christ is in the covenant. Sinner, canst thou lay hold on Christ? Canst thou say,

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling?"

Well, if thou hast got that, it was put in on purpose for thee to hold fast by God's covenant mercies all go together, and if thou hast laid hold on Christ, thou hast gained every blessing in the covenant. That is one reason why Christ was put there. Why, if Christ were not there, the poor sinner would say, "I dare not lay hold on that mercy. It is a God-like and a divine one, but I dare not grasp it; it is too good for me. I cannot receive it, it staggers my faith." But he sees Christ with all his great atonement in the covenant; and Christ looks so lovingly at him, and opens his arms so wide, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," that the sinner comes and throws his arms around Christ, and then Christ whispers, "Sinner, in laying hold of me, thou hast laid hold of all." Why, Lord, I dare not think I could have the other mercies. I dare trust thee, but I dare not take the others. Ah, sinner, but in that thou hast taken me thou hast taken all, for the mercies of the covenant are like links in the chain. This one link is an enticing one. The

sinner lays hold of it; and God has purposely put it there to entice the sinner to come and receive the mercies of the covenant. For when he has once got hold of Christ—here is the comfort—he has everything that the covenant can give.

2. Christ is put also *to confirm the doubting saint*. Sometimes he cannot read his interest in the covenant. He cannot see his portion among them that are sanctified. He is afraid that God is not *his* God, that the Spirit hath no dealings with *his* soul; but then,

"Amid temptations, sharp and strong,
His soul to *that dear refuge flies*;
Hope is his anchor, firm and strong,
When tempests blow and billows rise."

So he lays hold of Christ, and were it not for that, even the believer dare not come at all. he could not lay hold on any other mercy than that with which Christ is connected. "Ah," saith he, "I know I am a sinner, and Christ came to save sinners." So he holds fast to Christ. "I can hold fast here," he says, "my black hands will not black Christ, my filthiness will not make him unclean." So the saint holds hard by Christ, as hard as if it were the death-clutch of a drowning man. And what then? Why, he has got every mercy of the covenant in his hand. It is the wisdom of God that he has put Christ in, so that a poor sinner, who might be afraid to lay hold of another, knowing the gracious nature of Christ, is not afraid to lay hold of him, and therein he grasps the whole, but oftentimes unconsciously to himself.

4. Again, it was necessary that Christ should be in the covenant, because *there are many things there that would be nought without him*. Our great redemption is in the covenant, but we have no redemption except through *his* blood. It is true that my righteousness is in the covenant, but I can have no righteousness apart from that which Christ has wrought out, and which is imputed to me by God. It is very true that my eternal perfection is in the covenant, but the elect are only perfect in Christ. They are not perfect in themselves, nor will they ever be, until they have been washed, and sanctified, and perfected by the Holy Ghost. And even in

heaven their perfection consists not so much in their sanctification, as in their justification in Christ.

"Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus the Lord their righteousness."

In fact, if you take Christ out of the covenant, you have just done the same as if you should break the string of a necklace: all the jewels, or beads, or corals, drop off and separate from each other. Christ is the golden string whereon the mercies of the covenant are threaded, and when you lay hold of him, you have obtained the whole string of pearls. But if Christ be taken out, true there will be the pearls, but we cannot wear them, we cannot grasp them; they are separated, and poor faith can never know how to get hold of them. Oh! it is a mercy worth worlds, that Christ is in the covenant.

4. But mark once more, as I told you when preaching concerning God in the covenant, Christ is in the covenant *to be used*. There are some promises in the Bible which I have never yet used; but I am well assured that there will come times of trial and trouble when I shall find that that poor despised promise, which I thought was never meant for me, will be the only one on which I can float. I know that the time is coming when every believer shall know the worth of every promise in the covenant. God has not given him any part of an inheritance which he did not mean him to till. Christ is given us to use. Believer, use him! I tell thee again, as I told thee before, that thou dost not use thy Christ as thou oughtest to do. Why, man, when thou art in trouble, why dost thou not go and tell him? Has he not a sympathising heart, and can he not comfort and relieve thee? No, thou art gadding about to all thy friends save thy best friend, and telling thy tale everywhere except into the bosom of thy Lord. Oh, use him, use him. Art thou black with yesterday's sins? Here is a fountain filled with blood; use it, saint, use it. Has thy guilt returned again? Well, his power has been proved again and again; come use him! use him! Dost thou feel naked? Come hither, soul, put on the robe. Stand not staring at it; put it on. Strip, sir, strip thine own righteousness off, and thine own fears too. Put this on, and wear it, for it was meant to *wear*. Dost thou feel thyself sick? What, wilt thou not go and pull the night-bell of prayer,

and wake up thy physician? I beseech thee go and stir him up betimes, and he will give the cordial that will revive thee. What! art thou sick, with such a physician next door to thee, a present help in time of trouble, and wilt thou not go to him? Oh, remember thou art poor, but then thou hast "a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth." What! wilt thou not go to him and ask him to give thee of his abundance, when he has given thee this promise, that as long as he has anything thou shalt go shares with him, for all he is and all he has is thine? Oh, believer, do use Christ, I beseech thee. There is nothing Christ dislikes more than for his people to make a show-thing of him and not to use him. he loves to be worked. He is a great labourer; he always was for his Father, and now he loves to be a great labourer for his brethren. The more burdens you put on his shoulders the better he will love you. Cast your burden on him. You will never know the sympathy of Christ's heart and the love of his soul so well as when you have heaved a very mountain of trouble from yourself to his shoulders, and have found that he does not stagger under the weight. Are your troubles like huge mountains of snow upon your spirit? Bid them rumble like an avalanche upon the shoulders of the Almighty Christ. He can bear them all away, and carry them into the depths of the sea. Do use thy Master, for for this very purpose he was put into the covenant, that thou mightest use him whenever thou needest him.

III. Now, lastly, here is A PRECEPT, and what shall the precept be? Christ is ours; then *be ye Christ's*, beloved. *Ye are Christ's*, ye know right well. Ye are his by your Father's donation when he gave you to the Son. You are his by his bloody purchase, when he counted down the price for your redemption. You are his by dedication, for you have dedicated yourselves to him. You are his by adoption, for you are brought to him and made one of his brethren and joint-heirs with him. I beseech you, labour, dear brethren, to show the world that you are his in practice. When tempted to sin, reply, "I cannot do this great wickedness. I cannot, for I am one of Christ's." When wealth is before thee to be won by sin, touch it not; say that thou art Christ's, else thou wouldst take it; but now thou canst not. Tell Satan that you would not gain the world if you had to love Christ less. Are you exposed in the world to difficulties and dangers? Stand fast in the evil day, remembering that you are one of Christ's. Are you in a field where much is to be done, and others are sitting down idly and lazily,

doing nothing? Go at your work, and when the sweat stands upon your brow and you are bidden to stay, say, "No, I cannot stop; I am one of Christ's. He had a baptism to be baptised with, and so have I, and I am straitened until it be accomplished. I am one of Christ's. If I were not one of his, and purchased by blood, I might be like Issachar, crouching between two burdens; but I am one of Christ's." When the syren song of pleasure would tempt thee from the path of right, reply, "Hush your strains, O temptress; I am one of Christ's. Thy music cannot affect me; I am not my own, I am bought with a price. When the cause of God needs thee, give thyself to it, for thou art Christ's. When the poor need thee, give thyself away, for thou art one of Christ's. When, at any time there is ought to be done for his church and for his cross, do it, remembering that thou art one of Christ's. I beseech thee, never belie thy profession. Go not where others could say of thee, "He cannot be Christ's;" but be thou ever one of those whose brogue is Christian, whose very idiom is Christ-like, whose conduct and conversation are so redolent of heaven, that all who see thee may know that thou art one of the Saviour's and may recognise in thee his features and his lovely countenance.

And now, dearly beloved hearers. I must say one word to those of you to whom I have not preached, for there are some of you who have never laid hold of the covenant. I sometimes hear it whispered, and sometimes read it, that there are men who trust to the uncovenanted mercies of God. Let me solemnly assure you that there is *now* no such thing in heaven as uncovenanted mercy; there is no such thing beneath God's sky or above it, as uncovenanted grace towards men. All ye can receive, and all you ever ought to hope for, must be through the covenant of free grace, and that alone.

Mayhap, poor convinced sinner thou darest not take hold of the covenant to-day. Thou canst not say the covenant is thine. Thou art afraid it never can be thine; thou art such an unworthy wretch. Hark thee; canst thou lay hold on Christ? Darest thou do that? "Oh," sayest thou, "I am too unworthy." Nay, soul, darest thou touch the hem of his garment to-day? Darest thou come up to him just so much as to touch the very skirt that is trailing on the ground? "No," sayest thou "I dare not," Why not, poor soul, why not? Canst thou not trust to Christ?

"Are not his mercies rich and free?
Then say, poor soul, why not for thee."

"*I dare not come; I am so unworthy,*" you say. Hear, then; my Master bids you come, and will you be afraid after that? "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Why dare you not come to Christ? Oh, you are afraid he will turn you away! Hark ye, then, what he saith; "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." Thou sayest, "*I know he would cast me out.*" Come, then, and see if thou canst prove him a liar. I know thou canst not, but come and try. He has said "whosoever." "*But I am the blackest.*" Nevertheless, he has said "whosoever:" come along, blackest of the black. "*Oh, but I am filthy.*" Come along, filthy one, come and try him, come and prove him; recollect he has said he will cast out none that come to him by faith. Come and try him. I do not ask thee to lay hold on the whole covenant, thou shalt do that by-and-bye; but lay hold on Christ, and if thou wilt do that, then thou hast the covenant." "*Oh, I cannot lay hold of him,*" saith one poor soul. Well, then, lie prostrate at his feet, and beg of him to lay hold of *thee*. Do groan one groan, and say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!" Do sigh one sigh, and say, "Lord, save, or I perish." Do let thy heart say it, if thy lips cannot. If grief, long smothered, burns like a flame within thy bones, at least let one spark out. Now prayer one prayer, and verily I say unto thee, one sincere prayer shall most assuredly prove that he will save thee. One true groan, where God has put it in the heart, is an earnest of his love; one true wish after Christ, if it be followed by sincere and earnest seeking of him, shall be accepted of God, and thou shalt be saved. Come, soul, once more. Lay hold on Christ. "*Oh, but I dare not do it.*" Now I was about to say a foolish thing; I was going to say that *I wish* I was a sinner like thyself this moment, and I think I would run before, and lay hold on Christ, and then say to you, "Take hold too." But *I am* a sinner like thyself, and no better than thyself; I have no merits, no righteousness, no works; I shall be damned in hell unless Christ have mercy on me, and should have been there now if I had had my deserts. Here am I a sinner once as black as thou art; and yet, O Christ, these arms embrace thee. Sinner, come and

take thy turn after me. Have not I embraced him? Am I not as vile as thou art? Come and let my case assure thee. How did he treat me when I first laid hold of him? Why he said to me, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Come, sinner, come and try, If Christ did not drive me away, he will never spurn you. Come along, poor soul, come along -

"Venture on him, (tis no venture,) venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

He can do thee all the good thou wantest: oh! trust my Master, oh! trust my Master; he is a precious Lord Jesus, he is a sweet Lord Jesus, he is a loving Saviour, he is a kind and condescending forgiver of sin. Come, ye black; come, ye filthy; come, ye poor; come, ye dying; come, ye lost—ye who have been taught to feel your need of Christ, come all of you—come now for Jesus bids you come; come quickly. Lord Jesus, draw them, draw them by this Spirit! Amen.

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The Blood of the Covenant

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."—Hebrews 13:20-21.

What we ask others to do we should be prepared to do ourselves. Precept fails unless it be followed up by example. The apostle had exhorted the Hebrew believers to pray for him in the words, "Pray for us;" and then, as if to show that he did not ask of them what he was not himself. Willing to give, he utters this most wonderful prayer for them. He may confidently

say to his congregation, "Pray for me" who does unfeignedly from his soul pray for them. The prayer of the apostle, as you observe, is tinged with the subject upon which he had been writing. This Epistle to the Hebrews is full of distinctions between the old covenant and the new, the gist of it being to show that the former covenant was only typical of that abiding dispensation which followed it; for it had only the shadow, and not the very image of heavenly things. His subject had been the covenant, and when he prayed his garments were sweet with the myrrh and aloes and cassia among which his meditations had conducted him. According to the manner of his thoughts was the expression of his desires. He weaved into the texture of his prayer the meditations of his heart. And this is a very right method, especially when the prayer is public, for it ensures variety, it assists others to unite with us, and it tends to edification; in fact, as the bee gathers honey from many flowers, and the honey is often flavored with wild thyme or some other special flower which abounds in the region from which it collects its sweets, so doth our soul gather dainty stores of the honey of devotion from all sources, but that upon which she longest tarries in her meditations yields a paramount savor and flavor to the expression and the spirit of her prayer. What was more natural than that a discourse upon the covenant should be followed by this covenant prayer: "The God of peace, that brought from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will"?

The subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews is deep, for it passes on from the superficial rudiments to those underlying truths which are more mysterious and profound. It is a book for the higher classes in Christ's school; and hence this prayer is not for babes, but for men of understanding. We could not say to all the saints, "after this manner pray ye," for they would not know what they were asking; they have need to begin with something simpler, such as that sweet "Our Father, which art in heaven," which suits alike all believers. Full grown men feed on strong meat, think sublime thoughts, and offer mighty prayers. As we may admire in the prayer of the babe its simplicity, and in the prayer of the young man its vivacity, so in the prayer of one who has become a father in Christ, and feeds upon the covenant, we rejoice in its depth, compass, and sublimity. All these we find here. I invite those who would understand the

deep things of God to ask the Holy Spirit's assistance while we follow the apostle in this his covenant prayer, a prayer of which the covenant is the thread, the substance, and the plea.

I. The subject of our discourse this morning, therefore, is the covenant of grace, as it is here spoken of; and I shall begin by noticing, first, THE COVENANT NAMES which the apostle uses. He calls the ever-blessed Father "the God of peace;" and to the Redeemer who has taken the other side of the covenant, he gives the title, "Our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep." Dear friends, as many of us as have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are in Christ, and he is our Head and Representative, our Shepherd and Sponsor. On our behalf he made a covenant with the Father upon this tenor, that we having sinned, a full recompense should be made to injured justice, and the law of God should be fully honored; the Father on his part stipulating to grant full pardon, acceptance, adoption, and eternal life to us. Now, the covenant has been kept on Christ's side. The text assures us of that, for Jesus has according to his promise shed his blood, and now the covenant stands only to be fulfilled on the side of the eternal Father, and under that aspect of the covenant the apostle calls the Father "the God of peace." What a precious name! Under the covenant of works he is the God of vengeance; to sinners he is the thrice Holy God, terrible out of his holy places. Even our God is a consuming fire; and yet to us, seeing that the covenant has been fulfilled on our side by our great Head and Representative, he is only "the God of peace." All is peace between you and God, Christian; there is no past ground of quarrel remaining, nor any fear that a new one can arise; the everlasting covenant secures everlasting peace. He is not the God of a hollow truce, not the God of a patched-up forgetfulness of unforgiven injuries, but the God of peace in the very deepest sense; he is himself at peace, for there is a peace of God that passeth all understanding; and, moreover, by reason of his mercy his people are made to enjoy peace of conscience within themselves, for you feel that God is reconciled to you, your hearts rest in him, your sins which separated you have been removed, and perfect love has cast out the fear which hath torment. While the Lord is at peace with himself, and you are made to enjoy inward peace through him, he is also at peace with you, for he loves you with a love unsearchable; he sees nothing in you but that which he

delights in, for in the covenant he does not look at you as you are in yourself, but in your Head, Christ Jesus, and to the eye of God there is no sight in the universe so lovely as his own dear Son, and his people in his Son. There is beauty enough in Jesus to make him forget our deformities, merits enough in Jesus to swallow up our demerits, and efficacy sufficient in the atoning blood of our great High Priest to wash away all our transgressions. As for us, our soul recognizing that blood, and perceiving the love of God towards us, feels now no war with God. We did rebel once, for we hated him, and even now, when the old nature champs the bit, and the Lord's will runs cross to our desires, we do not find it easy to bow before him and say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because it seemed good in thy sight ": but yet the new nature which comes to the front does rule and govern, and all heart-contest between our soul and God is at an end. To us the Lord is in the widest and most perfect sense the God of peace. Oh, how I love that name; himself the peaceful, happy God, unruffled, undisturbed; ourselves within ourselves made to enjoy a peace that passeth all understanding, which keeps our hearts and minds. God at peace with us, declaring that he will never be wroth with us nor rebuke us, and ourselves rejoicing in him, delighting in his law, and living for his glory. Henceforth be it ours in every troubled hour to look to the Lord under this cheering name, "the God of peace," for as such the covenant reveals him.

The apostle had a view of the other great party to the covenant, and he names him "Our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep." We must view our Redeemer in the covenant first as Jesus the Savior who leads us into the Canaan which has been given to us by a covenant of salt, even the rest which remaineth to the people of God; he is also the Lord Jesus, in all the dignity of his nature, exalted far above all principalities and powers, to be obeyed and worshipped by us; and our Lord Jesus—ours because he has given himself to us, and we have accepted and received him with holy delight to be the Lord whom we cheerfully serve. Our Lord Jesus because he saves us; our Lord Jesus because by bringing us under his kingdom he rescues us; and our Lord Jesus because we have a special relation both to his sovereignty and his salvation. We are not generally observant of the appropriateness of our Lord's names, we do not notice the instruction which is intended by the writers who use them, nor do we exercise

discretion enough ourselves in the employment of them; yet is there great force in these titles when appropriately employed. Other names may have small significance, but in the titles of Jesus there is a wealth of meaning.

Further, our Lord is called "that great Shepherd of the sheep." In the covenant we are the sheep, the Lord Jesus is the Shepherd. You cannot make a covenant with sheep, they have not the ability to covenant; but you can make a covenant with the Shepherd for them, and so, glory be to God, though we had gone astray like lost sheep, we belonged to Jesus, and he made a covenant on our behalf, and stood for us before the living God. Now, I have aforesaid explained to you that our Lord Jesus in his death is the good Shepherd—the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep, and so shows his goodness; that in his rising again he is the great Shepherd, as we have it in the text, for his resurrection and return to glory display his greatness; but in his second advent he is the chief Shepherd—"when the chief Shepherd shall appear ye also shall appear with him in glory"—there he shows his superior sovereignty. Our Lord was good in laying down his life for the sheep, and there are other shepherds whom he makes good, who in his name feed his lambs and sheep. When he comes again the second time he will appear with others, the chief among them all; but in his resurrection for our justification, in connection with the covenant, he is alone, and bears the name of the or "that great Shepherd,"—that great Shepherd of whom all prophecy has spoken, in whom all the divine decrees are fulfilled, before whom all others shrink away, who stands alone, as in that covenant capacity the sole and only Shepherd of the sheep.

It is very beautiful to trace the shepherds through the Old Testament, and to see Christ as Abel, the witnessing shepherd, pouring out that blood, which crieth from the ground; as Abraham, the separating shepherd, leading out his flock into the strange country where they dwelt alone; as Isaac, the quiet shepherd, digging wells for his flock, and feeding them in peace in the midst of the enemies; as Jacob, the shepherd who is surety for the sheep, who earns them all by long toils and weariness, separates them, and walks in the midst of them to Canaan, preserving them by his own lone midnight prayers. There, too, we see our Lord as Joseph, the shepherd who is head over Egypt for the sake of Israel, of whom his dying

father said, "From thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel." Head over all things for his church, the King who governs all the world for the sake of his elect, the great Shepherd of the sheep, who for their sakes has all power committed unto his hands. Then follows Moses, the chosen shepherd, who led his people through the wilderness up to the Promised Land, feeding them with manna and giving them drink from the smitten rock,—what a wide theme for resection here! And then there is David, the type of Jesus, as reigning in the covenanted inheritance over his own people, as a glorious king in the midst of them all. All these together enable us to see the varied glories of "that great Shepherd of the sheep."

Beloved, this is a great subject, and I can only hint at it. Let us rejoice that our Shepherd is great, because he with his great flock will be able to preserve them all from the great dangers into which they are brought, and to perform for them the great transactions with the great God which are demanded of a Shepherd of such a flock as that which Jesus calls his own. Under the covenant, Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King—a shepherd should be all this to his flock; and he is great in each of these offices. While we rest in the covenant of grace we should view our Lord as our Shepherd, and find solace in the fact that sheep have nothing to do with their own feeding, guidance, or protection; they have only to follow their Shepherd unto the pastures which he prepares, and all will be well with them. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters."

II. Secondly, the apostle mentions THE COVENANT SEAL. "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd, of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." The seal of the covenant is the blood of Jesus. In olden times when men made covenants the one with the other, they generally used some ceremony to bind the bargain, as it were. Now, under the old dispensation covenants with God were always confirmed with blood. As soon as ever blood was shed, and the victim died, the agreement made was established. Now, when our heavenly Father made a covenant with Jesus Christ on our behalf, that covenant was true and firm, "according to the sure mercies of David," but to make it stand fast there must be blood. Now, the blood ordained to seal the covenant was not the blood of bulls

or of goats, but the blood of the Son of God himself; and this has made the covenant so binding that sooner may heaven and earth pass away than one Little of it fail. God must keep his own promises. He is a free God, but he binds himself; by two immutable things wherein it is impossible for him to lie, he has bound himself to bestow covenant blessings upon the flock which the great Shepherd represented. Brethren, you and I, as honest men, are bound by our word. If we took an oath, which I trust we would not, we should certainly feel doubly bound by it; and if we had lived in the old times, and blood had been sprinkled on an agreement which we had made, we should regard the solemn sign and never dream of running back from it. Think, for a moment, how impossible it is that the Lord should ever break that covenant of grace, which he spontaneously made with his own Son, and with us in him, now that it has been sprinkled with blood from the veins of his own well-beloved Son No; the covenant is everlasting. It stands fast for ever, because it is confirmed by blood which is none other than the blood of the Son of God.

Remember, too, that in our case that blood not only confirmed the covenant, but actually fulfilled it; because the covenant stipulation was on this wise:—Christ must subtler for our sins and honor the divine law. He had kept the law in his life, but it was necessary to the complete fulfilling of the covenant on his part that he should also be obedient to death, even the death of the cross. The shedding of his blood therefore was the carrying out of his promised obedience to its extremity. It was the actual fulfillment of Christ's side of the covenant on our behalf; so that now the whole covenant must stand firm, for that upon which it depended is finished for ever. It is not only ratified with that bloody signature, but by that blood it is actually carried out on Christ's part, and it cannot be that the eternal Father should start back from his side of the compact since our side of it has been carried out to the letter by that great Shepherd of the sheep who laid down his life for us.

By the shedding of the blood the covenant is turned into a testament. In some Bibles, the margin puts it "testament," and often in other cases we scarcely know how to translate the word, whether to say the new testament or the new covenant; certainly it is now a testament, for since

Christ has kept his part of the covenant he wills to us what is due to him from God, and he makes over to us by his death all that comes to him as his reward, making us his heirs by a testament which is rendered valid by his death. So you may say "testament" if you please, or "covenant" if you will, only forget not that the blood has made both testament and covenant sure to all the sheep of whom Jesus is the shepherd.

Dwell with pleasure upon that word "everlasting covenant." Certain men in these days declare that "everlasting" does not mean everlasting, but indicates a period to which an end will come sooner or later; I have no sympathy with them, and feel no inclination to renounce the everlastingness of heaven and other divine blessings in order to gratify the tastes of wicked men by denying the eternity of future punishments. Human nature leans in that direction, but the word of God does not, and following its unerring track we rejoice in the everlasting covenant, which will abide for ever and ever. The covenant of works is gone; it was based on human strength, and it dissolved as a dream; in the nature of things it could not be everlasting. Man could not keep the condition of it, and it fell to the ground. But the covenant of grace depended only upon the power and love and faithfulness of Christ, who has kept his part of the covenant, and therefore the covenant now rests only upon God, the faithful and true, whose word cannot fail.

"As well might he his being quit,
As break his promise, or forget."

"His mercy endureth for ever, and his truth throughout all generations." He has said, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good," and therefore do them good he must, for he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. So, then, the covenant seal makes all things sure.

III. We have now to notice THE COVENANT FULFILMENT, for the Lord has commenced to fulfill it. "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." See, then, Jesus Christ has been brought back again from the dead through the blood of the covenant. Here is the story. He was the covenantor on our behalf; he took our sin

upon himself, and undertook to suffer for it. Having been crucified he yielded up his life, and from the cross he was taken to the grave, and there he lay in duration vile. Now, it was a part of the covenant on God the Father's part that he would not leave Christ's soul in Hades, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption; this agreement has been faithfully kept. Christ on the cross represented all of us who believe in him—we were crucified in him: Jesus in the tomb also represented us, for we are buried with him. Whatever happened to him happened also to the flock. Now, then, what will occur to the body of Jesus? Will God keep his covenant? Will the worm devour that lovely frame, or will it defy corruption? Will it come to pass that he who has descended into the earth shall never return? Wait. It is the third morning! The promised time has come. As yet no worm has dared to feed upon that God-like form, yet it lies among the dead; but on the third morning the slumberer awakes like one that has been refreshed with sleep. He rises. The stone is rolled away. Angels escort him to liberty. He comes into the open air of the garden, and speaks to his disciples. Jesus who bled has left the dead, no more to die. He waits for forty days that he may let his friends see that he is really risen, but he has to rise higher yet to be fully brought back to his former honors. Will God be faithful to him and bring him back from the dead all the way he once descended? Yes, for on the Mount of Olives, when the time is come, he begins to ascend; cleaving the ambient air he mounts from amidst his worshipping disciples, till a cloud receives him. But will he rise fully to the point from which he came? Will he in his own person gain for his church a full recovery from all the ruin of the fall? Ah, see him as he enters the gates of pearl! How he is welcomed by the Father! See how he climbs aloft, and sits upon the Father's throne, for God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

Now note by what means our Lord returned from the dead to all this glory. It was because he had presented the blood of the everlasting covenant. When the Father saw that Jesus had kept all his part of the covenant even to death, then he began to fulfill his portion of the contract by bringing back his Son from the grave to life, from shame to honor, from humiliation to glory, from death to immortality. See where he now sits expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. Now, what has been

done to Jesus has been virtually done to all his people, because, you observe, the Lord "brought again from the dead," not the Lord Jesus as a private person only, but "Our Lord Jesus," as "that great Shepherd of the sheep." The sheep are with the Shepherd. Shepherd of the sheep, where is thy flock? We know that thou hast loved them even to the end; but thou art gone; hast thou left them in the wilderness? It cannot be, for it is written, "Who can separate us from the love of Christ? "Hear the Shepherd say, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." "Because I live ye shall live also." "Where I am there also shall my servant be." Beloved, the sheep never are away from that great Shepherd of the sheep, they are always in his hand, and none can pluck them thence. They were on earth with him, and they are risen with him. If Jesus had remained in the grave there must all his sheep have perished; but when the Father brought him back by the blood, he brought us back by the blood, and gave us for our souls a lively hope that they shall never die, and for our bodies the expectation of resurrection.

"For though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Shepherd rose,
So all his followers must."

Jesus in heaven is only there as our representative, and his flock is following him. I wish you could get a picture in your eye of the hills of heaven rising up from these lowlands. We are feeding here awhile under his watchful eye, and yonder is a river which runs at the foot of the celestial hills, and parts us from heavenly pasturage. One he one our beloved ones are being called across the flood by the Good Shepherd's voice, and they cross the river pleasantly at his bidding, so that a long line of his sheep may be seen going over the stream and up the hillside to where the Shepherd stands and receives them. This line joins the upper flock to the lower, and makes them all one company. Do you not see them continually streaming up to him, and passing again under the hand of him that telleth them, to be fed by the Lamb and made to lie down for ever where wolves can never come? Thus the one flock is even now with the Shepherd, for it is all one pasture to him, though to us it seems divided by Jordan's torrent. Every one of the sheep is marked with the

blood of the everlasting covenant; every one of them has been preserved, because Jesus lived; and as he was brought again from the dead by the blood, even so must they be, for so the covenant stands.

Remember, then, dear friends, that the punishment of the flock was borne by the Shepherd, that the flock died in the Shepherd, and that the flock now live because the Shepherd lives; that their life is consequently a new life; that he will bring all his sheep that as yet are not called, out of their death in sin, even as he has been brought out of his own death; that he will lead onward and upward those that are called, even as he went onward and upward from the grave to the throne; that he will preserve them all their journey through, even as he was preserved by the blood of the everlasting covenant; and that he will perfect them even as he is perfect. Even as the God of peace has glorified his Son, so also will he bring all his chosen to eternal glory with him.

IV. Fourthly, we will view THE COVENANT BLESSING. What is one of the greatest of all the covenant blessings? The writer of this epistle here pleads for it. "Now," saith he, "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight." Notice that one of the chief blessings of the covenant is power and will to serve God. The old covenant said, "There are the tables of stone, mind that you obey every word that is written thereon: if you do you shall live, and if you do not you shall die." Man never did obey, and consequently no one ever entered heaven or found peace by the law. The new covenant speaketh on this wise, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. I will write my law in their hearts, and on their minds will I write them. I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me." The prophets enlarge most instructively upon this new covenant. It is not a covenant of "if you will I will," but it runs thus, "I will and you shall." As a covenant this exactly suits me. If there were something to be performed by me I could never be sure, but as it is finished I am at rest. God sets us working, and we work; but the covenant itself dependeth wholly upon that great promise, "I will not turn away from them to do them good." So that it was right of Paul to pray that God would make us

meet in every good work to do his will, because of old this was the master promise, that those for whom Jesus died should be sanctified, purified, and made meet to serve their God. Great as the prayer is, it is asking what the covenant itself guarantees.

Taking the text word by word, I perceive that the first blessing asked for by the apostle is meetness for the divine service, for the Greek word is not "Make you perfect," but meet, "fit," "prepared," "able for." I have no reference to the discussion upon the doctrine of perfection in this observation. No one text would decide that controversy; I simply make the observation because it is matter of fact. The expression should be rendered, "Make you fully complete," or "fully fitted" to do his will. We ought to request earnestly that we may be qualified, adapted, and suited, to be used of God for the performance of his will. After the man once dead in sin is made alive again, the question arises, who shall be his master? We having died in our great Shepherd, and having been brought again from the dead, to whom shall we yield ourselves? Certainly unto God alone. Our prayer is that we may be made meet to do his will. Our Shepherd did his Father's will, for he cried, "I delight to do thy will, O God," "by the which will we are sanctified," and sanctified to the doing of that will each one of us thenceforth. It is a grand desire, but it burns in every Christian heart, that now he may be meet to serve his God, may be a vessel such as God can use, an instrument fit for the divine hand; weak and feeble, but not impure, unsuitable by reason of want of native strength, but suitable through having been cleansed by the blood of the covenant. Dear brothers and sisters, ask for meetness for service; pray day and night that you may be fully fitted for every good work.

But the apostle asked for an inward work of grace, not merely meetness for service, but an operation felt—"Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight." I long above everything to possess in myself the inworking of the Holy Ghost more and more clearly. There is so much superficial religion, and we are so apt to be contented with it that it becomes us to pray for deep heart-work. We need to have our affections elevated, our will subdued, our understanding enlightened, and our whole nature deeply spiritualized by the presence of the Holy Ghost. Now this is the promise of the covenant: "I will dwell in them and walk in

them." Remember, God worked in Christ in the grave by quickening his body into life, and he must work in us according to the working of that mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. Ask the Lord to do it. Do not be satisfied with a little, weak, almost imperceptible, pulse of religion, of which you can hardly judge whether it is there or not; but ask to feel the divine energies working within you, the eternal omnipotence of God, struggling and striving mightily in your spirit until sin shall be conquered, and grace shall gloriously triumph. This is a covenant blessing. Seek ye for it.

But we need outward as well as inward work. Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight—no small matter when you remember that nothing but perfect holiness can please God. Paul would have us made fit for every good work, wanted us to be many-sided men who could do every good work, just as Jesus did. He wished us to be qualified for any station and every position. When Jesus Christ rose from the dead he was seen; there was not merely a secret quickening in him, but a visible life, he was seen of angels and of men, and here below he lived for a period of time the observed of all observers. So, dear brethren, there ought to be in us not only an inner resurrection which we feel, but such a quickening that we shall be manifestly alive to newness of life. We must know the power of our Lord's resurrection, and exhibit it in every action of our lives. May God grant us this. There is much upon this point which time does not permit me to enlarge upon. May you know it all by experience.

Observe, once more, the completeness of this covenant blessing. Just as Jesus is fully restored to the place from which he came, and has lost no dignity nor power by having shed his blood, but rather is exalted higher than ever, so God's design is to make us pure and holy as Adam was at the first, and to add to our characters a force of love which never would have been there if we had not sinned and been forgiven, an energy of intense devotion, an enthusiasm of perfect self-sacrifice, which we never could have learned if it had not been for him who loved us and gave himself for us. God means to make us the princes of the blood royal of the universe, or, if you will, the body guards of the Lord of Hosts. He desires to fashion an order of creatures who will come very near to him, and yet will feel the loveliest reverence for him. He will have them akin to himself, partakers of

the divine natures and yet the most obedient of servants, perfectly free agents, and yet bound to him by bonds which will never let them disobey in thought, or word, or deed. And this is how he is fashioning this central battalion who shall wait upon his eternal marchings for ever—he is forgiving us great sins, he is bestowing upon us great blessings, he is making us one with his dear Son; and when he has entirely freed us from the cerements of our spiritual death he will call us up to where Jesus is, and we shall serve him with an adoration superior to all the rest of his creatures. Angels cannot love so much as we shall, for they have never tasted redeeming grace and dying love. This high devotion is the Lord's aim. He did not bring up the Lord Jesus from the dead that he might live a common life. He lifted him up that he might be head over all things to his church, and that all things might be under his feet; even so the destiny of Christians is mysteriously sublime: they are not lifted up from their native death to a mere morality. They are destined to be something more than philanthropists and men esteemed by their fellows, they are to exhibit to angels, and principalities, and powers, the wonderful grace of God, showing in their own persons what God can do with his creatures through the death of his Son. I do but touch like a swallow with my wing where it were delightful to dive.

IV. We conclude with THE COVENANT DOXOLOGY, "To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." If anything in the world can make a man praise his God it is the covenant, and the knowledge that he is in it. I will leave off preaching and ask you to think over the love of God in the covenant. It does not belong to all of you. Christ is not the Shepherd of the whole herd of men; he is only the Shepherd of the sheep, and he has not entered into any covenant for all mankind, but for his sheep alone. The covenant is for his own people; if you believe in him it is a covenant for you, but if you reject him you can have no participation in that covenant; for you are under the covenant of works, which condemns you. But now, believer, just sit down for a moment and think over this exceeding mercy. Your God, the everlasting Father, has entered into a solemn compact with Christ on your behalf; that he will save you, keep you, and make you perfect. He has saved you; he has performed a large part of the covenant in you already, for he has placed you in the way of life and kept you to this day; and if, indeed, you are his, he will keep you to the end. The Lord is

not as the foolish man who began to build and was not able to finish. He does not commence to carry out a design, and then turn from it. He will push on his work till he completes it in you. Can you really believe it? With you, a poor puny mortal, who will soon sleep in the grave—with you he has made an everlasting covenant! Will you not say with our text, "To whom be glory." Like dying David you can say, "Though my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." I am sure you will joyfully add, "Glory be to his name."

Our God deserves exclusive glory. Covenant theology glorifies God alone. There are other theologies abroad which magnify men; they give him a finger in his own salvation, and so leave him a reason for throwing up his cap and saying, "Well done I;" but covenant theology puts man aside, and makes him a debtor and a receiver. It does, as it were, plunge him into the sea of infinite grace and unmerited favor, and it makes him give up all boasting, stopping the mouth that could have boasted by filling it with floods of love, so that it cannot utter a vainglorious word. A man saved by the covenant must give all the glory to God's holy name, for to God all the glory belongs. In salvation wrought by the covenant the Lord has exclusive glory.

He also has endless glory. "To whom be glory for ever and ever." Have you glorified God a little, dear brethren, because of his covenant mercy? Go on glorifying him. Did you serve him well when you were young? Ah, not so well as you wish you had: then serve him better now in these riper days. Throw yourself into the glorifying of God. The task of saving yourself is not yours, Jesus has done it all. You may sing,
"A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;"

But you will not need to add—
"A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky,"

For that soul of yours is saved; "he hath saved us and called us with a holy calling," and you are fitted for the sky by the blood of the ever lasting

covenant, for Paul says, "Thanks be unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." All you have to do is to glorify the Lord who has saved you and set your feet upon a rock, and established your goings. Now, go at it with all your might. Are you getting grey, dear brother? With all your experience yore ought now to glorify the Lord more than ever. You will soon be up yonder in the land of the living. Do not praise the Redeemer any longer at a poor dying rate, for you have but a short time to tarry here. And, oh, when we ascend above these clouds, how we will magnify our covenant God! I am sure I shall not feel my powers capacious enough, even in heaven, to express my gratitude for his amazing love. I do not wonder that the poet says—
"Eternity's too short
To utter half his praise."

People find fault with that expression, and say it is an exaggeration. How would you have the poets talk? Is not hyperbole allowable to them? I might even plead that it is not an hyperbole, for neither time nor eternity can utter all the praises of the infinite Jehovah.

"On, for a thousand tongues to sing
Our great Redeemer's praise."

This shall be the sweetest note of all our music,—the covenant, "the covenant made with David's Lord, in all things ordered well," the covenant with that great Shepherd of the sheep by which every sheep was preserved and kept, and brought into the rich pastures of eternal glory. We will sing of covenant love in heaven. This shall be our last song on earth and the first in Paradise—"The covenant, the covenant sealed with blood." How I wish Christ's ministers would spread more and more of this covenant doctrine throughout England. He who understands the two covenants has found the marrow of all theology, but he who does not know the covenants knows next to nothing of the gospel of Christ. You would think, to hear some ministers preach, that salvation was all of works, that it was still uncertain who would be saved, that it was all a matter of "ifs," and "buts," and "peradventures" and if you begin to give them "shells," and "wills," and purposes, and decrees, and pledges, and oaths, and blood, they call you Calvinistic. Why, this doctrine was true before Calvin was born or thought of! Calvin loved it as we do, but it did

not come from him. Paul had taught it long before; nay, the Holy Ghost taught it to us in the word, and therefore we hold it. The bringing back of this truth to the front will be a grand thing for the church. From the mouth of this cannon the Lord will blow the Pope and all his myrmidons into a thousand shivers, but no other doctrine will do it. By God's good grace, we must live this doctrine as well as preach it, and may he that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will. Then will he have glory through the covenant and through you, both now and for ever. Amen and amen.

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The Messenger of the Covenant

"The messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in."—Malachi 3:1
The Lord's People delight in the covenant itself. It is an unfailing source of consolation to them so often as the Holy Spirit leads them to its green pastures, and makes them to lie down beside its still waters. They can sweetly sing of it from youth even to hoar hairs, from childhood even to the tomb, for this theme is inexhaustible:

"Thy covenant the last accent claims
Of this poor faltering tongue;
And that shall the first notes employ
Of my celestial song."

They delight to contemplate the antiquity of that covenant, remembering that before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round, the interests of the saints were made secure in Christ Jesus. It is peculiarly pleasing to them to remember the sureness of the covenant. They love to meditate upon "the sure mercies of David." They delight to celebrate the covenant in their songs of praise, as "signed and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well." It often makes their hearts dilate with joy to think of its immutability, as a covenant which neither time nor eternity,

life nor death, things present, nor things to come, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, shall ever be able to violate;—a covenant as old as eternity and as everlasting as the Rock of ages. They rejoice also to feast upon the fullness of this covenant, for they see in it all things provided for them.—God is their portion, Christ their companion, the Spirit their comforter, earth their lodge and heaven their home. They see in it not only some things, but all things; not only a help to obtain some desirable possessions, but an inheritance reserved and entailed to every soul that has an interest in this ancient and eternal deed of gift. Their eyes sparkled when they saw it as a treasure-trove in the Bible; but O how their souls were gladdened when they saw in the last will and testament of their divine kinsman that it was bequeathed to them! More especially it is the pleasure of God's people to contemplate the graciousness of this covenant. They see that the law was made void because it was a covenant of works and depended upon merit, but this they perceive to be enduring because grace is the basis, grace the condition, grace the strain, grace the bulwark, grace the foundation, grace the topstone. From the beginning even to the end, it is all of grace. They see that the covenant runneth on this wise, not "I will if you will," but "I will and you shall;" not "I will reward if you deserve," but "I will forgive even if you sin;" not "I will cleanse if you are clean," but "I will cleanse if you are filthy," not "I will keep if you assist," but "I will bring you back even if you be lost, I will surely save you and preserve you even to the end." I know some Christians—bleared-eyed, like Leah—who cannot see afar off, and hence the councils of eternity they cannot behold. I know some believers of weak knees and feeble joints who are afraid of that strong word "Covenant." But they that are men in Christ Jesus, who by reason of years have had their senses exercised, know that the covenant is a treasury of wealth, a granary of food, a fountain of life, a store-house of salvation, a charter of peace, and a haven of joy. The covenant! let my soul but anchor here, then howl ye winds, and roar ye hurricanes! I will not fear. The covenant! let my soul but cast its anchor here, and come life with all its tribulations, and death with all its pains and terrors, my soul laughs them all to scorn.

"The gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God

Lays the foundation for my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood.

We advance a step further towards our text, and remark that the "Messenger of the covenant" is a welcome ambassador to those who are interested in those exceeding great and precious promises which pertain to life and godliness. But, waiving further preface, let us notice, first, that we delight in the office of Christ as the messenger of the covenant; next, that we delight in the way in which he fulfils that office; and then, we shall conclude by noticing some ways in which we show our delight.

I. First, then, WE DELIGHT IN CHRIST IN HIS OFFICE OF MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

What is that office? I shall need two or three words to explain it. When we read of Christ as messenger of the covenant, I think we may understand him to be a covenanted messenger. Now, God has sent many messengers, whose words, when they have spoken in His name, he has not suffered to fall to the ground. So far they were covenanted messengers; but these persons sometimes spoke of themselves, and then God had not bound himself by promise to keep their words. Sometimes, even like the apostle Paul, they would have to pause and say, "I think I have the Spirit of God," but they might not be certain. But Christ is a covenanted messenger. God hath sworn to him to do for us whatever he may promise to us, so that if we believe in God we may believe also in him, since he speaks for God, and his every word is settled in heaven—

"Array'd in mortal flesh
He like an angel stands,
And holds the promises
And pardons in his hands:
Commission'd from his Father's throne
To make his grace to mortals known."

Again, he is the covenanted messenger; on our behalf Christ swore to God to carry out that part of the covenant which was left for man, and so he

stood as a covenanted messenger between God and man. The word "plenipotentiary" just hits my thought. You know sometimes kings send out ambassadors to try and negotiate peace, but they have limited powers. On other occasions ambassadors are sent with unlimited, unrestricted power, to make peace or not, and to make it just as they will. Now Christ comes as the covenanted ambassador of God, as the plenipotentiary of heaven. Let him do what he will, God is with him; let him promise what he may, God ratifies it; let him speak what he will to our souls, his word shall certainly be fulfilled. Now do you not rejoice in Christ in this office. He has said to us, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "Rest," saith the eternal Father, as he confirms Jesus' word. "Go in peace, thy sins which are many are forgiven thee." "They are forgiven thee," saith the court of heaven, "go in peace." "He that believeth on me is not condemned," saith Christ; and the Father saith himself "He is not condemned." There is not a word of the gospel which the Father has left unsanctioned. You need not therefore, when you venture upon Christ's word and Christ's merit, think you are resting on a something which God will not accept. He is God's covenanted messenger. He is sworn to accept whom Christ accepts, and since Christ saves all that trust in him, the Father accepts them likewise. He will save certainly all whom Christ hath declared shall be saved.

This, however, does not exhaust the meaning. Christ is the messenger of the covenant, in the next place, as the messenger of the Father to us. Moses was messenger of the covenant of works, and his face shone, for the ministration of death was glorious; but Christ is the messenger of the covenant of grace. O let his face shine in your esteem, ye saints of the Lord, for the ministration of life must be more glorious, far! Christ comes to us to tell us all that God will tell. The revelation of God is Christ. If you would know God, he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father. God's word is Jesus, he speaketh fully by him. Would you know the father's decree? "I will declare the decree," saith Christ. Would you know his character? See every attribute of God in the man, Christ. Would you know his designs? See the designs of God effected in the works of Jesus. Would you know in fact all that is knowable of God? Understand that you can see it, not in nature, nor in providence, but in Jesus,

"God in the person of his Son,
Hath all his mightiest works outdone."

And will you not delight in him as such—as God's messenger to you?—If the very ministers of Christ are delightful to you, if their feet are beautiful upon the tops of the mountains when they bring glad tidings, how much more beautiful is he who comes from God to man, with messages of peace, declaring to us that God is reconciled to us, and accepteth us in the beloved. Sing his praises, O ye that have heard his voice. Glory ye in his holy name, O ye that have received his report, unto whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed, for as God's messenger to you, ye should delight in him.

But then, he is, as the messenger of the covenant, our messenger and mediator with the Father. You want to tell your Father something; Jesus stands to carry the message for you. George Herbert, in one of his poems, pictures Christ as using the hole in his side as a bag to carry our letters to glory—

"If ye have anything to send or write,
(I have no bag, but here is room)
Unto my father's hands and sight
(Believe me) it shall safely come.
That I shall mind, what you impart;
Look, you may put it very near my heart."

In the wounds of Christ we put our messages to God, and they go up to heaven with something more added to them. The blots and blurs of our petition Christ wipeth out, and then he savoureth our prayers, and incenseth them by putting with them the costly mixture of his own precious righteousness. See! In his golden censer yonder smokes the incense of your prayer, accepted for the incense sake, and for the sake of him who swings it to and fro as it smokes before the Most High. "The messenger of the covenant;" this name is peculiar to our Lord. Let not any man arrogate this office to himself, for it is Christ's alone. God never did hear a message from man that he accepted, except through this messenger. I cannot get to God directly, I must have a mediator. Well said

Luther, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God; for our God is a consuming fire." No sigh ever reached the Most High, except through Christ—I mean so as to move his heart to pour out his grace. Prayers, groans, tears, all these are like arrows without a bow, till Christ comes and fits them to the string, and shoots them home for you and me. All our prayers are like a victim, with the wood and altar; Christ must bring the fire, and then the sacrifice smokes to heaven. He is the messenger. Oh Christian, do you not rejoice in him then as the messenger of the covenant? He is doing thy errands before the throne to-night, pleading for me, pleading for you. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." You came to this house to-night, you offered prayer, Christ is offering it now, as an offering most divinely sweet. As you are sitting here, you are breathing a vow, or a desire to heaven. Christ presents it, for he stands at the golden altar, having a censer full of the prayer and vows of saints. Give him an errand now. Try him at this moment, entreat him to plead on your behalf. Thus view him; thus exercise your faith upon him as the plenipotentiary from God to man, as the revealer of God to man, and as spokesman from man to God.

"Look up, my soul, with cheerful eye,
See where the great Redeemer stands,—
The glorious Advocate on high,
With precious incense in his hands!
He sweetens every humble groan,
He recommends each broken prayer;
Recline thy hope on him alone,
Whose power and love forbid despair."

II. But briefly on the second point. WE DELIGHT IN THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST HAS CARRIED OUT THIS OFFICE AS MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

And here let us dwell on that part of the office which relates to the revelation of God to man. Oh, what a full messenger has he been! He has not dropped half the message; he has not told us a part of God, but all that his heavenly Father bade him declare, he has revealed unto us as we could bear it; and he has given us this day the Holy Spirit who lead us

into all truth, who shall take of the things of Christ which the Father gave him, and reveal them unto us. What a full messenger, and how faithful! Surely the Master could say, "I have kept back nothing that is profitable for you." With greater emphasis than ever Paul could say it, he might have declared, "I am clear from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." We poor messengers mar the Master's message in the telling of it, but "Never man spake like this man." So full and faithful is he who speaketh with Jehovah's bidding to his chosen people, that he can say, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Then, how willingly he does it! "I delight to do thy will, O God." How sweet it seemed to him to show God out to us! Even his tears, though bitterly they flowed, were cheerfully bestowed; and his very death, though it was an awful baptism, yet was one for which he longed. How was he straitened until it was accomplished! I hate a man to be a messenger who goes unwillingly, and who mumbles out the message as if he had no interest in it; but oh! our sweet Lord Jesus tells God's message to us as though he were more interested in it than we are; tells it so lovingly, so affectionately, so tenderly, with all his heart, turning his soul out that we may see it, writing his very nature out in streams of blood, that we might see in crimson lines what otherwise we might not have been able to perceive. Oh, how well—better than ministers, better than prophets, better than apostles, better than angels. Christ hath performed the office of messenger from God. Solomon's proverb is all outdone in our Redeemer's case. "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters."

Beloved, let us delight equally as much in the way in which he has performed our message from ourselves to God. Ah, I have been to my advocate a thousand times, but I never found him a weary messenger. You have a servant, and you give him many things to do; but towards nightfall it may be that you give him one thing too many, and the poor man's weary feet and languid looks chide you when you give him the errand. But I have been to my Master, and so have you, in the dead of night, and I never found him asleep. I have been to him in the heat of

summer, but I never found him point to his bloody sweat, and say he could not go. I have been to him a thousand times, and yet I have never, never heard him say, "I have served thee enough, I will not be thy messenger again." But cheerfully, willingly hath he taken our request to God, again, and again, and again, and presented it there. And how full of sweet powers of memory and generous recollections he has been! We have often failed to tell him the message aright, and sometimes there was a part of it that we could not tell him—groanings that could not be uttered—but he read the message, and then told it perfectly out in the other place, within the veil, never forgetting one desire nor one faint wish; sometimes erasing one that was evil and putting in another that was right, but he hath never forgotten us. The blessed Master hath a thousand souls to plead for; nay, what if I say millions! but never hath he forgotten one. The meanest lamb in his flock he has tended; the poorest subject in his dominions has been the object of his advocacy. And then, brethren, with what passionate love hath he pleaded for us in heaven! Oh, you cannot conceive him, for he is high above us; but if we could see him to-night, standing before the throne, we should say, "I never thought I had such an advocate as this;"—not with sighs and tears, for they are over now, but with authority he pleads, points to his wounded hands and to his side, and urges the case of his people as though it were his own case, and so indeed, it is, for he may well say—

"I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,
For thou art most near me—my flesh and my bones."

Never such an advocate as this. Fathers might plead for sons, and a wife might throw herself on the ground to plead with a judge for her husband, but never such a pleader as this. Thou messenger of the covenant, none can plead as thou dost.

And then, dear friends, I think we ought to delight in him, when we think how unflinchingly he perseveres in his intercession, though we are continually forgetful and ungrateful for his kindness. I am sure if we had a friend's cause to plead, and he were as unworthy and forgetful as we are, we should tell him to suit himself, and find some other advocate. But he, for Zion's sake, doth not hold his peace, for Jerusalem's sake he doth

not rest. Going to and fro from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, he speaketh messages of love from God to our souls, bearing messages of pleading and of intercession from our souls to God. Take thou, beloved, a sweet delight in Jesus, for he doth his errand wed. He is a choice messenger, one among a thousand, yea the chief among ten thousand.

III. But time flies, and therefore we hasten onward to carry out our third proposal. **HOW ARE WE TO SHOW THAT WE DO REALLY DELIGHT IN CHRIST?** Well, there is one way of doing it, and that is by again employing him to-night. Thou hast been upon my errands so many times, my sweet Lord, that thou shalt even go again. I ask thee, brother Christian, to let me speak to thee a moment. I know thou hast some very heavy matter on thy mind to-night, some very heavy trial awaiteth thee to-morrow, and thou hast been troubled about it all the week. Dost thou delight in the messenger of the covenant? Ah, then send thy Jesus with it as a message to the throne to-night. Say thou unto Jesus, "I pray thee tell the Father that one of his adopted who can say, 'Abba,' is in trouble deep and sore. Send thou from heaven and deliver me, and pluck me out of the deep waters." Thou wilt show thy delight in him by trusting him in thy great matters. Oh, but you mean to do it yourself; you have all your wits about you and mean to get through it yourself do you? You shall flounder in the mire. But give the matter up to Him and let him take it to thy God and see whether prayer does not more often prevail in trial than all the energies and wits of man. And sister over yonder, thou hast a secret, one thou wouldst not tell to me, no, nor to thy dearest friend, but it rankles and it makes thy heart bleed in secret till sometimes thou art weary of thy life. Dost thou love the messenger of the covenant? Whisper into his ear what thou canst tell to none beside, and ask him to speak for thee to the king, to the captain of the host. Say unto him, "Jesus, lover of my soul, I'll trust thee with this most secret grief That which no creature can intermeddle with, thou shalt know; behold I bare the wound before thy tender eye; go tell the Father that a child of his is weeping in secret, walking in darkness and seeing no light. "Thou wilt show thy delight in him by trusting him now. Minister, send a messenger by him to-night for thy flock! Sunday school teacher, give him a missive from thy heart for thy class! Mother, the messenger waits for thee, ask him to plead for thy sons and daughters! Father, the messenger is ready to bear thy wish to

heaven! Tell him thou wouldst have no greater joy than this, to see thy children walk in the truth! Jesus, say thou to thy Father that my prayer to-night is that I would have this congregation saved. Oh speak thou; bear the ponderous message; ask that not one within these walls may perish. Lift up thy hands, and plead for every man, and woman, and child, beneath this tabernacle's dome to-night, and ask that every one may be a partaker of the grace that saves. I know that thou wilt prevail if thou wilt ask, for if thou shouldst ask anything of thy Father he will do it for thee. Thou hast but to will it and 'tis done. Behold, by faith I would lay hold upon the skirt of thy garment thou great High Priest, the sweetly sounding bells of thy ephod I hear to-night; upon thy glittering breastplate the eyes of my faith are fixed. Take that request, and plead it solemnly before the awful throne of heaven, and let the answer come to all this multitude—an answer of grace and peace! Thus, my beloved, we must show our delight in him—by bidding him plead for us.

Leaving for a moment the thought of messenger, I want to add some other things, not quite, perhaps, in keeping with our text, but quite in harmony with our delight in Jesus. You are coming round the table, brothers and sisters, and you delight in Christ. Shall I tell you how it is that we show that we delight in him?

One way is by waiting for him. There is the wife at evening. It is past the proper hour for her husband to return. She goes to the window and looks out into the cold dark night, and then she goes back to the chair, and to the little one, and takes her needle and whiles away the time, but soon she is up again looking out of the window once more, and listening to every foot-fall in the street, or looking out from the open door. Why is not her spouse at home? How is it that he is away? She sits down again, she tries to ease her mind with household business, but every ticking of the clock, and every striking of the hour suggests to her, "Why is he so long in coming?" See she is again drawing back the curtains and looking out into the black night for the hundredth time, longing for her husband, and why? because she takes delight in him, and wants to see his face. So when Christians look out into the dark world and say, "When will he come?" and when they go to their labor, and say, "Why are his chariot-wheels so long in coming?" and when they can cry with John, "Come quickly, even

so, come quickly, Lord Jesus," and are waiting for and hastening unto the coming of the Son of man, then they prove that they have intense delight in him. Do you show this, Christian? Are you waiting for him? Are you getting ready for the time when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God?

"Come, my beloved, haste away,
Cut short the hours of thy delay:
Fly like a youthful hart or roe,
Over the hills where spices grow."

We prove our delight in him in another way, by working for him. There is a woman there; she is working hard at her embroidery needle; she is making a little coat; it is a linen ephod. I wonder why that woman smiles so, while she works with her needle? There, she must put it away, for there is other work to do. I wonder why next day she goes to the drawer, so pleased to get that work out and continue it? I will tell you her name; her name is Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, and she is making a little coat for her son Samuel, whom she has left with Eli at the Tabernacle; now you perceive wherefore is she so pleased in making this ephod? Because she delighteth in Samuel. So I see the Sunday school teacher pleased to meet his children; I see the minister go to the pulpit with beaming eye, and I see the missionary leaving house and home, kindred and cherished associations, joyfully giving up everything for Christ, and I ask why? Because he delights in Christ, and therefore he can work for him. Is it so with you, friends, are you working for Christ? Yes, methinks you are, or else I fear me you are not delighting in him.

And then another thing. I have seen the boy at school—I knew such a boy myself—and one day that child was at play, and merry was he at his games and well intent thereat, but some lad ran across the ground, and said, "Your father's come to see you," and he laid aside his playthings and his games, and ran at once into his father's arms because he delighted in his parent. And I have seen the Christian when he is delighting in his God, when lecture or prayer-meeting night came, say, "Well, I will gladly lose a little of my business, that I may run into my Father's arms in the

hour of worship." There has been a saint to be visited, or a sinner to be warned, and I have seen the lovers of Jesus leave their nets that they may follow Christ, and forsake the world, that they might serve him. Beloved, if he were to come tonight and bid us choose whether we would be in heaven or here, I think we would not long delay, but say to him, "Thou leavest me no choice." To be with thee is so much better than aught beside, that I embrace thee now. Oh take me up to thee!

Further, we may show our delight in Christ by searching after him when we lose his presence. There is the spouse in the Canticles; she is going about in the city in the dark night—"Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" The watchmen meet her and pluck away her veil rudely, and they smite her. Why is not that delicate woman at home at rest? See, she wanders on, cold and weary, with tears rolling down her cheeks, and hanging like pearls from her eyes. Wherefore is this woman weeping and searching thus? The answer is—"Tell me O thou whom my soul lovest, where thou feedest?" She hath such a delight in him, that she will search a thousand nights; yea, a believing soul would search hell through to find Christ, if he were to be found nowhere else; and I know what Rutherford said was no great exaggeration, when he said, "If there were fifty hells between my soul and Christ, and he bade me wade through them and he would come and meet me, I fain would dash through them all to reach his fond embrace." Jesu, our thirst for thee is insatiable; we must have thee, and thus we prove our delight in thee.

Lastly, we may prove our delight in Christ by being very happy ourselves and trying to make others partakers of our joy. Do not go to the Lord's table to-night if you can help it burdened with your groans and moans. If you cannot come without bringing them, then come; come anyhow. But I would have you to-night, if you could, delight yourselves in the Lord. You are very poor.—Ah! but you are very rich in him. You are sick, you say.—Ay! but remember what he suffered for you. Oh! but you are a sinner. Ay! but remember his precious blood! Fix your eye on him to-night and on nothing else, and oh be glad! Come to his table with delight. I often say I know the people that come here—our regular people that come here—because they have a way of walking, and a look on the Sabbath that is different from most people that go to other places of worship. Other folks

are so solemn, as if they were going to an execution. They look so grave, as if it were an awful work to serve God, as bad as going to prison, to attend a service, and as disagreeable as the pillory to stand up and praise the Lord. But I notice that you come here with joy, looking upon the Sabbath as a joyous day, not a time to pull the blinds down and shut out the light, but a day to feast yourselves in God. Now I think ordinance days are especially times of rejoicing. You and I have been all the week up to our elbows in work. By-and-bye we shall have to go back to that dingy workroom among those persecuting worldlings. Never mind; Lord make this as a sanctuary to us to-night. Shut us in and shut the world out, and let us rejoice ourselves in our God.

"As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is dying a Christ to me;
And while he makes my soul his guest,
Thy bosom, Lord, shall be my rest.
No beams of cedar, or of fir,
Can with thy courts on earth compare;
And here we wait, until thy love
Raise us to nobler seats above."

Beloved brethren, if you have this delight tell it to others. Do not be tongue-tied and dumb any of you. Speak out what God has done for you. Tell! tell!—

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior you have found."

If you should have any enjoyment to-night let others partake of the honey which you have discovered. God help you thus to live to his praise.

I am about to retire a few moments, while our friends get to their seats for the communion. Before I retire, I have a message to tell from the Messenger of the Covenant. He is willing to take a message from any poor, troubled, sin-burdened, conscience-stricken sinner in this Tabernacle. Has any one of you a message for him? The Lord Jesus Christ is willing to receive and stamp with his own blood-marked hand any

earnest, heart-written message you are willing to send to God to-night. Is there any one who has this to send—"God be merciful to me a sinner?" What! Not one of you? Is there not a heart here that would say, "Lord save or I perish?" Surely there are some! Breathe thy desire out now silently; Jesus hears it; trust him to carry it to God. Believe that his blood can cleanse thee. Trust him, trust his merits to clothe thee. Trust especially his intercession to prevail for thee as the messenger of the covenant. Do it soul. "Oh but," you say, "my hand is black." Never mind, he will touch it and make it white. "Oh but I cannot pray." He can pray for you. "Oh but I cannot plead." He can plead in your stead. Tell him your wants. As Rowland Hill once did, so would I do with you. It is said that Rowland once had to put up in a village where there was no other house to put up at but a tavern; and having a pair of horses to bait, and going into the best room of the inn, he was considered to be a valuable guest for the night. So the host came in, and he said, "Glad to see you Mr. Hill." "I am going," was the reply, "to stay with you tonight; will you let me have family prayer to-night in this house?" "I never had such a thing as family prayer here," said the landlord, "and I don't want to have it now." "Very well, then just fetch my horses out; I can't stop in a house where they won't pray to God. Take the horses out." Now being too good a guest to lose, the man thinks better of it, and promises to have family prayer. "Ah but," said Hill, "I'm not in the habit of conducting prayer in other people's houses. You must conduct it yourself." The man said he could not pray. "But you must," said Rowland Hill. "Oh but I never did pray." "Then my dear man you will begin to-night," was the answer. So when the time came, and the family were on their knees, "Now," said Rowland Hill, "every man prays in his own house; you must offer prayer to-night." "I can't pray, I can't," said the landlord. "What, man, you have had all these mercies to-day, and are you so ungrateful that you cannot thank God for them? Besides, what a wicked sinner you have been. Can't you tell God what a sinner you've been and ask for pardon?" The man began to cry, "I can't pray, Mr. Hill, I can't, indeed I can't." "Then tell the Lord, man, you can't; tell him you can't pray," said Mr. Hill, "and ask him to help you." Down went the poor landlord on his knees. "O Lord I can't pray; I wish I could," "Ah! you have begun to pray," said Rowland Hill, "you have begun to pray, and you will never leave off. As soon as God has once set you to pray, faint though it be, you will never leave off. Now I'll pray for you."

And so he did, and it was not long before the Lord was pleased, through that strange instrumentality, to break the landlord's hard heart and to bring him to Christ. Now I say, if any of you can't pray, tell the Lord you can't. Ask him to help you to pray; ask him to show you your need to be saved; and if you can't pray, ask him to give you everything that you need. Christ will make as well as take the message. He will put his own blood upon your prayer; and the Father will send down the Holy Ghost to you to give you more faith and more trust in Christ.

May the Lord send you away with his blessing to-night. Amen.

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Pricked in Their Heart

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—Acts 2:36-37.

This was the first public preaching of the gospel after our Lord was taken up into glory. It was thus a very memorable sermon, a kind of first-fruits of the great harvest of gospel testimony. It is very encouraging to those who are engaged in preaching that the first sermon should have been so successful. Three thousand made up a grand take of fish at that first cast of the net. We are serving a great and growing cause in the way chosen of God, and we hope in the future to see still larger results produced by that same undying and unchanging power which helped Peter to preach such a heart-piercing sermon.

Peter's discourse was not distinguished by any special rhetorical display: he used not the words of man's wisdom or eloquence. It was not an oration, but it was a heart-moving argument, entreaty, and exhortation. He gave his hearers a simple, well-reasoned, Scriptural discourse, sustained by the facts of experience; and every passage of it pointed to the

Lord Jesus. It was in these respects a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its contents. His plea was personally addressed to the people who stood before him, and it had a practical and pressing relation to them and to their conduct. It was aimed, not at the head, but at the heart. Every word of it was directed to the conscience and the affections, It was plain, practical, personal, and persuasive; and in this it was a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its aim and style. Yet Peter could not have spoken otherwise under the impression of the divine Spirit: his speech was as the oracles of God, a true product of a divine inspiration. Under the circumstances, any other kind of address would have been sadly out of place. A flashy, dazzling oration would have been a piece of horrible irreverence to the Holy Ghost; and Peter would have been guilty of the blood of souls if he had attempted it. In sober earnestness he kept to the plain facts of the case, setting them in the light of God's Word; and then with all his might he pressed home the truth upon those for whose salvation he was labouring. May it ever be the preacher's one desire to win men to repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! May no minister wish to be admired, but may he long that his Lord and Master may be sought after! May none bewilder their people with the clouds of theoretic philosophy, but refresh them with the rain of revealed truth? Oh, that we could so preach that our hearers should be at once pricked in their hearts, and so be led at once to believe in our Lord Jesus, and immediately to come forward and confess their faith in his name!

We must not forget, however, to trace the special success of the sermon on the day of Pentecost to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, in which Peter had shared. This it is which is the making of the preacher. Immersed into the Holy Spirit, the preacher will think rightly, and speak wisely; his word will be with power to those who hear. We must not forget, also, that there had been a long season of earnest, united, believing prayer on the part of the whole church. Peter was not alone: he was the voice of a praying company, and the believers had been with one accord in one place crying for a blessing; and thus not only was the Spirit resting upon the preacher, but on all who were with him. What a difference this makes to a preacher of the gospel, when all his comrades are as much anointed of the Spirit as himself! His power is enhanced a hundredfold. We shall seldom see the very greatest wonders wrought

when the preacher stands by himself; but when Peter is described as standing up "with the eleven," then is there a twelve-man ministry concentrated in one; and when the inner circle is further sustained by a company of men and women who have entered into the same truth, and are of one heart and one soul, then is the power increased beyond measure. A lonely ministry may sometimes effect great things, as Jonah did in Nineveh; but if we look for the greatest and most desirable result of all, it must come from one who is not alone, but is the mouthpiece of many. Peter had the one hundred and twenty registered brethren for a loving body-guard, and this tended to make him strong for his Lord. How greatly I value the loving co-operation of the friends around me! I have no word, to express my gratitude to God for the army of true men and women who surround me with their love, and support me with their faith. I pray you, never cease to sustain me by your prayers, your sympathy, and your co-operation, until some other preacher shall take my place when increasing years shall warn me to stand aside.

Yet much responsibility must rest with the preacher himself; and there was much about Peter's own self that is well worthy of imitation. The sermon was born of the occasion, and it used the event of the hour as God intended it to be used. It was earnest without a trace of passion, and prudent without a suspicion of fear. The preacher himself was self-collected, calm, courteous, and gentle. He aired no theories, but went on firm ground, stepping from fact to fact, from Scripture to Scripture, from plain truth to plain truth. He was patient at the beginning, argumentative all along, and conclusive at the end. He fought his way through the doubts and prejudices of his hearers; and when he came to the end, he stated the inevitable conclusion with clearness and certainty. All along he spake very boldly, without mincing the truth—Ye with wicked hands have crucified and slain him whom God has highly exalted. He boldly accused them of the murder of the Lord of glory, doing his duty in the sight of God, and for the good of their souls, with great firmness and fearlessness. Yet there is great tenderness in his discourse. Impulsive and hot-headed Peter, who, a little while before, had drawn his sword to fight for his Lord, does not, in this instance, use a harsh word; but speaks with great gentleness and meekness of spirit, using words and terms all through the address which indicate a desire to conciliate, and then to convince.

Though he was as faithful as an Elijah, yet he used terms so courteous and kindly that, if men took offence, it would not be because of any offensiveness of tone on the speaker's part. Peter was gentle in his manner, but forceful in his matter. This art he had learned from his Lord; and we shall never have master-preachers among us till we see men who have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. Oh, that we could become partakers of our Lord's Spirit, and echoes of his tone! Then may we hope to attain to Pentecostal results, when we have preachers like Peter, surrounded by a band of earnest witnesses, and all baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

When we follow the run of Peter's argument, we do not wonder that his hearers were pricked in their hearts. We ascribe that deep compunction to the Spirit of God; and yet it was a very reasonable thing that it should be so. When it was clearly shown to them that they had really crucified the Messiah, the great hope of their nation, it was not wonderful that they should be smitten with horror. Looking as they were for Israel's King, and finding that he had been among them, and they had despitefully used him, and crucified him, they might well be smitten at the heart. Though for the result of our ministry we depend wholly upon the Spirit of God, yet we must adapt our discourse to the end we aim at; or, say rather, we must leave ourselves in the Spirit's hand as to the sermon itself as well as in reference to the result of the sermon. The Holy Ghost uses means which are adapted to the end designed. Because, beloved, I do desire beyond all things that many in this congregation may be pricked in the heart, I have taken this concluding part of Peter's discourse to be the text of my sermon this morning. Yet my trust is not in the Word itself, but in the quickening Spirit who works by it. May the Spirit of God use the rapier of his Word to pierce the hearts of my hearers!

First, note that Peter speaks to his hearers upon their evil conduct to the Lord Jesus; and, secondly, he declares to them the exaltation that God has bestowed upon him. When we have dwelt on these two things, we will notice, in the third place, the result of knowing this grand fact—"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

I. First, then, Peter dwelt tenderly, but very plainly, upon THEIR EVIL CONDUCT TOWARDS THE LORD JESUS. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." As a nation, Israel had rejected him whom God had sent. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had gone further, and had consented unto his death; nay, had even clamoured for it, crying, "Crucify him, crucify him." Solemnly had the Jews exclaimed, "His blood be on us, and on our children." None of them had protested against the murder of the innocent One; but many of them had been eager to make an end of him. This Peter, in plain words, charged upon them, and they could not deny it; nor did they pretend to do so. It is well when a sense of guilt compels a man to stand silent under the rebuke of God. We then have hope of him that he will seek for pardon.

Men and brethren, we are not in Jerusalem, and the death of our Lord happened more than eighteen hundred years ago; therefore we need not dwell upon the sin of those long since dead. It will be more profitable for us practically to consider how far we have been guilty of similar sins against the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look at home. Let each one consider his own case. I may be addressing some to-day who have blasphemed the name of the Lord Jesus. I do not suppose that you have been guilty of the vulgar language of blasphemy, which is coarse and revolting, as well as profane; but there are politer methods of committing the self-same crime. Some, with their elaborate criticisms of Christianity, wound it far more seriously than atheists with their profanities. In these days, wiseacres, with their philosophy, derogate from the glory of our Lord's nature, and, with their novel doctrines, undermine his gospel. Denying the atonement, or teaching it as something other than a substitutionary sacrifice, they try to make away with that which is the very heart and soul of the Redeemer's work. Men nowadays drink in opinions which lessen the guilt of sin, and, of course, lower the value of the atoning blood. The cross is still a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. Men do not now accept the words of the Bible as authoritative, nor the teaching of the apostles as final; they set themselves up to be teachers of the great Teacher, reformers of the divine gospel. They do not accept the teaching of the Lord Jesus one half so much as they criticize it. If any here present have been thus guilty, may the Holy Spirit convince them of their sin! Since the Lord God hath made this atoning Jesus both Lord and Christ, and set him

on his right hand, any teaching which does despite to him, however learned, however advanced, however cultured it may seem to be, is a grievous sin against the Lord God himself. By such conduct we are, as far as in us lies, again putting the Lord Jesus to death; we are attempting to make away with that which is the very life and glory of Christ. O my hearer, if you have denied his Deity, rejected his atoning blood, ridiculed his imputed righteousness, or scoffed at salvation by faith in him, may you be pricked in the heart as you see that God hath made that same Jesus to be Lord of all!

Much more common, however, is another sin against our Lord Jesus—namely, neglecting him, ignoring his claims, and postponing the day of faith in him. I trust that none here are willing to die unconverted, or would even dare to think of passing away without being washed in the precious blood; yet, my hearers, you have lived to manhood; to ripe years; perhaps even to old age, without yielding your hearts to the Lord Jesus, and accepting him as your Saviour. To say the least of it, this is a very sad piece of neglect. To ignore a man altogether is, in a certain sense, as far as you are concerned, to kill that man.

If you put him out of your reckoning, if you treat him as if he were nothing, if your estimate of life is made as if he were a cipher, you have put your Lord out of existence in reference to yourself. You treat him with empty compliment by observing his day, and hearing his Word; but you have no real regard for him. Is not this a cruel fault? From morning till night your Lord is not in all your thoughts; he never affects your dealings with your fellow-men; you never endeavour to catch his spirit of love, and considerateness, and meekness; and thus, as a Leader and Exemplar, he is dead to you. You have never confessed your sin before him, nor sought for pardon at his hands, nor have you looked to see whether he hath borne your sins in his own body on the tree. O soul, this is base neglect—ungrateful contempt! God thinks so much of his Son that he cannot set him too high; he has placed him at his own right hand, and yet you will not spare him a thought! The great God thinks heaven and earth too little for him, and magnifies him exceedingly above all, as King of kings, and Lord of lords; and yet you treat him as if he were of no account, and might be safely made to wait your time and leisure. Is this right? Will you

treat your Saviour thus? May this prick you in the heart, and may you cease from this base ingratitude!

There are others who have done more than this, for they have rejected Christ. I now allude to those of you who have not been able to resist the appeals made to you by the Lord's ministers. You have felt a good deal—felt more than you would like to confess. You have been so inclined to seek the Saviour that you have almost done so; sin has flashed in your face like the flames of Tophet, and in alarm you have resolved to seek salvation; you have gone home to bend the knee in prayer, you have read the Scriptures to learn the way of eternal life; but, alas! an evil companion crossed your path, and the question came, "Shall it be this man or Christ?" You chose the man: I had almost said, you chose Barabbas, and rejected Jesus. A sinful pleasure came before you when you had begun to be serious, and the question arose, "Shall I give up this pleasure, or shall I renounce all hope of Christ?" You snatched at the pleasure, and you let your Saviour go. Do you not remember when you did violence to your conscience? There was an effort about it, as you stifled conviction. You had to put forth a decided act of the will to quench the Spirit of God, and to escape from the strivings of your awakened conscience. I know not to whom this may apply; but I am certain, as certain as Peter was when he spoke to the crucifiers of Christ, that I am speaking to some who have been rejecters of the Lord Jesus Christ, not once nor twice. Some of you have distinctly rejected him almost every Sabbath-day; but especially when the Word of the Lord has been with extraordinary power, and you have felt it shake you, as a lion shakes his prey. Thank God, you are not past feeling yet! I pray you, do not presume upon the continuance of your tenderness. You will not always feel as you have felt: the day may come when even the thunders of God may not be heard by your deafened ear, and the love of Christ will not affect the heart which you have made callous by willful obstinacy. Woe to the man when his heart is turned to stone! When flesh turns to stone, it is a conversion unto eternal death; just as the turning of stone to flesh is conversion to eternal life. God have mercy upon you, and prick you in the heart this morning, while you yet have tenderness enough to feel that you have rejected him whom you ought to embrace with all your heart!

I must come a little closer to certain of you, who have forsaken the Lord Jesus Christ. There are a few unhappy persons here this morning, over whom I greatly grieve, because of their wanderings; and yet I am glad that they have not quite forsaken the courts of the Lord's house. These once professed to be disciples of Christ; but they have gone back, and walk no more with him. They were once numbered with us, and went in and out of our solemn assemblies for prayer and breaking of bread; but now we know them not. They were not backward to confess themselves Christians, But now they deny their Lord. In former days they were zealous, and apparently devout; they were quick in the service of God, and sound in their creed. But there came a day—I need not describe the circumstances, for they differ in different cases—when two roads were before them, and they must go either to the right or to the left; and they took the road by which they turned their back upon Christ, and upon the vitality of godliness. They went off into sin, and apostatized from the faith. We fear "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." They have gone aside unto crooked ways, and we fear that the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. O my backsliding hearer, I hope you are not a Judas; my trust is that you may be a Peter! You have denied your Master, but I hope you will yet weep bitterly, and be restored to your Lord's service. For your good I must bring home your wanderings to you; may the Lord prick you in the heart about them! Why have you left your Lord? Wherein has he wearied you? There may be present persons from the country, or friends from America, who were once glad to be numbered with the children of God, but now they care nothing for God, or his people. Alas! they take part with the adversaries of Christ, and the despisers of his precious blood! Friend, you are here this morning that I may bring your sin to remembrance, and ask you why you have done this thing! Were you a hypocrite? If not, why have you turned aside? God has exalted to his throne the Saviour, on whom you have turned your back; have you not acted madly in what you have done? The Most High God is on the side of Jesus, and you are avowedly on the other side; is this right, or wise? It is painful to me to speak of these things. I hope it is far more painful for you to hear of them. I want you to feel as David did, when his heart smote him. What have you been doing? Has the Lord Jesus deserved this at your hands? Turn, I pray you, from your evil way, and

turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart.

II. After Peter had dwelt upon the sin of his hearers in treating the Lord so ill, he declared to them THE EXALTATION BESTOWED ON HIM BY GOD. The great God loved, and honoured, and exalted that same Jesus whom they had crucified. O my hearers, whatever you may think of the Lord Jesus, God thinks everything of him! To you he may be dead and buried, but God hath raised him from the dead. To God he is the ever-living, the ever well-beloved Christ. You cannot destroy the Lord Jesus, or his cause. If you could do all that the most malicious heart could suggest, you could not really defeat him. Men wreaked their vengeance on him: once they put him to a felon's death, they laid him in the grave, and sealed the stone; but he rose again, for God was on his side. My hearer, whatever you do, you cannot shake the truth of the gospel, nor rob the Lord Jesus of a single beam of his glory. He lives and reigns, and he will live and reign, whatever becomes of you. You may refuse his salvation but he is still a Saviour, and a great one. His gospel chariot rolls on, and every stone which is placed to hinder it is crushed into the earth, and compelled to make a road for him. If you resist the Lord, you do it at your peril; but you do it in vain. You might as well hope to reverse the laws of nature, quench the sun, and snatch the moon from her orbit, as hope to overthrow the cause and kingdom of the Lord Jesus; for God is on his side, and his throne is established for ever. God hath raised his Son from the dead, and taken him up to sit at his right hand, and there he will remain while his enemies shall be made his footstool. By this you may see what evil you have done through rejecting Christ, and may know who he is whom you have neglected refused, and forsaken.

Let me remind you that, when we read of our Lord as being at the right hand of God, we perceive that he enjoys infinite felicity. At the right hand of God there are pleasures for evermore; and David said, as the representative of our Lord, "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." He who was the Man of sorrows now overflows with gladness. All his work and warfare done, he rests in boundless blessedness. His priestly work being finished, he sits down. No more does he feel the cross and nails, no more does he endure the mockery of cruel eyes and ribald lips. He is full of joy,

that joy which he bids his people share when he says, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." His portion is measureless, infinite, inconceivable delight. Can it be that you are opposed to him, and neglect him, while God lavishes upon him more than all the bliss of heaven, and makes him to be the fountain of unspeakable delight to all his redeemed ones? Grieve that you should grieve him whom God thus loads with blessedness.

Moreover, remember that at the right hand of God our Lord sits in infinite majesty. Jesus, whom you think little of, Jesus, from whom you turn aside, is to-day adored of angels, obeyed by seraphs, worshipped by just men made perfect. He is the highest in the highest heavens. Do you not hear the blast of heaven's trumpets, which proclaims him head over principalities and powers? Do you not hear the song which ascribes to him honour, and glory, and power, and dominion, and might? My faith anticipates the happy day when I shall stand a courtier in his unrivalled courts, and behold him, the Lamb upon the throne, reigning high over all, with every knee in heaven and in earth gladly bowing before him. Can it be that you have neglected him whom God hath exalted? Can it be that you have refused him, that you have done despite to him, that you have, as far as you could, put him to death whom Jehovah has made Lord of all?

Nor is this all: for the place at the right hand of God, to which he is now exalted, is the place of power. There sits the Mediator, the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, while his enemies are being subdued under him. Do not believe it, O proudest of doubters, that thou canst take away from Christ any measure of his power! He overrules all mortal things; he directs the movements of the stars; he rules the armies of heaven. He restrains the rage of his adversaries, and what he suffers to be let loose he turns to his glory. All power is given to him in heaven and earth; he reigns in the three realms of nature, providence, and grace. His kingdom ruleth over all, and of his dominion there shall be no end. O sirs, what do our hearts suggest but that we bow at his feet? that we worship him with loving reverence? that we yield to that supreme power which is used for purposes of love? Yet it is this Christ, this mighty Christ, who is set at nought by some of you, so that you run the risk of perishing because you have no heart for him and his great salvation.

Learn, next, that he is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, seated as our Judge. If we refuse him as a Saviour, we shall not be able to escape from him as Judge in the last great day. All the acts of men are being recorded, and in that day, when the great white throne shall be set in the heavens, all things shall be made manifest, and we must stand unveiled in his presence. You have often heard and sung of him whose face was more marred than that of any man, when he was here as a sacrifice for guilty men. If you refuse him, you will have to stand before his bar to answer for it. The most awful sight for the impenitent in the day of judgment will be the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not find that they cry, "Hide us from the tempest," nor "Hide us from the angels," nor "Hide us from their swords of fire," but, "Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Love, when once it turns to wrath, is terrible beyond compare. As oil when set on fire blazes with great force, so the meek and loving Jesus, when finally rejected, will exhibit a wrath more terrible than death.

"Ye sinners, seek his grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of his cross,
And find salvation there."

Perhaps through ignorance you have rebelled; repent, and take another course. You supposed that when you kicked against a sermon, you had only put down the minister's words; but in reality you resisted the Saviour's love. You thought that when you turned away from Christ and his people, it was only leaving a church, and having your name crossed out of a book. Ah, sirs! take heed, for I fear you have left the Lamb of God, and renounced your part in his Book of Life! At the last it may turn out to have been an awful thing to have been put forth from the Church of Christ on earth; for when we, as a church, do our Lord's bidding, that which we bind on earth is bound in heaven. In refusing the Lord's Word, you refuse him who speaks from heaven: you refuse not only his words, but himself, and he shall be your Judge—your Judge most just, most holy. Oh, how will you bear it? How will you bear to stand at the bar of the despised Saviour?

Peter also showed his hearers that the Lord was greatly exalted in heaven as the Head over all things to his church, for he had that day shed abroad the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes, he comes from Christ, and as the witness of his power. He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and he bears witness with both. Christ's power was marvellously proved when, after he had been but a little while in heaven, he was able to bestow such gifts upon men, and specially to send the tongues of fire, and the rushing mighty wind, which betoken the energy of the Holy Ghost. He is such a Lord that he can save or destroy. The Christ that died upon the cross hath all things committed into his hands. He can this morning send forth salvation to the ends of the earth, so that multitudes shall believe and live; for him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. Or, he can turn the key the other way, and shut the door against this untoward generation; for he openeth, and no man shutteth; and he shutteth, and no man openeth. In any case, be ye sure of this, ye Gentiles, even as Peter would have the house of Israel be sure of it, that "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

I notice that, at this time, few writers or preachers use the expression, "Our Lord Jesus Christ." We have lives of Christ, and lives of Jesus; but, brethren, he is THE LORD. Jesus is both Lord and Christ: we need to acknowledge his Deity, his dominion, and his divine anointing. He is "God over all, blessed for ever," and we can never praise him too much. A great and grievous error of the times is a want of reverence for our Lord and his sacrifice. To sit in judgment on his sacred teaching, is to spit in his face; to deny his miracles, is to strip him of his own clothes; to make him out to be a mere teacher of ethics, is to mock him with a purple robe; and to deny his atonement, in philosophical phraseology, is to crown him with thorns, and crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame. Be not guilty of this, my hearers, for God hath made this same Jesus "both Lord and Christ"; let us worship him as Lord, and trust him as Christ.

III. Now I come to my closing point, which is, THE RESULT OF KNOWING THIS ASSUREDLY. May I here pause to ask—do you know this assuredly? I hope all of you believe that God hath made Jesus Christ, the Mediator, in his complex person, as God-and-man, to be " both Lord

and Christ." He was Lord, as God, always; but as God-and-man, he is now Lord and Christ. Manhood and Godhead are in him united in one wondrous Person, and this Person is "both Lord and Christ." You believe it. But do you so believe it that it is a fact of the utmost importance to you? Will you assuredly believe it, that the man of Nazareth, who died on Calvary, is to-day both Lord and Christ? If you do now believe this, what are your feelings as you review your past misconduct towards him? Does not your past neglect prick you in the heart? If you do not so believe, it is of little use for me to describe what the result of such belief would be, for that result will not take place in you; but if you have so believed, and Jesus is to you Lord and Christ, you will look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn for him. As you recollect your negligence of him, your rejection of him, your backsliding from him, and all your ungrateful acts which show contempt of him, your heart will be ready to break, and you will be seized with a great sorrow, and a hearty repentance. The Lord work it in you, for his Son's sake!

Observe, that as the result of Peter's sermon, his hearers felt a mortal sting. "They were pricked in their heart." The truth had pierced their souls. When a man finds out that he has done a fearful wrong to one who loved him, he grows sick at heart, and views his own conduct with abhorrence. We all remember the story of Llewellyn and his faithful dog. The prince came back from the hunt, and missed his infant child, but saw marks of blood everywhere. Suspecting his dog Gelert of having killed the child he drove his vengeful sword into the faithful hound, which had been bravely defending his child against a huge wolf, which lay there, all torn and dead, "tremendous still in death." Yes, he had slain the faithful creature which had preserved his child. Poor Gelert's dying yell pierced the prince to the heart; and well it might. If such emotions fitly arise when we discover that we have, in error, been ungenerous and cruel to a dog, how ought we to feel towards the Lord Jesus, who laid down his life that we, who were his enemies, might live?

I recall an awfully tragic story of an evil couple, who kept an inn of base repute. A young man called one night to lodge. They noticed that he had gold in his purse, and they murdered him in the night. It was their own son, who had come back to gladden their old age, and wished to see

whether his parents would remember him. Oh, the bitterness of their lamentation when they found that through the lust of gold they had murdered their own son!

Take out of such amazing grief its better portion, and then add to it a spiritual conviction of the sin of evil—entreating the Son of God, the perfect One, the Lover of our souls, and you come near the meaning of being "pricked in the heart." Oh, to think that we should despise him who loved us, and gave himself for us, and should rebel against him that bought us with his own blood while we were his enemies! I would to God everyone here, that has not come to Christ, would feel a sting in his conscience now; and would mourn that he has done this exceeding evil thing against the ever-blessed Son of God, who became man, and died for love of guilty men.

When we read "they were pricked in their heart," we may see in it the meaning, that they felt a movement of love to him—a relenting of heart, a stirring of emotion towards him. They said to themselves, "Have we treated him thus? What can we do to show our horror of our own conduct?" They were not merely convinced of their fault so as to be grieved, but their desires and affections went out towards the offended One, and they cried, "What shall we do? In what way can we acknowledge our wrong? Is there any way of undoing this ill towards him whom we now love?" To this point I would have you all come. I would have you know the meaning of Newton's hymn:—

"I saw One hanging on a tree,
in agonies and blood,
Who fix'd his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.
Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seem'd to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.
My conscience felt and own'd the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And help'd to nail him there.

Alas! I knew not what I did;
But now my tears are vain;
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain."

Let us tearfully enquire how we can end our opposition, and prove ourselves to be his friends and humble servants.

As a consequence of Peter's sermon, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, these people exhibited obedient faith. They were roused to action, and they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They believed that the same Jesus whom they had crucified was now Lord of all, and they hastened to be obedient unto him. When Peter said, "Repent!" they did indeed repent. If repentance be grief, they grieved at their hearts. If repentance be a change of mind and life, they were indeed altered men. Then Peter said, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Take the open and decisive step: stand forth as believers in Jesus, and confess him by that outward and visible sign which he has ordained. Be buried with him in whom your sin is buried. You slew him in error; be buried with him in truth. They did it gladly, they repented of the sin; they were baptized into the sacred name. And then Peter could tell them—"You have remission of sins: the wrong you have done to your Lord is cancelled: the Lord hath put away your sin for ever. Remission of sins comes to you through Jesus, whom you slew, whom the Father has raised up. You shall not be summoned before the bar of God to account even for the hideous crime of murdering the Lord, for by his death you are forgiven. In proof of forgiveness you shall now be made partakers of the great gift which marks his ascending power. The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, even upon you his murderers, and you shall go forth, and be witnesses for him."

O my hearers, to what a place have I brought you now! If indeed the Holy Spirit has helped you to follow me in my discourse, see where we have climbed! However black your crime, however vile your character, if you have seen the wrong that you have done, if you have repented of having done it because you see that you have sinned against your loving Lord, and if you will now come to him repenting and believing, and will confess

him as he bids you confess him in baptism; then you have full remission, and you shall be partakers of the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit, and henceforth you shall be chosen witnesses for the Christ whom God hath raised from the dead. Beloved, you need no choice speech from me: pure gold needs no gilding, and as I have told you the most wonderful of all facts in heaven or in earth, I let it remain in all its simple grandeur.

May God write out this old, old story on your hearts! Oh, that he would issue a new edition of his gospel of love, printed on your hearts! Every man's conversion is a freshly-printed copy of the poem of salvation. May the Lord issue you hot from the press this morning, a living epistle to be known and read of all men; and specially to be read by your children at home, and your neighbours in the same street! The Lord grant that hearts may be pricked by this sermon, for his name's sake! Amen.

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Terrible Convictions and Gentle Drawings

"When I kept silence, my bones willed old through my roaring all the day long. For day, and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."—Psalm 32:3-4.

David here describes a very common experience amongst convinced sinners. He was subjected to extreme terrors and pangs of conscience. These terrors were continual; they scared him at night with visions, they terrified him all day with dark and gloomy forebodings. "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me." His pain was so extreme, that when he resorted to prayer he could scarcely utter an articulate word. There were groanings that could not be uttered within his spirit; and hence he calls his prayer roaring—a "roaring all the day long." Wherever he was, his spirit seemed to be always sighing, sending a full torrent of melancholy groans upwards towards God; a "roaring all the day long." So far did this groaning proceed, that at last his bodily frame began to show evidences of it. He grew old, and that not merely in the lines of the countenance and the falling in of the cheeks, but his very bones seemed as if they partook

of the suffering. He became like an old man before his time. We have heard of some who through severe trouble have had their hair blanched in a single night. But here was a man who did not show merely externally, but even internally, the heavy pressure of grief, on account of sin. His bones grew old, and the sap of his life, the animal spirits, were all dried up; his "moisture was turned into the drought of summer." So intimate is the connection between the body and the soul, that when the soul suffers extremely, the body must be called to endure its part of grief. Verily in this case it was but simple justice, for David had sinned with his body and with his soul too. By fornication he had defiled his members; he had looked out from his eyes with lustful desires, and had committed iniquity with his body, and now the frame which had become the instrument of unrighteousness, becomes a vehicle of punishment, and his body bears its share of misery,— "my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." We gather from what David says in this Psalm, and indeed in all these seven penitential Psalms that his convictions on account of his sin with Bathsheba, and his subsequent murder of Uriah, were of the deepest and most poignant character, and that the terrors he experienced were indescribable, filling his soul with horror and dismay.

Now, this morning, I propose to deal with this case, so common among those who are under conviction of sin. There are many, who, when the Lord is bringing them to himself, are alarmed by reason of the hardness of the stroke with which he smites them, and the sternness of the sentence which he pronounces against them. After having dealt very solemnly with that character, I shall then turn and spend a few moments in trying to comfort another class of persons, who, strange to say, are without comfort, because they do not have these terrors, and are unhappy because they have never experienced this unhappiness. Strange perversity of human nature, that when God sends the terrors we doubt, and when he withholds them we doubt none the less. May God the Spirit bless my discourse doubly to these two different conditions of men.

I. First, then, let me address myself with lovingkindness to those who are now **THE SUBJECTS OF GOD'S REBUKE AND THE TERRORS OF GOD'S LAW.**

To you would speak on this wise; first, detect the causes of your terror. In the second place tell you God's design in subjecting you thereto, and then point you to the great remedy.

1. As for the causes of your terror they are many, and perhaps in your case the cause may be so peculiar that the wit of man may not be able to discover it. Nevertheless, the remedy which I have to propound at the end, will most assuredly be adapted to your case, for it is a remedy which reaches all diseases, and is a panacea for all ills. You tell me you are sore troubled by reason of conviction, and that your convictions of sin are attended by the most terrible and gloomy thoughts, I am not at a loss to tell you why it is. I shall this morning borrow my divisions from quaint old Thomas Fuller, whose book happened to be thrown in my way this week by Providence, and as I cannot say better things than he said, I shall borrow much of his description of the causes of the terrors of conviction.

First, those wounds must be deep which are given by so strong a hand as that of God. Remember, sinner, it is God that is dealing with you; when you lay dead in your sins he looked on you, and now he has begun not only to look, but to smite; he is now wounding you with the design of afterwards making you whole; he is killing you that he may afterwards make you spiritually alive. You have now entered the lists with DO other than the Almighty God; do you wonder, then, that when he smites, his blows fell you to the ground? Are you astonished that when he wounds, his wounds are deep and hard to heal? Besides, remember it is an angry God that you have to deal with; one who has had patience with you in your sins these thirty, forty, or fifty years, and now he has come forth himself to compel you to throw down the weapons of your rebellion, and to take you captive by true justice, that he may afterwards set you free by his grace. Is it any marvel, then, that when an angry God—a God who has restrained his anger these many years—comes out in battle against you, you find it hard to resist him, and that his blows bruise you and break your bones, and make your spirit feel as if it must verily die, crushed beneath the mighty hand of a cruel one? Be not astonished at all your terrors; God on Sinai, when he came to give the law, was terrible; but God on Sinai, when he comes to bring the law into the conscience, and to strike it home, must be more terrible far. When God did but stretch out

his hand with the two tables of stone, Moses did exceedingly fear and quake; but when he throws those tables of stone upon you, and makes you feel the weight of that law which you have broken, it is but little marvel that your spirit is bruised and mangled, and dashed into a thousand shivers.

Again, it is no wonder that you are sore troubled when you remember the place where God has unrounded you. He has not wounded you in your hand, or in your head, or in your foot; he is striking at your conscience—the eye of your soul; he wounds you in your heart—in your inmost soul. Every wound that God gives to the convicted man is a wound in the very heart—in the very vitals; he cuts into the core of the liver, and makes his darts cut through the gall, and parches your inward parts with agony. It is not now a disease that has laid hold merely on your skin or flesh, but it is a something which makes the life-floods boil with hot anguish. He has now shot his arrows into your inmost spirit, thrust his fingers into your eyes and put out their light. Oh! ye need not wonder that your pains are fearful, when God thus smites you on the tenderest part of a conscience which he has made tender by his grace. He may well smart that has salt rubbed into hi' wounds. You have been lashed with the ten-thonged whip of the law till your heart is all bare and bleeding, and now God is scattering, as it were, the salt, and making all those wounds to tingle and smart. Oh! ye might wonder, if ye did not feel, when God is thus casting bitterness into the fountain of your life.

Besides these, there is a third cause for this your pain, namely, that Satan is now busy upon you. He sees that God is wounding you and he does not wish that those wounds shall heal; he therefore trusteth in his fangs, and teareth open the flesh, and trieth if he cannot pour his poison into that very flesh which God has been wounding with the sword. "Now," saith he, "that God is against him will I be against him too. God is driving him to sadness; I will drive him farther still, and urge him to despair. God has brought him to the precipice, to the edge of his self-righteousness, and bidden him look down and see the yawning gulf. Now," says Satan, "one push more, and over he will go." He has come forth, therefore, with all his strength, hoping that the hour of your conviction shall be also the hour of your condemnation. He will tempt you, perhaps, as he did Job, till you

any, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life." He will seek to bring you low, like Jeremiah, until you are ready to wish you had never been born, rather than that you should suffer like this. You can well understand, if a man had been wounded, that it were hard work for the most skillful surgeon to heal him if some vile wretch should tear away the liniments and rend open the wounds as fast as they began to close. Oh! pray against Satan! Cry aloud to your God to deliver you from this fiend, for he is the cause of much of your distress; and if you were rid of him, it may be that your wound would soon heal, and you would find peace. But, remember, the remedy that I shall have to propound to you is a remedy against devils. It is the fiend's confusion as well as sin's destruction. Let them come against you as they may. The remedy I shall have to propound can heal the wounds of Satan, and the tearings of his tangs, as well as those sorrows of soul which God has brought upon you.

You may discover a yet further reason why you are so sore wounded, when you consider the terrible nature of that weapon with which God has wounded you. He had not made a little gash with some slender instrument, but if I understand your case aright, he has brought against you the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Its Word condemns you; its threatenings strike you like barbed arrows. You turn to the law as it is here revealed, and it is altogether on a smoke against you. You turn to the promises, and even they wound you, because you feel you have no right to them. You look at the most precious passages, but they do not assuage your grief, but the rather increase it, because you cannot realize them and lay hold upon them for yourself. Now, this is God using his Word against you, and you know what a weapon that is,— "the sword of the Spirit, which is quick and powerful, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." They are cut deep that are wounded by the Word of God. If it were my words which had brought you into this fear, you might soon get rid of it; but these are God's words. Were it a father's curse, it might be hard to give you comfort; but it is God's curse that bath gone out against you—the curse of the God who made you. He himself bath told you that the sinner shall not stand in his sight, and that he hateth the workers of iniquity. He has himself brought home to your conscience some of those awful passages:—"God is angry with the wicked every day;"

"He will by no means clear the guilty;" "Our God is a consuming fire;" "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." With such weapons as these; with red-hot shot fired against you with all the power of the Spirit, it remains no longer a wonder that your soul should be sharply racked, and your very bones should wax old through your roaring all the day long.

Furthermore, there is another cause for this deep disease of conviction, namely, the foolishness of the patient. Physicians will tell you that they can heal one man vastly more quickly than another, even though the disease be precisely the same, and the same remedies be used; for there are some men who help the physician by the quietude of their spirits by the ease and resignation of their minds, their heart is at ease and this gives "health to the navel, and marrow to the bones." But other men are fretful, disturbed, vexed, anxious, questioning this and questioning that; and then the remedies themselves cease to have their proper effect. It is even so with you; you are a foolish patient; you will not do that which would cure you, but you do that which aggravates your woe; you know that if you would cast yourselves upon Christ Jesus you would have peace of conscience at once; but instead of that, you are meddling with doctrines too high for you, trying to pry into mysteries which the angels have not known, and so you turn your dizzy brain, and thus help to make your heart yet more singularly sad. You know that you are trying still to work out a righteousness of your own, and this is making your wounds stinking and corrupt. You know, too, that you are looking more to your faith than you are to the object of your faith; you are looking more to what you feel than to what Christ felt; you spend more time in looking at your convictions than you do at Christ's vicarious sacrifice upon the cross. You are a foolish patient; you are doing that which aggravates your complaint. Oh that you were but wiser, and these terrors and these pangs might the sooner be over; you would not tarry so long in the prison if you would but use the means of escape, instead of seeking to dash your head against its strong walls,—walls that will not move with all your ravings, but which will only break, and bruise, and wound you the more. You seek to file your fetters, and you rivet them; you seek to unbind them yourself, and you thrust them the deeper into your flesh; you grasp the hammer, and here is the fetter about your wrist; you think to snap it, but you send the

iron through the flesh, and make it bleed; you make yourself worse by all your attempts to make yourself better, so that much of your sorrowful conviction is due to your own absurdity, your own ignorance and folly.

And, once more, I must give you another reason. There is no wonder that you are under great and terrible pain when under conviction, for it is a disease in which nothing can ever help you but that one remedy. All the joys of nature will never give you relief. I have heard of some vain man who once wore the gown of a clergyman, who was "visited by a poor creature under distress of mind, in the days of Whitfield;" he said to the penitent, "You have been among the Methodists." "I know I have," said he. "Then don't go among those fellows; they have made you mad." "But what am I to do to get rid of the distress of mind I now feel?" "Attend the theater," said he; "go off to balls; take to gaming and the like; and in that way you will soon dissipate your woe." But as he that poureth vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a sad heart; it is taking away a man's garment to make him warm; it is heaping snow upon his head to dissolve the frostbite, sending him back to draff and dung that he may stay his hunger therewith, thrusting him into the kennel that he may get rid of the stench that offends his nostrils Nay, but if these be the true woundings of God, sinful pleasures will make you worse instead of better; and even the usual comforts of life will lose all power to console you. The words of the tenderest wife, the most loving husband, the mercies of Providence, the blessings of home,—all these will be of no avail to you to cure this disease. There is one remedy for it; but none of these will so much as touch it. Quaint old Fuller uses language to this effect, when Adam had sinned, he became suddenly plunged in misery; the birds sang as sweetly, the flowers bloomed as brightly, and the air was as balmy, and Eden quite as blissful; but Adam was in misery; he had unparadised paradise. God had not said a word against him, and yet he went and hid himself under the trees of the garden to find a shelter there. There was nothing in the whole garden that could give Adam a moment's delight, because he was under a sense of sin. And so will it be with you. If you could be put in paradise, you would not be the happier. Now that God has convinced you of sin, there is only one cure for you, and that one cure you must have; for you may ramble the world round and you will never find another. You may try your best with all the pleasures and mercies of this

life, but you would be in torment, even though you could be taken to heaven, unless this one remedy should appease your aching heart.

2. I have thus, I think, given you sufficient reasons for the great poignancy of your grief; but now, secondly, what are God's designs in thus plunging you deeply in the mire? He does not deal so with all his people; some he brings in a very gentle way to himself. Why, then, does he deal thus hardly with you? The answers to this question are these: there are some questions best unanswered; there are some dealings of God about which we have no right to ask a question. If he draws you to heaven, though it were through hell itself, you ought to be content. So long as you are but saved, however fearful the process, you ought not to murmur. But I may give you some reasons after all.

In the first place, it is because you were such a stony-hearted sinner,—so dead, so careless,—that nothing else ever would have awakened you but this-trumpet. It would have been of no use to bring out the gospel with its dulcet notes; it would have been of little service for David to play on his harp before you. You needed to be aroused, and therefore it is that God has hurled his thunderbolts at you one after another, and has been pleased to make heaven and earth shake before you that you might be made to tremble. You were so desperately set on mischief, so stolid, so indifferent, that if saved, God must save you in such a way, or else not at all.

And then again, the Lord knows that there is that in your heart which would take you back to your old sins, and so he is making them bitter to you; he is burning you, that you may be like the burnt child that dreads the fire; he is letting you see the disease in its full climax, that you may from henceforth avoid the company in which that disease was found; he has taught you the full evil of your heart, the full obnoxiousness of sin, in order that from this day forth you may become a more careful walker, and may the more zealously hate every false way.

Besides, it may possibly happen that he designs this out of love to your soul, to make you the more happy afterwards. He is filling your mouth with wormwood, and breaking your teeth with gravel-stone, that you may

have a richer appreciation of the luscious flavour of the will of pardon when he pours it into your heart. It is making you feed on ashes—the serpent's meat—that when you come to eat children's meat—the bread of heaven—your joy may be multiplied sevenfold. I am one of those poor souls who for five years led a life of misery, and was almost driven to distraction; but I can heartily say, that one day of pardoned sin was a sufficient recompense for the whole five years of conviction. I have to bless God for every terror that ever seared me by night, and for every foreboding that alarmed me by day. It has made me happier ever since; for now, if there be a trouble weighing upon my soul, I thank God it is not such a trouble as that which bowed me to the very earth, and made me creep like a very beast upon the ground by reason of heavy distress and affliction. I know I never can again suffer what I have suffered; I never can, except I be sent to hell, know more of agony than I have known; and now, that ease, that joy and peace in believing, that "no condemnation" which belongs to me as a child of God, is made doubly sweet and inexpressibly precious, by the recollection of my past days of sorrow and grief. Blessed be thou, O God, for ever, who by those black days, like a dreary wilt bath made these summer days all the fairer and the sweeter! The shore is never so welcome as when you mount it with the foot of a shipwrecked mariner just escaped from the sea; food never so sweet as when you sit at the table after days of hunger; water never so refreshing as when you arrive at the end of a parched desert, and have known what it is to thirst.

And yet one other reason let me give you, and I need not keep you longer on this point. Possibly, God is bringing you thus, my dear friends, because he means to make great use of you. We are all God's weapons against the enemy. All his saints are used as instruments in the Holy War; but there are some whom God uses in the thickest part of the battle. They are his swords whom he wields in his hand, and strikes innumerable blows with them. These he anneals again, and again, and again. He is annealing you. He is making you meet to be a mighty one in his Israel by-and-bye. Oh! how sweetly you will be able to talk to others like yourself, when you once get comfort; and oh! how much you will love him when he once puts away your sin! Will you not? Oh! I think I see you the first day after your sins are forgiven. Why you will be wanting to preach: I should

not wonder if you will be going out into the streets, or hurrying to your old companions, and saying to them, "My sins are washed away." Why there will tee nothing too hard for you. The Lord gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction. These are Highlanders that carry everything before them. They know the rivers of sin, they know the glens of grief, and now their sins are all washed away, they know the heights of self-consecration, and of pure devotion; they can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth them, the Christ who has forgiven them.

Do you not think I have just driven the nail home here? Do you not feel in your spirit, that if Jesus would forgive you, you would do everything for him? Oh! I know if I should give out that hymn—

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace."

you would say, "Ah, that I will; if ever he forgives such a wretch as I am, and takes such a poor worm as me to his bosom, nothing shall be too hard for me. I will give him all in this life, and I will give and eternity of praise in the life to come."

3. But now I am impatient to come to the word of comfort which I have for you upon the great remedy. Sinners' distressed on account of sin, and bowed with terror down, there is a way of salvation for thee, a way open and accessible,—accessible now. Thou mayest now have all thy griefs assuaged, and all thy sorrows may flee away. Hear thou then the remedy, and hear it as from the lip of God, and take care that thou availest thyself of it now, for the longer thou tarriest, the harder will it be to avail thyself of it. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Dost understand me? Trust Christ and you are saved; trust him now and all your sins are gone; there is not one left. Past, present, and to come, all gone. "Am I to feel nothing?" No, not as a preparation for Christ; trust Jesus and thou art saved. "Are there no good works required of me?" None, none; good works shall follow afterwards. The remedy is a simple one; not a compound mixture of thy things and Christ; it is just this—the blood of Jesus Christ. There is Jesus on his cross. His hands are bleeding; his heart is bursting; his limbs are tortured; the powers of his soul are full

of agony. Those sufferings were offered to God in the place of our sufferings, and "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Believe on him now. "But I may not," says one. Thou mayest, nay, not only thou mayest, but thou art condemned if thou dost not believe him now. "I cannot," saith one. Canst not believe thy Lord? Is he a liar? Canst thou not believe his power to save? The Son of God in agony, and yet no power to save!! "I cannot think he shed his blood for me," saith such an one. Thou art commanded to trust him. Thou shalt read thy title clear in him afterwards. Thy business now is simply with him, not with thine interest in him. That shall be known afterwards. Trust him now and thou art saved. Faith is not believing that Christ died for me. If Christ died for every man, then every Arminian, saved or unsaved, bath the true faith: for he believes Christ died for every man. We as Calvinists, do not believe this, but we believe faith consists in trusting Christ, and whosoever trusts Christ shall know as the effect of that trues, that Jesus died for him, and he is saved. Trust Jesus now; just as thou art, fall flat on thy face before him. Away with that last dirty rag of thine—that last good work; away with that last filthiness—that last good thought; thy good thought, and thy good works are rags and filthiness. Come just as thou art; naked, lost, ruined, helpless, poor. If thou art so bad that I cannot describe thee, and thou canst not describe thyself, yet come. Mercy's free, mercy's free. I am never afraid of preaching grace too free, or a Christ too willing to save. You do want a Mediator to come to God with, but you want none to come to Christ with. You do need some preparation if you are going to the Father; you want none if you are coming to the Son. Come as you are; and God himself must be untrue, his throne must have foundations apart from righteousness, Christ must be false, and this Bible a lie, before one soul that trusts Jesus can ever perish. There is the remedy, by the power of the Holy Spirit; avail thyself of it. Now God help thee and thou art fully saved.

II. I shall now want your patient attention for another five or ten minutes, while I take upon myself what was a double duty, because I was afraid w shout the last part of the sermon the first part might do hurt. In the last part of the sermon I have to deal with some WHO HAVE NEVER FELT THESE TERRORS AT ALL, AND WHO STRANGE TO SAY IT, WISH THEY HAD FELT THEM.

I suppose I may have conversed now with somewhere verging upon two thousand souls who have been brought to know the Lord under my instrumentality, and I have very often noticed that a considerable proportion of these, and of the best members of our Church too, were brought to know the Lord not by legal terrors, but by gentler means. Sitting one day last week, I saw some twenty-three, and I should think that there might be as many as twelve out of the twenty-three whose convictions of sin were not distinctly marked with the terrors of the law. An excellent young woman comes! before me—"What was the first thought that set you really seeking the Savior?" "Sir, it was Christ's lovely character that first made me long to be his disciple. I saw how kind, how good, how disinterested, how self-sacrificing he was, and that made me feel how different I was to what he was. I thought Oh! I am not like Jesus!" and that sent me up to my chamber, and I began to pray! I often have cases like this—I preach a terrible sermon upon the law, and I find sinners get comfort under it; I preach another sermon upon Election, and I find poor sinners get awakened under it. God blesses the Word in the very opposite manner to which I thought it would be blessed, and he brings very, very many, to know their state by nature by things which we should have thought would rather have comforted than alarmed them. "The first religious impression I ever had," said another, "that set me seeking the Savior, was this; a young companion of mine fell into sin, and I knew that I was likely to do the same if I was not kept by some one stronger than myself; I therefore sought the Lord, not on account of past sin at first, but because I was afraid of some great future sin. God visited me, and I then felt conviction of sin and was brought to Christ." Singularly enough too I have met with at least a score of persons who found Christ and then mourned their sins more afterwards than they did before. Their convictions have been more terrible after they have known their interest in Christ than they were at first. They have seen the evil after they have escaped from it; they had been-plucked out of the miry clay, and their feet set on a rock, and then afterwards they have seen more fully the depth of that horrible pit out of which they have been snatched, So that it is not true that all who are saved suffer these convictions and terrors;. There are a considerable number who are drawn by the cords of love and the bands of a man. There are some who, like

Lydia. have their hearts opened not by the crowbar of conviction, but by the pick-lock of divine grace. Sweetly drawn, almost silently enchanted by the loveliness of Jesus, they say, "Draw me, and I will run after thee."

And now you ask me the question—"Why has God brought me to himself in this gentle manner?" Again I say—there are some questions better unanswered than answered. God knows best the reason why he does not give you these terrors; leave that question with him. But I may tell you an anecdote. There was a man once who had never felt these terrors and he thought within himself—"I never can believe I am a Christian unless I do." so he prayed to God that he might feel them, and he did feel them, and what do you think is his testimony? He says, "Never, never do that, for the result was fearful in the extreme." If he had but known what he was asking for, he would not have asked for anything so foolish. I knew a Christian man once who prayed for trouble. He was afraid he was not a Christian, because he had no trouble; but when the trouble came, he soon discovered how foolish he was to be asking for a thing which God in mercy had kept back from him. O be not foolish enough to sigh for misery. Thank God that you go to heaven along the walls of salvation; bless the Master that he does not call you in the cloudy and dark day, but brings you gently to himself; and be content, I pray you, to be called by the music of the voice of love.

May it not happen that Jesus Christ has thus brought you for another reason? He knew that you were very weak, and your mind was very frail, and if you had felt these terrors you might have gone, mad; and you might have been in a lunatic asylum now instead, if you had passed through them. It is true his grace could have kept you, but God always tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and he will not treat the weak ones as he does the strong ones.

And I think again, it may be that if God had given you these feelings you would have grown self-righteous. You would have trusted in them, so he has not given you them. You have not got them to build on, thank God for that, for now you must build on Christ. You say—"If I had felt these things, I think I should have been saved." Yes, then you would have trusted in your feelings; the Lord knew that, and therefore he has not

given you them. He has given you nothing at all, therefore you must now rest on Christ and nowhere else but there. Oh! do so now.

It may be, again, that he has kept you there because he means to make you needful—useful to some who like yourself have come gradually to him, for you can say to them when you find them in distress, "Why Jesus Christ brought me gently, and therefore be of good cheer, he is bringing you too." I always like to see in my church some of all sorts. Now there is a brother I could point out this morning who has never known in his life, and I think never will know, about the plague of his own heart, to such an extent as some of us have learnt. He has never gone through fire and through water, but on the contrary is a loving-hearted spirit; a man who spends and is spent in his Master's service, he knows more of the heights of communion than some of us. For my part—though I do not want to change places with anybody—I think I could trust my Master if I had his experience, as well as I can trust him with my own. For what has experience to do with it after all? We do not rest on experiences, and frames, and doings;

"Our hopes are fixed on nothing less
Than Jesus blood and righteousness."

Now to you then, in conclusion, I preach the same remedy. Poor soul, thou longest to be troubled; ay! but I'd rather have thee long to get relief. Jesus Christ hangs on the cross, and if thou wilt trust him, thou shalt be saved. Just as thou art, as I said to my other friend just now—Just as thou art, take Christ as he is. Now, never think about getting ready for Christ; he does not want anything of yours. You need not trim and dress yourselves to come to Christ. Even your frames and feelings are not the wedding garment. Come naked. "But sir, I am so careless."—come careless, then. "But I am so hardhearted."—come hard-hearted, then. "But I am so thoughtless."—come thoughtless, then, and trust Christ now. If you trust him, you will not trust a deceiver. You will not have put your soul into the hand of one who will let it fall and perish. ' Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,' whether convicted by terror or by love, for "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. he that believeth not "feel what he may, and be in terror though he may. "shall be

damned." Amen.

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Lessons From Nature

"Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rooks for the conies."—Psalm 104:17-18.

This psalm is all through a song of nature, the adoration of God in the great outward temple of the universe. Some in these modern times have thought it to be a mark of high spirituality never to observe nature; and I remember sorrowfully reading the expressions of a godly person, who, in sailing down one of the most famous rivers in the world, closed his eyes, lest the picturesque beauties of the scene should divert his mind from scriptural topics. This may be regarded by some as profound spirituality; to me it seems to savor of absurdity. There may be persons who think they have grown in grace when they have attained to this; it seems to me that they are growing out of their senses. To despise the creating work of God, what is it but, in a measure, to despise God himself? "Whoso mocketh the poor despiseth his Maker." To despise the Maker, then, is evidently a sin; to think little of God under the aspect of the Creator is a crime. We should none of us think it a great honor to ourselves if our friends considered our productions to be unworthy of admiration, and rather injurious to their minds than improving. If when they passed our workmanship they turned their eyes away, lest they should suffer injury by looking at it, we should not regard them as very respectful to ourselves; surely the despising of that which is made is somewhat akin to the despising of the Maker himself. David tells us that "The Lord shall rejoice in his works." If he rejoices in what he has made, shall not those who have communion with him rejoice in his works also? "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein." Despise not the work, lest thou despise the worker.

This prejudice against the beauties of the material universe reminds me

of the lingering love to Judaism, which acted like a spell upon Peter of old. When the sheet knit at the four corners descended before him, and the voice said, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat," he replied that he had not eaten anything that was common or unclean. He needed that the voice should speak to him from heaven again and again before he would fully learn the lesson, "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common." The Jew thinks this and that unclean, though Christ has cleansed it; and certain Christians appear to regard nature as unclean. The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, the glorious sunrise and sunset, the snow-clad Alps, the ancient forests, the mysterious glaciers, the boundless ocean, God hath cleansed them: call them not common. Here on this earth is Calvary where the Savior died, and by his sacrifice, offered not within walls and roofs, he made this outer world a temple wherein everything doth speak of God's glory. If thou be unclean, all things will be unclean to thee; but if thou hast washed thy robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb, and if the Holy Spirit hath overshadowed thee, then this world is but a nether heaven; it is but the lower chamber of which the upper story glows with the full splendor of God, where angels see him face to face, and this lower story is not without glory, for in the person of Christ Jesus we have seen God, and have communion and fellowship with him even now.

It appears to me that those who would forbear the study of nature, or shun the observation of its beauties, are conscious of the weakness of their own spirituality. When the hermits and monks shut themselves out from the temptations of life, foolish persons said, "These are strong in grace." Not so, they were so weak in grace that they were afraid to have their graces tried. They ran away from the battle like the cowards they were, and shut themselves up because they knew their swords were not of the true Jerusalem metal, and they were not men who could resist valiantly. Monasticism was the confession of a weakness which they endeavored to cover with the vain show of humility, and the presence of superior sanctity. If my graces are strong, I can look upon the outward world, and draw forth its good without feeling its evil, if evil there be; but if my religion is mainly fictitious, then hypocrisy dictates to me the affectation of unusual spirituality, or at any rate I have not grace enough to rise from a contemplation of the works of God to a nearer fellowship with God himself. It cannot be that nature of itself debases me, or diverts

me from God; I ought to suspect a deficiency in my self when I find that the Creator's handiworks have not a good effect upon my soul.

Moreover, rest assured brethren, that he who wrote the Bible, the second and clearest revelation of his divine mind, wrote also the first book, the book of nature; and who are we that we should derogate from the worth of the first because we esteem the second. Milton's "Paradise Regained" is certainly inferior to his "Paradise Lost," but the Eternal God has no inferior productions, all his works are master-pieces. There is no quarrel between nature and revelation, fools only think so: to wise men the one illustrates and establishes the other. Walking in the fields at eventide, as Isaac did, I see in the ripening harvest the same God of whom I read in the word that he covenanted that seed-time and harvest should not cease. Surveying the midnight skies, I remember him who, while he calls the stars by their names, also bindeth up the broken in heart. Who will neglect the volume of creation, or the volume of revelation, I shall delight in them both as long as I live.

Let us, then, follow David this morning, for when he wrote our text, he evidently traveled amongst the works of God, admiring and adoring. Let us go with him, and see if there be not something to be learned among the birds and storks, the wild goats and the conies.

I. Our first observation from our text shall be this: FOR EACH PLACE GOD HAS PREPARED A SUITABLE FORM OF LIFE. For the fir trees, the stork; for the high hills, the wild goat, or steinbock; for the rocks, the conies, or rabbits. Almost every part of God's world was meant to be the abode of some creature or another. On earth, a countless company wait upon the Lord for meat; and as for the sea, it contains "creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts." Among the trees which shade the brooks, the birds are singing; in the tall sombre pine, the silent storks are building their nests; on the lofty crags, virgin as yet to human foot, the chamois leaps from ledge to ledge; and away, where human voice was never heard, the marmot, the mouse, and the rabbit (whichever creature the Hebrew may mean) find their dwelling-place among the rocks. The teaching of this fact is clear. We shall find that for all parts of the spiritual universe God has provided suitable forms of divine life. Think out that

thought a moment. Each age has its saints. The first age had its holy men, who walked with God: and when the golden age had gone, and men everywhere had polluted themselves, God had his Noah. In after days, when men had again multiplied upon the face of the earth, and sin abounded, there was Job in the land of Uz, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob dwelling in tents in the land which had been given to them by promise. On whatever period of the world's history you choose to place your finger you may rest assured that as God is there, so is there also some form of the divine life extant; some of God's twice born creatures are to be found even in the most barren ages. If you come to a period like that of Ahab, when a lonely Elijah bitterly complains, "I, only I am left, and they seek my life to destroy it," you shall hear a still small voice that saith, "Yet have I reserved unto myself seven thousand men that have not bowed the knee to Baal." God has still his elect remnant in the most wicked times to whom he has given a banner, because of the truth. When the light was almost gone from Israel, and formalism had eclipsed the sun of Judaism, there were still a Simeon and an Anna waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Times of fearful persecution, when to mention the name of Christ was to sentence yourself to death, have not been devoid of saints, but rather in the hottest times of oppression God has brought forth heroes equal to the emergency. The fiercer the trial the stronger the men. The church of God, like the fabled Salamander, has lived and flourished amid the flames, and has seemed to feed upon the flames that threatened to devour her. As on the crags where it appears impossible for life to exist God places wild goats, so on the high crags of persecution he upholds men whose feet are like hind's feet, and who glory as they tread upon their high places. Oppression brings out the heavenly manhood of the saints and lets the devil see what strength God can put into the weakness of man. There have been times of heresy too—such as the age of rampant Arianism, but saints have outlived it. God has provided for such an emergency brave defenders of the faith. What a man was Athanasius, when standing upright and alone he said, "I know that Jesus Christ is very God, and if all the world believe the contrary, I, Athanasius, stand against the world." Sardis may have a name to live and be dead, but the Lord saith, "thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." Is not this an encouraging truth, for as it has been in the past it

is in the present, and it will be in the future. Do not give way to gloomy forebodings as to the church's future welfare. Whine not with those who deplore these evil days, and prognosticate overwhelming ills. We are told that we are passing through a crisis, but I recollect that it was a crisis twenty years ago, and our grandsires could tell us of a crisis every year of the last fifty. The fact is there is no such crisis as is talked of. The crisis is past, for Christ said, "Now; is the crisis of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." When Jesus went to Golgotha and bled and died, the crisis of the church and of the world was over; the victory of truth and of Christ was secured beyond all hazard. Even if times should darken and the night should grow thicker and thicker, rest assured that he who has the conies for the rocks, and goats for the high hills, and finds for the forests the stork, will find for every age a suitable form of Christian life that shall bring glory to his name.

As it has been in every age, so is it in every position in which men are found. Go into all classes of society, and you shall find that the Christian religion, if received in truth, is equally well adapted for all conditions. Here and there upon the throne have been found those that have feared God, and have gone from a crown on earth to a crown in heaven. There can be no better qualification for swaying a kingdom than obedience to the King of kings. Go straight down from the palace to the poor-house, little enough of comfort there, but the richest consolation which can be found for the meanest pauper, will be brought by that hand which was nailed to the tree. He it is that can console the sorrows of poverty as well as sanctify the risks of wealth. Go ye where ye will amongst the busy, whose cares buzz around them, and you shall find no relief for aching heads like a contemplation of the love of Christ: or go amongst those who have leisure, and spend it in solitude, no meditation can be so sweet to while away their hours as the meditation which springs out of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Glory be to God, no man need say, "My trade does not permit me to be a Christian;" if it be so, you have no business to follow that trade, for no lawful calling is without its saint. Up there among the precipices the wild goat finds safe footing, and so amid dignity and honor saints can survive, and in the dark rock-rifts of this sin-smitten city, as conies live among the rocks, so Christian men are useful and happy. Where the believer is persecuted on every side, he shall not be forsaken,

and where, through the example of the wicked, his heart is grieved, he shall be preserved like righteous Lot. As God maintains life in every region, so doth he maintain spiritual life in every position and every calling. Have comfort in this you who are placed in circumstances unfavourable to grace.

Again, you shall find spiritual life in every church. I know it is the notion of the bigot, that all the truly godly people belong to the denomination which he adorns. Orthodoxy is my doxy; heterodoxy is anybody else's doxy who does not agree with me. All the good people go to little Bethel, and nowhere else: they all worship at Zoar, and they sing out of such-and-such a selection, and as for those who cannot say Shibholeth, and lay a pretty good stress on the "h," but who pronounce it "Sibboleth;" let the fords of the Jordan be taken, and let them be put to death. True, it is not fashionable to roast them alive, but we will condemn their souls to everlasting perdition, which is the next best thing, and may not appear to be quite so uncharitable. Many suppose that because there is grievous error in a church, concerning an ordinance or a doctrine, therefore no living children of God are there. Ah, dear brethren, this severe opinion arises from want of knowing better. A mouse had lived in a box all its life, and one day crawled up to the edge of it, and looked round on what it could see. Now the box only stood in a lumber room, but the mouse was surprised at its vastness, and exclaimed: "How big the world is!" If some bigots would get out of their box, and only look a little way round them, they would find the realm of grace to be far wider than they dream. It is true that these pastures are a most proper place for sheep, but yet upon yonder hill-tops wild goats are pastured by the Great Shepherd. It is true that yonder plains covered with verdure are best fitted for cattle, but the Lord of all has his beasts in the forest, and his conies among the rocks. You may have to look a long while before you find these living things, but he sees them when you do not, and it is a deal more important to a cony for God to see it, than it is for a man to see it; and so it is an infinitely more weighty matter for a child of God for his Father to know that he is his child, than for his brother to know it. If my brother will not believe me to be a Christian, he cannot help being my brother; he may do what he will in his unkindness, but if I am one of God's children, and he also is one, the tie of brotherhood cannot be broken between us. I love to think

that the Lord has his hidden ones—even in churches that have sadly degenerated from the faith; and, although it is yours and mine to denounce error unsparingly, and with the iconoclastic hammer to go through the land and break the idols of all the churches in pieces as far as God gives us strength, yet there is not a lamb amongst Christ's flock that we would disdain to feed—there is not the least of all his people, however mistaken in judgment, whom our soul would not embrace an ardent love. God, in nature, has placed life in singular spots, and so has he put spiritual life into strange out-of-the-way places, and has his own chosen where least we should look for them.

Once more, there are to be found God's people in every city. Some of you are going away, it may be, to the ends of the earth, and this word may be comfortable to you. The Lord has an elect people everywhere. The wild goats are on the rocks, and the conies amongst the stones, and the storks in the trees. Go you where you will, you shall find that God has a living people; or if you should be sent to a country where as yet there are no converted men or women, let not that discourage you, but rather say, "I am sent with the purpose of finding out God's elect, who as yet are hidden in sin. I am to be the instrument of finding out the Lord's own blood-bought but hidden ones here." When thou goest into a city that is given to idolatry, thou shalt hear it said to thee, "I have much people in this city;" go, therefore, and labor to find out the much people. Introduce the gospel, tell of the love of Jesus, and you shall soon find that your efforts are rewarded by the discovery of those who shall love your Savior, and delight in the same truth which now charms your heart. Do not believe that there is a rock without its wild goat; do not think that there is a fir-forest without its stork; or that there are to be found trees by the brook without their birds. Expect to find where God dwells that there are some who are sojourners with him, as all their fathers were.

I shall leave the first point, repeating the sentence, for each place there a form of life.

II. Secondly, the text teaches us plainly that EACH CREATURE HAS ITS APPROPRIATE PLACE. Birds with their nests for the cedars of Lebanon, storks for the fir trees, wild goats for the high hills, and conies for the

rocks. Each of these creatures looks most beautiful at home. Go into the Zoological Gardens, and see the poor animals there under artificial conditions, and you can little guess what they are at home. A lion in a cage is a very different creature from a lion in the wilderness. The stork looks wretched in his wire pen, and you would hardly know him as the same creature if you saw him on the housetops or on the fir trees. Each creature looks best in its own place. Take that truth, now, and use it for yourself. Each man has by God a providential position appointed to him, and the position ordained for each Christian is that in which he looks best; it is the best for him and he is the best for that; and if you could change his position, and shift him to another, he would not be half as happy, nor half as useful, nor half so much himself. Put the stork on the high hills, put the wild goat on the fir trees—what monstrosities! Take my dear brother who has been a working-man this last twenty years, and always been a spiritually-minded man, and make him Lord Mayor of London, and you would spoil him altogether. Take a good hearer and set him preaching, and he would make a sorry appearance. A man out of place is not seen to advantage, you see the wrong side of him, the gracious side is hidden. The position in which God has placed me is the best for me. Let me remember this when I am grumbling and complaining. It may be I have got past that foolish discontent which is altogether selfish, but perhaps I repine because I think, if I were in a different position, I could glorify God more. This species of discontent is very insinuating, but let us beware of it. It is foolish to cry, "if I were placed in a different position, I could do so much more for God!" You could not do so much as you can do now. I am sure the goat would not show the wisdom of God so well in a fir tree, as he would up on a high hill; and you would not display the grace of God so well anywhere else as you can do where you are. Ah, says the young Christian, "I am only an apprentice; if I were a master man, I think I could then glorify God." Sir, if you cannot magnify him in your apprenticeship, you will not do so when you become a journeyman. "Oh, but my shop is so little, my trade brings me in such a small amount, I can give but little, and I have such few opportunities of doing good." Be slow to leave your calling till you have plain indications from providence that you ought to do so, for many a man in moving from his place has been as a bird that has wandered from her nest. God knows better than you what is best for you; bow your

soul to his sovereign will. God appoints our position infinitely better than we could appoint it, even if we could have the choosing of it.

My beloved friends, it is not only that each form of life has its own best position as to providence, but it is so as to experience. God has not made two creatures precisely alike. You shall gather leaves from a tree, and you shall not find two veined in precisely the same way. In Christian experience it is the same. Wherever there is living Christian experience, it is different from everybody else's experience in some respect. In a family of children each child may be like its father, and yet each child shall be different from each other child; and amongst the children of God, though they all have the likeness of Christ in a measure, yet are they not all exactly the one like the other. You read the other day the life of John Bunyan, and you said, "Oh, if I had experience like John Bunyan, then I should know I was a child of God." This was foolish. The biographies that are published in our magazines in many cases do some good, but more mischief; for there are Christian people who begin at once to say, "Have I felt precisely thus? Have I felt exactly that?—If not, I am lost." Hast thou felt thyself a sinner and Christ a Savior? Art thou emptied of self and dost thou look to Christ alone? Well, if no other soul hath trod the same path as thou hast done, thou art in a right path; and though thy experience may have eccentricities in it that differ from all others, it is right it should be so. God has not made the wild goat like the cony, nor has he made the stork like any other bird, but he has made each to fit the place it is to occupy, and he makes your experience to be suitable to the bringing out some point of his glory, which could not be brought out otherwise. Some are full of rejoicing, others are often depressed; a few keep the happy medium; many soar aloft, and then dive into the deeps again; let these varied experiences, as they are all equally clear phases of the same divine lovingkindness, be accepted, and let them be rejoiced in.

The same holds good as to individuality of character. Each creature has its appropriate place, and I believe that each constitution is meant, under the power of grace, to be suitable for a man's position. I might wish to be of a different temperament from what I am—I sometimes think so, but in wiser moments, I would not wish to alter anything in myself but that which is sinful. Martin Luther might have wished that he had been as

gentle as Melancthon, but then we might have had no reformation: Melancthon might certainly sometimes have wished that he had been as energetic as Martin Luther, but then Luther might have lacked his most tender comforter, if Melancthon had been as rough as he. Peter might have been improved if he had not been so rough, and John might possibly have been improved if he had been somewhat more firm; but after all, when God makes Peter he is best as Peter, and when he makes John he is best as John, and it is very foolish when Peter wants to be John, and when John pines to be Peter. Dear brethren, the practical matter is, be yourselves in your religion. Never attempt to counterfeit another's virtues, nor try to square your experience according to another man's feelings, nor endeavor to mould your character so that you may look as if you were like a certain good man whom you admire. No, ask the Lord, who made a new man of you, to let your manhood come out as he meant it, and whichever grace he meant to be prominent, let it be prominent. If you are meant to play the hero and rush into the thick of the battle, then let courage be developed; or if he designed you to lie in the hospital and suffer, then let patience have its perfect work; but ask the Lord to mould you after his own mind, that as he finds a stork for a fir tree and a fir tree for a stork; a hill for a wild goat, and a wild goat for a hill; he will find a place for you, the man, and find for you, the man, the place that he has created for you, There his name shall be most glorified, and you shall be safest. Kick not against the pricks, but take kindly to the yoke, and serve your day and generation till your Master calls you home.

III. Now, briefly, a third point. It appears from the text that **EVERY CREATURE THAT GOD HAS MADE IS PROVIDED WITH SHELTER.** Birds fly to the trees, and the stork to the fir, the wild goat to the high hills, and the cony to the rocks. There is a shelter for every one of these creatures, great and small. Think a moment, then, if God has made each creature happy, and given a place of refuge to each creature, then, depend upon it, he has not left man's soul without a shelter. And here is an important truth, for every man is certainly in danger, and every thinking man knows it. My God, dost thou shield and shelter the cony in the rock, and is there no rock for me to shelter in? Assuredly thou hast not made man and left him without a refuge; when thou givest to the rock-rabbit the cleft in which he may hide himself, there must be a shelter for man.

This must certainly be true, because you and I, if we have observed our inner life, must have felt conscious that nothing here below can fill an immortal soul. You have prospered in business, and have enjoyed good health; but for all that, in quiet moments of reflection, you feel a craving for something not to be found beneath the sun. Have you not felt yearnings after the Infinite,—hungerings which bread cannot satisfy; thirstings which a river could not quench? And are you never conscious—I know I am as a man, I speak not as a Christian now—of cold shiverings of fear, which make the entire manhood to tremble? The mind looks forward and considers, "And shall I live for ever? When my body moulders, shall I continue? Am I a vessel launched upon the river of existence, and shall I be borne onward to a shoreless and mysterious sea? And what will be that sea, and will it be a calm, or tossed with storms?" Or, to change the figure, "I shall sleep, but in that sleep of death, what dreams may come?" Have you never felt all that, and said within yourself, "O that there were a place where I could hide myself, never to tremble more! O that I could grasp something that would satisfy my insatiable lodgings! O that I could get my foot upon a rook, and no longer feel that a quicksand is beneath me! O that I knew of truth sure and indisputable, and possessed a treasure that would enrich me for ever." Well, then, if you have such longings as these, surely there must be a provision to meet them. The stork has an instinct for building a nest of a certain sort; it is too large a nest to be placed on a bush, she needs a tree; there is a tree somewhere then, for God never made a stork for a tree but he made also a tree for the stork. Here is a wild goat: you put it down on a flat meadow, and it is not happy. Give it the greenest pasture, it looks up and pines. Rest assured that since those little feet are meant to traverse rocks and crags, there are rocks and crags that are meant for those feet to leap upon. A chamois argues an Alps, and the conclusion is verified by fact. Yonder little cony cannot live anywhere but among the stones; it delights to conceal itself in the fissures of the rock; then be assured there are rocks meant for conies. So for me, with my thirstings, my longings, my pipings, my mysterious instincts—there is a God somewhere, there is a heaven somewhere, there is an atonement somewhere, there is a fullness somewhere to meet my emptiness. Man wants a shelter, there must be a shelter; let us show you what it is.

Beloved, there is a shelter for man from the sense of past guilt. It is because we are guilty that we are fearful: we have broken our Maker's law, and therefore we are afraid. But our Maker came from heaven to earth; Jesus, the Christ of God, came here, and was made man, and bore that we might never bear his Father's righteous wrath, and whosoever believeth in Jesus shall find perfect rest in those dear wounds of his. Since Christ suffered for me, my guilt is gone, my punishment was endured by my Substitute, therefore do I hear the voice that saith, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people! Say unto them, that their warfare is accomplished; for they have received at the Lord's hand double for all their sins." And as for future fears, he who believes in Jesus finds a refuge from them in the Fatherhood of God. He who trusts Christ, says: "Now I have no fear about the present, nor about the future. Let catastrophe follow catastrophe, let the world crash, and all the universe go to ruin; beneath the wings of the Eternal God I must be safe. All things must work together for my good, for I love God, and have been called according to his purpose." What a blessed shelter this is! The little conies in their rock-clefts are perfectly at ease, and so we, when we enter fully into the truth of our adoption of God, are filled with unutterable peace. And as for the present, with its cares, and griefs, and heart-throbs, there is the Holy Ghost abiding in us, the Comforter, and we fly to him, and receive consolations so rich and powerful, that this day we feel at peace in the midst of discomforts, and if perplexed we are not in despair. Brethren, there is a shelter in the atonement of Christ, in the Fatherhood of God, in the abiding presence of the Comforter—there is a shelter for man—would God that all of us had found it!

IV. And now just a moment of your attention will be wanted for the fourth observation, that **FOR EACH CREATURE THE SHELTER IS APPROPRIATE**. The tree for the bird; the fir tree, a particular and special tree, for the stork; a high hill for the steinbock or ibex, and the rocks for the hyrax or rabbit. Whatever creature it may be, each shall have his own suitable shelter. But you will reply to me, is there a shelter, then, for each individual man? Did you not say that there was only one shelter for manhood? If I did not say it, I certainly will say it now. There is only one shelter under heaven or in heaven for any man of woman born, but yet there is a shelter suitable for each. Christ Jesus suits all sorts of sinners,

all sorts of sufferers. He is a Savior as suitable for me as if he came to save me and no one else; but he is a Redeemer as remarkably suitable to every other of his redeemed ones. Note, then, that there is a refuge in Christ Jesus for those simple trustful natures that take the gospel at once and believe it. These are like the little birds that fly to the trees and build their nests and begin to sing. These are the commonest sort of Christians, but in some respects they are the best. They hear the gospel, believe it to be God's word, accept it, and begin to sing. Jesus Christ exactly suits them, he is a shelter for those chosen birds of the air, whom your heavenly Father daily feed. But there are others of larger intellect, who require unusual support ere they can build their nest and be at ease. These, like the stork, need a special support, and they find it in the gospel. Since they are more weighty with doubt and perplexity, they need substantial verities to rest on; these find great fir-tree doctrines and cedar-like principles in the Bible, and they rest in them. Many of us this day are resting on the immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie. We rest upon the substitution of Christ, and repose in the completeness of the atonement. Some get hold of one great principle and some another in connection with the grace of God; and God has been pleased to reveal strong, immovable, eternal, immutable principles in his Word which are suitable for thoughtful and troubled minds to rest on. Moreover, we have in the church of God persons of great reasoning powers: these love the craggy paths of thought, but when they come to Christ and trust in him, though they are like the wild goat and love the high places, they find in the Scriptures good ground for them. The doctrine of election, and all the mysteries of predestination, the deep and wonderful doctrines that are spoken of by the apostle Paul; where is the man of thought who will not be at home among these if he loves sublimity? If you have that turn of mind which delights to deal with the high things of God, which have been the perplexity of men and angels, you shall find yourself at home, and what is better, safe with the gospel. If you are in Christ, you shall have good, solid, safe material for the profoundest meditations. Perhaps, instead of being bold and daring and thoughtful, you are not comparable to the wild goat but you are "a very timid trembling little creature like the cony. If anyone claps his hands, away runs the cony; he fears always. But there is a shelter for conies; and so in the grace of God for very timid trembling people, there is a suitable refuge. Here is a delightful shelter for

some of you to run into. "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God." Here is another—"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Many a poor trembler has hidden under that condescending word. If I cannot find shelter in one text, what a blessing it is the Bible is full of promises, and there are promises in the Bible which seem made for a certain form of mind, as if the Holy Ghost cast his thoughts and his words into all sorts of moulds to suit the habits of thought and mind of all whom he would bless. O trembling soul, though thou art half afraid to say that thou belongest to Jesus, yet come and rest in him, hide in the rift of his side, and thou art safe.

V. Now we must close, and we do so with this observation, that EACH CREATURE USES ITS SHELTER, for the storks have made their nests in the fir trees, and the wild goats climb the high hills, and the conies hide among the rocks. I never heard of one of these creatures that neglected its shelter—they love their natural abodes; but I have heard of men who have neglected their God, I know women who have forgotten Christ. We say, "silly sheep." Ah, if the sheep knew all about us, they would wonder we should call them silly. The cony in danger which does not seek its rock is foolish; but the soul in danger which does not seek its Savior is insane—insane, nay, if there can be a madness which is as much beyond madness, as madness is beyond sanity, then such is the raving lunacy of a man who neglects the Savior. I have never heard of any of these creatures that they despise the shelter provided. The birds are satisfied with the trees, and the stork with the firs, and even the cony with its rock-hole; but, alas! there are men who despise Christ. God himself becomes the shelter of sinners, and yet sinners despise their God. The Son of God opens his side and lays bare his heart that a soul may come and shelter there in the crimson cleft, and yet that soul for many a day refuses to accept the shelter. Oh, where are tears? Who shall give us fit expressions for our sorrow that men should be such monsters to themselves, and to their God? The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but men know not God. The stork knows its fir tree, the wild goat its crag, and the cony knows its cleft, but the sinner knows not his Christ. Ah, manhood, what has befallen thee? What strange wine of Gomorrah hast thou drunk which has thus intoxicated thee!

One other thing, I never heard of a stork that when it met with a fir tree demurred as to its right to build its nest there, and I never heard of a cony yet that questioned whether it had a permit to run into the rock. Why these creatures would soon perish if they were always doubting and fearing as to whether they had a right to use providential provisions. The stork says to himself, "ah, here is a fir tree;" he consults with his mate—"Will this do for the nest in which we may rear our young?" "Ay" says she, and they gather the materials, and arrange them. There is never any deliberation, "May we build here?" but they bring their sticks and make their nest. So the wild goat on the crag does not say, "Have I a right to be here?" No! he must be somewhere, and there is a crag which exactly suits him; and he springs upon it. Yet though these dumb creatures know the provision of their God, the sinner does not recognize the provisions of his Savior. He quibbles and questions, "May I?" and "I am afraid it is not for me," and "I think it cannot be meant for me; and I am afraid it is too good to be true." And yet nobody ever said to the stork, "Whosoever buildeth on this fir tree shall never have his nest pulled down." No inspired word has ever said to the cony, "Whosoever runs into this rock-cleft shall never be driven out of it;" if it had been so, it would make assurance doubly sure. And yet here is Christ provided for sinners, just the sort of a Savior sinners need, and the encouragement is added, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" "Whosoever will let him come, and take the water of life freely." O dear brothers and sisters, do not be standing out against the generosity of a sin-pardoning God, who bids the sinner come and welcome. Come, believe in Jesus, and find salvation now. O that you would come, it is what God has provided for your wants. Come, take it, for he bids you come. "The Spirit and the bride say come, and whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely." To believe is to trust Jesus, to trust his suffering, to trust his atonement, and rely upon him alone for salvation. May God enable you to do it for Christ's sake. Amen.

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The First Cry from the Cross

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."—Luke 23:34.

Our Lord was at that moment enduring the first pains of crucifixion; the executioners had just then driven the nails through his hands and feet. He must have been, moreover, greatly depressed, and brought into a condition of extreme weakness by the agony of the night in Gethsemane, and by the scourgings and cruel mockings which he had endured all through the morning, from Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, and the Praetorian guards. Yet neither the weakness of the past, nor the pain of the present, could prevent him from continuing in prayer. The Lamb of God was silent to men, but he was not silent to God. Dumb as sheep before her shearers, he had not a word to say in his own defense to man, but he continues in his heart crying unto his Father, and no pain and no weakness can silence his holy supplications. Beloved, what an example our Lord herein presents to us! Let us continue in prayer so long as our heart beats; let no excess of suffering drive us away from the throne of grace, but rather let it drive us closer to it.

"Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live."

To cease from prayer is to renounce the consolations which our case requires. Under all distractions of spirit, and overwhelmings of heart, great God, help us still to pray, and never from the mercy-seat may our footsteps be driven by despair. Our blessed Redeemer persevered in prayer even when the cruel iron rent his tender nerves, and blow after blow of the hammer jarred his whole frame with anguish; and this perseverance may be accounted for by the fact that he was so in the habit of prayer that he could not cease from it; he had acquired a mighty velocity of intercession which forbade him to pause. Those long nights upon the cold mountain side, those many days which had been spent in solitude, those perpetual ejaculations which he was wont to dart up to heaven, all these had formed in him a habit so powerful, that the severest

torments could not stay its force. Yet it was more than habit. Our Lord was baptised in the spirit of prayer; he lived in it, it lived in him, it had come to be an element of his nature. He was like that precious spice, which, being bruised, doth not cease to give forth its perfume, but rather yieldeth it all the more abundantly because of the blows of the pestle, its fragrance being no outward and superficial quality, but an inward virtue essential to its nature, which the pounding in the mortar did not fetch from it, causing it to reveal its secret soul of sweetness. So Jesus prays, even as a bundle of myrrh gives forth its smell, or as birds sing because they cannot do otherwise. Prayer enwrapped his very soul as with a garment, and his heart went forth in such array. I repeat it, let this be our example—never, under any circumstances, however severe the trial, or depressing the difficulty, let us cease from prayer.

Observe, further, that our Lord, in the prayer before us, remains in the vigour of faith as to his Sonship. The extreme trial to which he now submitted himself could not prevent his holding fast his Sonship. His prayer begins, "Father." It was not without meaning that he taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father," for our prevalence in prayer will much depend upon our confidence in our relationship to God. Under great losses and crosses, one is apt to think that God is not dealing with us as a father with a child, but rather as a severe judge with a condemned criminal; but the cry of Christ, when he is brought to an extremity which we shall never reach, betrays no faltering in the spirit of sonship. In Gethsemane, when the bloody sweat fell fast upon the ground, his bitterest cry commenced with, "My Father," asking that if it were possible the cup of gall might pass from him; he pleaded with the Lord as his Father, even as he over and over again had called him on that dark and doleful night. Here, again, in this, the first of his seven expiring cries, it is "Father." O that the Spirit that makes us cry, "Abba, Father," may never cease his operations! May we never be brought into spiritual bondage by the suggestion, "If thou be the Son of God;" or if the tempter should so assail us, may we triumph as Jesus did in the hungry wilderness. May the Spirit which crieth, "Abba, Father," repel each unbelieving fear. When we are chastened, as we must be (for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?) may we be in loving subjection to the Father of our spirits, and live; but never may we become captives to the spirit of

bondage, so as to doubt the love of our gracious Father, or our share in his adoption.

More remarkable, however, is the fact that our Lord's prayer to his Father was not for himself. He continued on the cross to pray for himself, it is true, and his lamentable cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" shows the personality of his prayer; but the first of the seven great cries on the cross has scarcely even an indirect reference to himself. It is, "Father, forgive them." The petition is altogether for others, and though there is an allusion to the cruelties which they were exercising upon himself, yet it is remote; and you will observe, he does not say, "I forgive them"—that is taken for granted—he seems to lose sight of the fact that they were doing any wrong to himself, it is the wrong which they were doing to the Father that is on his mind, the insult which they are paying to the Father, in the person of the Son; he thinks not of himself at all. The cry, "Father, forgive them," is altogether unselfish. He himself is, in the prayer, as though he were not; so complete is his self-annihilation, that he loses sight of himself and his woes. My brethren, if there had ever been a time in the life of the Son of man when he might have rigidly confined his prayer to himself, without any one cavilling thereat, surely it was when he was beginning his death throes. We could not marvel, if any man here were fastened to the stake, or fixed to a cross, if his first, and even his last and all his prayers, were for support under so arduous a trial. But see, the Lord Jesus began his prayer by pleading for others. See ye not what a great heart is here revealed! What a soul of compassion was in the Crucified! How Godlike, how divine! Was there ever such a one before him, who, even in the very pangs of death, offers as his first prayer an intercession for others? Let this unselfish spirit be in you also, my brethren. Look not every man upon his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Love your neighbours as yourselves, and as Christ has set before you this paragon of unselfishness, seek to follow him, treading in his steps.

There is, however, a crowning jewel in this diadem of glorious love. The Son of Righteousness sets upon Calvary in a wondrous splendour; but amongst the bright colours which glorify his departure, there is this one—the prayer was not alone for others, but it was for his cruellest enemies.

His enemies, did I say, there is more than that to be considered. It was not a prayer for enemies who had done him an ill deed years before, but for those who were there and then murdering him. Not in cold blood did the Saviour pray, after he had forgotten the injury, and could the more easily forgive it, but while the first red drops of blood were spurting on the hands which drove the nails; while yet the hammer was bestained with crimson gore, his blessed mouth poured out the fresh warm prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I say, not that that prayer was confined to his immediate executioners. I believe that it was a far-reaching prayer, which included Scribes and Pharisees, Pilate and Herod, Jews and Gentiles—yea, the whole human race in a certain sense, since we were all concerned in that murder; but certainly the immediate persons, upon whom that prayer was poured like precious nard, were those who there and then were committing the brutal act of fastening him to the accursed tree. How sublime is this prayer if viewed in such a light! It stands alone upon a mount of solitary glory. No other had been prayed like it before. It is true, Abraham, and Moses, and the prophets had prayed for the wicked; but not for wicked men who had pierced their hands and feet. It is true, that Christians have since that day offered the same prayer, even as Stephen cried, "Lay not this sin to their charge;" and many a martyr has made his last words at the stake words of pitying intercession for his persecutors; but you know where they learnt this, let me ask you where did he learn it? Was not Jesus the divine original? He learnt it nowhere; it leaped up from his own Godlike nature. A compassion peculiar to himself dictated this originality of prayer; the inward royalty of his love suggested to him so memorable an intercession, which may serve us for a pattern, but of which no pattern had existed before. I feel as though I could better kneel before my Lord's cross at this moment than stand in this pulpit to talk to you. I want to adore him; I worship him in heart for that prayer; if I knew nothing else of him but this one prayer, I must adore him, for that one matchless plea for mercy convinces me most overwhelmingly of the deity of him who offered it, and fills my heart with reverent affection.

Thus I have introduced to you our Lord's first vocal prayer upon the cross. I shall now, if we are helped by God's Holy Spirit, make some use of it. First, we shall view it as illustrative of our Saviour's intercession;

secondly, we shall regard the text as instructive to the church's work; thirdly, we shall consider it as suggestive to the unconverted.

I. First, my dear brethren, let us look at this very wonderful text as ILLUSTRATIVE OF OUR LORD'S INTERCESSION.

He prayed for his enemies then, he is praying for his enemies now; the past on the cross was an earnest of the present on the throne. He is in a higher place, and in a nobler condition, but his occupation is the same; he continues still before the eternal throne to present pleas on the behalf of guilty men, crying, "Father, O forgive them." All his intercession is in a measure like the intercession on Calvary, and Calvary's cries may help us to guess the character of the whole of his intercession above.

The first point in which we may see the character of his intercession is this—it is most gracious. Those for whom our Lord prayed, according to the text, did not deserve his prayer. They had done nothing which could call forth from him a benediction as a reward for their endeavours in his service; on the contrary, they were most undeserving persons, who had conspired to put him to death. They had crucified him, crucified him wantonly and malignantly; they were even taking away his innocent life. His clients were persons who, so far from being meritorious, were utterly undeserving of a single good wish from the Saviour's heart. They certainly never asked him to pray for them—it was the last thought in their minds to say, "Intercede for us, thou dying King! Offer petitions on our behalf, thou Son of God!" I will venture to believe the prayer itself, when they heard it, was either disregarded, and passed over with contemptuous indifference, or perhaps it was caught as a theme for jest. I admit that it seems to be too severe upon humanity to suppose it possible that such a prayer could have been the theme for laughter, and yet there were other things enacted around the cross which were quite as brutal, and I can imagine that this also might have happened. Yet our Saviour prayed for persons who did not deserve the prayer, but, on the contrary, merited a curse—persons who did not ask for the prayer, and even scoffed at it when they heard it. Even so in heaven there stands the great High Priest, who pleads for guilty men—for guilty men, my hearers. There are none on earth that deserve his intercession. He pleads for none on the supposition

that they do deserve it. He stands there to plead as the just One on the behalf of the unjust. Not if any man be righteous, but "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Remember, too, that our great Intercessor pleads for such as never asked him to plead for them. His elect, while yet dead in trespasses and sins, are the objects of his compassionate intercessions, and while they even scoff at his gospel, his heart of love is entreating the favour of heaven on their behalf. See, then, beloved, if such be the truth, how sure you are to spend with God who earnestly ask the Lord Jesus Christ to plead for you. Some of you, with many tears and much earnestness, have been beseeching the Saviour to be your advocate? Will he refuse you? Stands it to reason that he can? He pleads for those that reject his pleadings, much more for you who prize them beyond gold. Remember, my dear hearer, if there be nothing good in you, and if there be everything conceivable that is malignant and bad, yet none of these things can be any barrier to prevent Christ's exercising the office of Intercessor for you. Even for you he will plead. Come, put your case into his hands; for you he will find pleas which you cannot discover for yourselves, and he will put the case to God for you as for his murderers, "Father, forgive them."

A second quality of his intercession is this—its careful spirit. You notice in the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Our Saviour did, as it were, look his enemies through and through to find something in them that he could urge in their favour; but he could not see nothing until his wisely affectionate eye lit upon their ignorance: "they know not what they do." How carefully he surveyed the circumstances, and the characters of those for whom he importuned! Just so it is with him in heaven. Christ is no careless advocate for his people. He knows your precise condition at this moment, and the exact state of your heart with regard to the temptation through which you are passing; more than that, he foresees the temptation which is awaiting you, and in his intercession he takes note of the future event which his prescient eye beholds. "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Oh, the condescending tenderness of our great High Priest! He knows us better than we know ourselves. He understands every secret grief and groaning. You need not trouble yourself about the wording of your prayer, he will put the wording

right. And even the understanding as to the exact petition, if you should fail in it, he cannot, for as he knoweth what is the mind of God, so he knoweth what is your mind also. He can spy out some reason for mercy in you which you cannot detect in yourselves, and when it is so dark and cloudy with your soul that you cannot discern a foothold for a plea that you may urge with heaven, the Lord Jesus has the pleas ready framed, and petitions ready drawn up, and he can present them acceptable before the mercy-seat. His intercession, then, you will observe is very gracious, and in the next place it is very thoughtful.

We must next note its earnestness. No one doubts who reads these words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," that they were heaven-piercing in their fervour. Brethren, you are certain, even without a thought, that Christ was terribly in earnest in that prayer. But there is an argument to prove that. Earnest people are usually witty, and quick of understanding, to discover anything which may serve their turn. If you are pleading for life, and an argument for your being spared be asked of you, I will warrant you that you will think of one when no one else might. Now, Jesus was so in earnest for the salvation of his enemies, that he struck upon an argument for mercy which a less anxious spirit would not have thought of: "They know not what they do." Why, sirs, that was in strictest justice but a scant reason for mercy; and indeed, ignorance, if it be wilful, does not extenuate sin, and yet the ignorance of many who surrounded the cross was a wilful ignorance. They might have known that he was the Lord of glory. Was not Moses plain enough? Had not Esaias been very bold in his speech? Were not the signs and tokens such that one might as well doubt which is the sun in the firmament as the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah? Yet, for all that, the Saviour, with marvelous earnestness and consequent dexterity, turns what might not have been a plea into a plea, and puts it thus: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, how mighty are his pleas in heaven, then, in their earnestness! Do not suppose that he is less quick of understanding there, or less intense in the vehemence of his entreaties. No, my brethren, the heart of Christ still labours with the eternal God. He is no slumbering intercessor, but, for Zion's sake, he doth not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake, he doth not cease, nor will he, till her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.

It is interesting to note, in the fourth place, that the prayer here offered helps us to judge of his intercession in heaven as to its continuance, perseverance, and perpetuity. As I remarked before, if our Saviour might have paused from intercessory prayer, it was surely when they fastened him to the tree; when they were guilty of direct acts of deadly violence to his divine person, he might then have ceased to present petitions on their behalf. But sin cannot tie the tongue of our interceding Friend! Oh, what comfort is here! You have sinned, believer, you have grieved his Spirit, but you have not stopped that potent tongue which pleads for you. You have been unfruitful, perhaps, my brother, and like the barren tree, you deserve to be cut down; but your want of fruitfulness has not withdrawn the Intercessor from his place. He interposes at this moment, crying, "Spare it yet another year." Sinner, you have provoked God by long rejecting his mercy and going from bad to worse, but neither blasphemy nor unrighteousness, nor infidelity, shall stay the Christ of God from urging the suit of the very chief of sinners. He lives, and while he lives he pleads; and while there is a sinner upon earth to be saved, there shall be an intercessor in heaven to plead for him. These are but fragments of thought, but they will help you, I hope, to realise the intercession of your great High Priest.

Think yet again, this prayer of our Lord on earth is like his prayer in heaven, because of its wisdom. He seeks the best thing, and that which his clients most need, "Father, forgive them." That was the great point in hand; they wanted most of all there and then forgiveness from God. He does not say, "Father, enlighten them, for they know not what they do," for mere enlightenment would but have created torture of conscience and hastened on their hell; but he crieth, "Father, forgive;" and while he used his voice, the precious drops of blood which were then distilling from the nail wounds were pleading too, and God heard, and doubtless did forgive. The first mercy which is needful to guilty sinners is forgiven sin. Christ wisely prays for the boon most wanted. It is so in heaven; he pleads wisely and prudently. Let him alone, he knows what to ask for at the divine hand. Go you to the mercy-seat, and pour out your desires as best you can, but when you have done so always put it thus, "O my Lord Jesus, answer no desire of mine if it be not according to thy judgment; and if in

aught that I have asked I have failed to seek for what I want, amend my pleading, for thou art infinitely wiser than I." Oh, is it sweet to have a friend at court to perfect our petitions for us before they come unto the great King. I believed that there is never presented to God anything but a perfect prayer now; I mean, that before the great Father of us all, no prayer of his people ever comes up imperfect; there is nothing left out, and there is nothing to be erased; and this, not because their prayers were originally perfect in themselves, but because the Mediator makes them perfect through his infinite wisdom, and they come up before the mercy-seat moulded according to the mind of God himself, and he is sure to grant such prayers.

Once more, this memorable prayer of our crucified Lord was like to his universal intercession in the matter of its prevalence. Those for whom he prayed were many of them forgiven. Do you remember that he said to his disciples when he bade them preach, "beginning at Jerusalem," and on that day when Peter stood up with the eleven, and charged the people with wicked hands they had crucified and slain the Saviour, three thousand of these persons who were thus justly accused of his crucifixion became believers in him, and were baptised in his name. That was an answer to Jesus' prayer. The priest were at the bottom of the Lord's murder, they were the most guilty; but it is said, "a great company also of the priests believed." Here was another answer to the prayer. Since all men had their share representatively, Gentiles as well as Jews, in the death of Jesus, the gospel was soon preached to the Jews, and within a short time it was preached to the Gentiles also. Was not this prayer, "Father, forgive them," like a stone cast into a lake, forming at first a narrow circle, and then a wider ring, and soon a larger sphere, until the whole lake is covered with circling waves? Such a prayer as this, cast into the whole world, first created a little ring of Jewish converts and of priest, and then a wider circle of such as were beneath the Roman sway; and today its circumference is wide as the globe itself, so that tens of thousands are saved through the prevalence of this one intercession "Father, forgive them." It is certainly so with him in heaven, he never pleads in vain. With bleeding hands, he yet won the day; with feet fastened to the wood, he was yet victorious; forsaken of God and despised of the people, he was yet triumphant in his pleas; how much more so now the tiara is about his

brow, his hand grasp the universal sceptre, and his feet are shod with silver sandals, and he is crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords! If tears and cries out of weakness were omnipotent, even more mighty if possible must be that sacred authority which as the risen Priest he claims when he stands before the Father's throne to mention the covenant which the Father made with him. O ye trembling believers, trust him with your concerns! Come hither, ye guilty, and ask him to plead for you. O you that cannot pray, come, ask him to intercede for you. Broken hearts and weary heads, and disconsolate bosoms, come ye to him who into the golden censer will put his merits, and then place your prayers with them, so that they shall come up as the smoke of perfume, even as a fragrant cloud into the nostrils of the Lord God of hosts, who will smell a sweet savour, and accept you and your prayers in the Beloved. We have now opened up more than enough sea-room for your meditations at home this afternoon, and, therefore we leave this first point. We have an illustration in the prayer of Christ on the cross of what his prayers always are in heaven.

II. Secondly, the text is INSTRUCTIVE OF THE CHURCH'S WORK.

As Christ was, so his church is to be in this world. Christ came into this world not to be ministered unto, but to minister, not to be honoured, but to save others. His church, when she understands her work, will perceive that she is not here to gather to herself wealth or honour, or to seek any temporal aggrandisement and position; she is here unselfishly to live, and if need be, unselfishly to die for the deliverance of the lost sheep, the salvation of lost men. Brethren, Christ's prayer on the cross I told you was altogether an unselfish one. He does not remember himself in it. Such ought to be the church's life-prayer, the church's active interposition on the behalf of sinners. She ought to live never for her ministers or for herself, but ever for the lost sons of men. Imagine you that churches are formed to maintain ministers? Do you conceive that the church exists in this land merely that so much salary may be given to bishops, and deans, and prebends, and curates, and I know not what? My brethren, it were well if the whole thing were abolished if that were its only aim. The aim of the church is not to provide out-door relief for the younger sons of nobility; when they have not brains enough to win anyhow else their livelihood, they are stuck into family livings. Churches are not made that

men of ready speech may stand up on Sundays and talk, and so win daily bread from their admirers. Nay, there is another end and aim from this. These places are not built that you may sit here comfortably, and hear something that shall make you pass away your Sundays with pleasure. A church in London which does not exist to do good in the slums, and dens, and kennels of the city, is a church that has no reason to justify its longer existing. A church that does not exist to reclaim heathenism, to fight with evil, to destroy error, to put down falsehood, a church that does not exist to take the side of the poor, to denounce injustice and to hold up righteousness, is a church that has no right to be. Not for thyself, O church, dost thou exist, any more than Christ existed for himself. His glory was that he laid aside his glory, and the glory of the church is when she lays aside her respectability and her dignity, and counts it to be her glory to gather together the outcast, and her highest honour to seek amid the foulest mire the priceless jewels for which Jesus shed his blood. To rescue souls from hell and lead to God, to hope, to heaven, this is her heavenly occupation. O that the church would always feel this! Let her have her bishops and her preachers, and let them be supported, and let everything be done for Christ's sake decently and in order, but let the end be looked to, namely, the conversion of the wandering, the teaching of the ignorant, the help of the poor, the maintenance of the right, the putting down of the wrong, and the upholding at all hazards of the crown and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the prayer of Christ had a great spirituality of aim. You notice that nothing is sought for these people but that which concerns their souls, "Father, forgive them." And I believe the church will do well when she recollects that she wrestles not with flesh and blood, nor with principalities and powers, but with spiritual wickedness, and that what she has to dispense is not the law and order by which magistrates may be upheld, or tyrannies pulled down, but the spiritual government by which hearts are conquered to Christ, and judgments are brought into subjection to his truth. I believe that the more the church of God strains after, before God, the forgiveness of sinners, and the more she seeks in her life prayer to teach sinners what sin is, and what the blood of Christ is, and what the hell that must follow if sin be not washed out, and what the heaven is which will be ensured to all those who are cleansed from

sin, the more she keeps to this the better. Press forward as one man, my brethren, to secure the root of the matter in the forgiveness of sinners. As to all the evils that afflict humanity, by all means take your share in battling with them; let temperance be maintained, let education be supported; let reforms, political and ecclesiastical, be pushed forward as far as you have the time and the effort to spare, but the first business of every Christian man and women is with the hearts and consciences of men as they stand before the everlasting God. O let nothing turn you aside from your divine errand of mercy to undying souls. This is your one business. Tell to sinners that sin will damn them, that Christ alone can take away sin, and make this the one passion of your souls, "Father, forgive them, forgive them! Let them know how to be forgiven. Let them be actually forgiven, and let me never rest except as I am the means of bringing sinners to be forgiven, even the guiltiest of them."

Our Saviour's prayer teaches the church that while her spirit should be unselfish, and her aim should be spiritual, the range of her mission is to be unlimited. Christ prayed for the wicked, what if I say the most wicked of the wicked, that ribald crew that had surrounded his cross! He prayed for the ignorant. Doth he not say, "They know not what they do"? He prayed for his persecutors; the very persons who were most at enmity with him, lay nearest to his heart. Church of God, your mission is not to the respectable few who will gather about your ministers to listen respectfully to their words; your mission is not to the polite and the eclectic, the intelligent who will criticise your words and pass judgment upon every syllable of your teaching; your mission is not to those who treat you kindly, generously, affectionately, not to these I mean alone, though certainly to these as among the rest; but your great errand is to the harlot, to the thief, to the swearer and the drunkard, to the most depraved and debauched. If no one else cares for these, the church always must, and if there be any who are first in her prayers it should be these who alas! are generally last in our thoughts. The ignorant we ought diligently to consider. It is not enough for the preacher that he preaches so that those instructed from their youth up can understand him; he must think of those to whom the commonest phrases of theological truth are as meaningless as the jargon of an unknown tongue; he must preach so as to reach the meanest comprehension; and if the ignorant may come not to

hear him, he must use such means as best he may to induce them, nay, compel them to hear the good news. The gospel is meant also for those who persecute religion; it aims its arrows of love against the hearts of his foes. If there be any whom we should first seek to bring to Jesus, it should be just these who are the farthest off and the most opposed to the gospel of Christ. "Father, forgive them; if thou dost pardon none besides, yet be pleased to forgive them."

So, too, the church should be earnest as Christ was; and if she be so, she will be quick to notice any ground of hope in those she deals with, quick to observe any plea that she may use with God for their salvation.

She must be hopeful too, and surely no church ever had a more hopeful sphere than the church of this present age. If ignorance be a plea with God, look on the heathen at this day—millions of them never heard Messiah's name. Forgive them, great God, indeed they know not what they do. If ignorance be some ground for hope, there is hope enough in this great city of London, for have we not around us hundreds of thousands to whom the simplest truths of the gospel would be the greatest novelties? Brethren, it is sad to think that this country should still lie under such a pall of ignorance, but the sting of so dread a fact is blunted with hope when we read the Saviour's prayer aright—it helps us to hope while we cry, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It is the church's business to seek after the most fallen and the most ignorant, and to seek them perseveringly. She should never stay her hand from doing good. If the Lord be coming to-morrow, it is no reason why you Christian people should not subside into mere talkers and readers, meeting together for mutual comfort, and forgetting the myriads of perishing souls. If it be true that this world is going to pieces in a fortnight, and that Louis Napoleon is the Apocalyptic beast, or if it be not true, I care not a fig, it makes no difference to my duty, and does not change my service. Let my Lord come when he will, while I labour for him I am ready for his appearing. The business of the church is still to watch for the salvation of souls. If she stood gazing, as modern prophets would have her; if she gave up her mission to indulge in speculative interpretations, she might well be afraid of her Lord's coming; but if she

goes about her work, and with incessant toil searches out her Lord's precious jewels, she shall not be ashamed when her Bridegroom cometh.

My time has been much too short for so vast a subject as I have undertaken, but I wish I could speak words that were as loud as thunder, with a sense and earnestness as mighty as the lightening. I would fain excite every Christian here, and kindle in him a right idea of what his work is as a part of Christ's church. My brethren, you must not live to yourselves; the accumulation of money, the bringing up of your children, the building of houses, the earning of your daily bread, all this you may do; but there must be a greater object than this if you are to be Christlike, as you should be, since you are bought with Jesus' blood. Begin to live for others, make it apparent unto all men that you are not yourselves the end-all and be-all of your own existence, but that you are spending and being spent, that through the good you do to men God may be glorified, and Christ may see in you his own image and be satisfied.

III. Time fails me, but the last point was to be a word SUGGESTIVE TO THE UNCONVERTED.

Listen attentively to these sentences. I will make them as terse and condensed as possible. Some of you here are not saved. Now, some of you have been very ignorant, and when you sinned you did not know what you did. You knew you were sinners, you knew that, but you did not know the far-reaching guilt of sin. You have not been attending the house of prayer long, you have not read your Bible, you have not Christian parents. Now you are beginning to be anxious about your souls. Remember your ignorance does not excuse you, or else Christ would not say, "Forgive them;" they must be forgiven, even those that know not what they do, hence they are individually guilty; but still that ignorance of yours gives you just a little gleam of hope. The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance. The God whom you have ignorantly forgotten is willing to pardon and ready to forgive. The gospel is just this, trust Jesus Christ who died for the guilty, and you shall be saved. O may God help you to do so this very morning, and you will become new men and new women, a change will take place in you equal to a new birth; you

will be new creatures in Christ Jesus.

But ah! My friends, there are some here for whom even Christ himself could not pray this prayer, in the widest sense at any rate, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," for you have known what you did, and every sermon you hear, and especially every impression that is made upon your understanding and conscience by the gospel, adds to your responsibility, and takes away from you the excuse of not knowing what you do. Ah! Sirs, you know that there is the world and Christ, and that you cannot have both. You know that there is sin and God, and that you cannot serve both. You know that there are the pleasure of evil and the pleasures of heaven, and that you cannot have both. Oh! In the light which God has given you, may his Spirit also come and help you to choose that which true wisdom would make you choose. Decide to-day for God, for Christ, for heaven. The Lord decide you for his name's sake. Amen.

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The Shortest of the Seven Cries

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."—John 19:28.

It was most fitting that every word of our Lord upon the cross should be gathered up and preserved. As not a bone of him shall be broken, so not a word shall be lost. The Holy Spirit took special care that each of the sacred utterances should be fittingly recorded. There were, as you know, seven of those last words, and seven is the number of perfection and fulness; the number which blends the three of the infinite God with the four of complete creation. Our Lord in his death-cries, as in all else, was perfection itself. There is a fulness of meaning in each utterance which no man shall be able fully to bring forth, and when combined they make up a vast deep of thought, which no human line can fathom. Here, as everywhere else, we are constrained to say of our Lord, "Never man spake like this man." Amid all the anguish of his spirit his last words prove him

to have remained fully self-possessed, true to his forgiving nature, true to his kingly office, true to his filial relationship, true to his God, true to his love of the written word, true to his glorious work, and true to his faith in his Father.

As these seven sayings were so faithfully recorded, we do not wonder that they have frequently been the subject of devout meditation. Fathers and confessors, preachers and divines have delighted to dwell upon every syllable of these matchless cries. These solemn sentences have shone like the seven golden candlesticks or the seven stars of the Apocalypse, and have lighted multitudes of men to him who spake them. Thoughtful men have drawn a wealth of meaning from them, and in so doing have arranged them into different groups, and placed them under several heads. I cannot give you more than a mere taste of this rich subject, but I have been most struck with two ways of regarding our Lord's last words. First, they teach and confirm many of the doctrines of our holy faith. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" is the first. Here is the forgiveness of sin—free forgiveness in answer to the Saviour's plea. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Here is the safety of the believer in the hour of his departure, and his instant admission into the presence of his Lord. It is a blow at the fable of purgatory which strikes it to the heart. "Women, behold thy son!" This very plainly sets forth the true and proper humanity of Christ, who to the end recognised his human relationship to Mary, of whom he was born. Yet his language teaches us not to worship her, for he calls her "woman," but to honor him in whom his direst agony thought of her needs and griefs, as he also thinks of all his people, for these are his mother and sister and brother. "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" is the fourth cry, and it illustrates the penalty endured by our Substitute when he bore our sins, and so was forsaken of his God. The sharpness of that sentence no exposition can fully disclose to us: it is keen as the very edge and point of the sword which pierced his heart. "I thirst" is the fifth cry, and its utterance teaches us the truth of Scripture, for all things were accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and therefore our Lord said, "I thirst." Holy Scripture remains the basis of our faith, established by every word and act of our Redeemer. The last word but one, "It is finished." There is the complete justification of the believer, since the work by which he is accepted is fully

accomplished. The last of his last words is also taken from the Scriptures, and shows where his mind was feeding. He cried, ere he bowed the head which he had held erect amid all his conflict, as one who never yielded, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." In that cry there is reconciliation to God. He who stood in our stead has finished all his work, and now his spirit comes back to the Father, and he brings us with him. Every word, therefore, you see teaches us some grand fundamental doctrine of our blessed faith. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

A second mode of treating these seven cries is to view them as setting forth the person and offices of our Lord who uttered them. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"—here we see the Mediator interceding: Jesus standing before the Father pleading for the guilty. "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise"—this is the Lord Jesus in kingly power, opening with the key of David a door which none can shut, admitting into the gates of heaven the poor soul who had confessed him on the tree. Hail, everlasting King in heaven, thou dost admit to thy paradise whomsoever thou wilt! Nor dost thou set a time for waiting, but instantly thou dost set wide the gate of pearl; thou hast all power in heaven as well as upon earth. Then came, "Women, behold thy son!" wherein we see the Son of man in the gentleness of a son caring for his bereaved mother. In the former cry, as he opened Paradise, you saw the Son of God; now you see him who was verily and truly born of a woman, made under the law; and under the law you see him still, for he honours his mother and cares for her in the last article of death. Then comes the "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Here we behold his human soul in anguish, his inmost heart overwhelmed by the withdrawing of Jehovah's face, and made to cry out as if in perplexity and amazement. "I thirst," is his human body tormented by grievous pain. Here you see how the mortal flesh had to share in the agony of the inward spirit. "It is finished" is the last word but one, and there you see the perfected Saviour, the Captain of our salvation, who has completed the undertaking upon which he had entered, finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in ever lasting righteousness. The last expiring word in which he commended his spirit to his Father, is the note of acceptance for himself and for us all. As he commends his spirit into the Father's hand, so does he bring all believers nigh to God, and henceforth

we are in the hand of the Father, who is greater than all, and none shall pluck us thence. Is not this a fertile field of thought? May the Holy Spirit often lead us to glean therein.

There are many other ways in which these words might be read, and they would be found to be all full of instruction. Like the steps of a ladder or the links of a golden chain, there is a mutual dependence and interlinking of each of the cries, so that one leads to another and that to a third. Separately or in connection our Master's words overflow with instruction to thoughtful minds: but of all save one I must say, "Of which we cannot now speak particularly."

Our text is the shortest of all the words of Calvary; it stands as two words in our language—"I thirst," but in the Greek it is only one. I cannot say that it is short and sweet, for, alas, it was bitterness itself to our Lord Jesus; and yet out of its bitterness I trust there will come great sweetness to us. Though bitter to him in the speaking it will be sweet to us in the hearing,—so sweet that all the bitterness of our trials shall be forgotten as we remember the vinegar and gall of which he drank.

We shall by the assistance of the Holy Spirit try to regard these words of our Saviour in a five-fold light. First, we shall look upon them as THE ENSIGN OF HIS TRUE HUMANITY. Jesus said, "I thirst," and this is the complaint of a man. Our Lord is the Maker of the ocean and the waters that are above the firmament: it is his hand that stays or opens the bottles of heaven, and sendeth rain upon the evil and upon the good. "The sea is his, and he made it," and all fountains and springs are of his digging. He poureth out the streams that run among the hills, the torrents which rush adown the mountains, and the flowing rivers which enrich the plains. One would have said, If he were thirsty he would not tell us, for all the clouds and rains would be glad to refresh his brow, and the brooks and streams would joyously flow at his feet. And yet, though he was Lord of all he had so fully taken upon himself the form of a servant and was so perfectly made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that he cried with fainting voice, "I thirst." How truly man he is; he is, indeed, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," for he bears our infirmities. I invite you to meditate upon the true humanity of our Lord very reverently, and very lovingly.

Jesus was proved to be really man, because he suffered the pains which belong to manhood. Angels cannot suffer thirst. A phantom, as some have called him, could not suffer in his fashion: but Jesus really suffered, not only the more refined pains of delicate and sensitive minds, but the rougher and commoner pangs of flesh and blood. Thirst is a commonplace misery, such as may happen to peasants or beggars; it is a real pain, and not a thing of a fancy or a nightmare of dreamland. Thirst is no royal grief, but an evil of universal manhood; Jesus is brother to the poorest and most humble of our race. Our Lord, however, endured thirst to an extreme degree, for it was the thirst of death which was upon him, and more, it was the thirst of one whose death was not a common one, for "he tasted death for every man." That thirst was caused, perhaps, in part by the loss of blood, and by the fever created by the irritation caused by his four grievous wounds. The nails were fastened in the most sensitive parts of the body, and the wounds were widened as the weight of his body dragged the nails through his blessed flesh, and tore his tender nerves. The extreme tension produced a burning feverishness. It was pain that dried his mouth and made it like an oven, till he declared, in the language of the twenty-second psalm, "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws." It was a thirst such as none of us have ever known, for not yet has the death dew condensed upon our brows. We shall perhaps know it in our measure in our dying hour, but not yet, nor ever so terribly as he did. Our Lord felt that grievous drought of dissolution by which all moisture seems dried up, and the flesh returns to the dust of death: this those know who have commenced to tread the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus, being a man, escaped none of the ills which are allotted to man in death. He is indeed "Immanuel, God with us" everywhere.

Believing this, let us tenderly feel how very near akin to us our Lord Jesus has become. You have been ill, and you have been parched with fever as he was, and then you too have gasped out "I thirst." Your path runs hard by that of your Master. He said, "I thirst," in order that one might bring him drink, even as you have wished to have a cooling draught handed to you when you could not help yourself. Can you help feeling how very near Jesus is to us when his lips must be moistened with a sponge, and he must be so dependent upon others as to ask drink from their hand? Next time your fevered lips murmur "I am very thirsty," you may say to

yourself, "Those are sacred words, for my Lord spake in that fashion." The words, "I thirst," are a common voice in death chambers. We can never forget the painful scenes of which we have been witness, when we have watched the dissolving of the human frame. Some of those whom we loved very dearly we have seen quite unable to help themselves; the death sweat has been upon them, and this has been one of the marks of their approaching dissolution, that they have been parched with thirst, and could only mutter between their half-closed lips, "Give me to drink." Ah, beloved, our Lord was so truly man that all our griefs remind us of him: the next time we are thirsty we may gaze upon him; and whenever we see a friend faint and thirsting while dying we may behold our Lord dimly, but truly, mirrored in his members. How near akin the thirsty Saviour is to us; let us love him more and more.

How great the love which led him to such a condescension as this! Do not let us forget the infinite distance between the Lord of glory on his throne and the Crucified dried up with thirst. A river of the water of life, pure as crystal, proceedeth to-day out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and yet once he condescended to say, "I thirst," before his angelic guards, they would surely have emulated the courage of the men of David when they cut their way to the well of Bethlehem that was within the gate, and drew water in jeopardy of their lives. Who among us would not willingly pour out his soul unto death if he might but give refreshment to the Lord? And yet he placed himself for our sakes into a position of shame and suffering where none would wait upon him, but when he cried, "I thirst," they gave him vinegar to drink. Glorious stoop of our exalted Head! O Lord Jesus, we love thee and we worship thee! We would fain lift thy name on high in grateful remembrance of the depths to which thou didst descend!

While thus we admire his condescension let our thoughts also turn with delight to his sure sympathy: for if Jesus said, "I thirst," then he knows all our frailties and woes. The next time we are in pain or are suffering depression of spirit we will remember that our Lord understands it all, for he has had practical, personal experience of it. Neither in torture of body nor in sadness of heart are we deserted by our Lord; his line is parallel with ours. The arrow which has lately pierced thee, my brother, was first stained with his blood. The cup of which thou art made to drink, though it

be very bitter, bears the mark of his lips about its brim. He hath traversed the mournful way before thee, and every footprint thou leavest in the sodden soil is stamped side by side with his footmarks. Let the sympathy of Christ, then, be fully believed in and deeply appreciated, since he said, "I thirst."

Henceforth, also, let us cultivate the spirit of resignation, for we may well rejoice to carry a cross which his shoulders have borne before us. Beloved, if our Master said, "I thirst," do we expect every day to drink of streams from Lebanon? He was innocent, and yet he thirsted; shall we marvel if guilty ones are now and then chastened? If he was so poor that his garments were stripped from him, and he was hung up upon the tree, penniless and friendless, hungering and thirsting, will you henceforth groan and murmur because you bear the yoke of poverty and want? There is bread upon your table to-day, and there will be at least a cup of cold water to refresh you. You are not, therefore, so poor as he. Complain not, then. Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord? Let patience have her perfect work. You do suffer. Perhaps, dear sister, you carry about with you a gnawing disease which eats at your heart, but Jesus took our sicknesses, and his cup was more bitter than yours. In your chamber let the gasp of your Lord as he said, "I thirst," go through your ears, and as you hear it let it touch your heart and cause you to gird up yourself and say, "Doth he say, 'I thirst'? Then I will thirst with him and not complain, I will suffer with him and not murmur." The Redeemer's cry of "I thirst" is a solemn lesson of patience to his afflicted.

Once again, as we think of this "I thirst," which proves our Lord's humanity, let us resolve to shun no denials, but rather court them that we may be conformed to his image. May we not be half ashamed of our pleasures when he says, "I thirst"? May we not despise our loaded table while he is neglected? Shall it ever be a hardship to be denied the satisfying draught when he said, "I thirst." Shall carnal appetites be indulged and bodies pampered when Jesus cried "I thirst"? What if the bread be dry, what if the medicine be nauseous; yet for his thirst there was no relief but gall and vinegar, and dare we complain? For his sake we may rejoice in self-denials, and accept Christ and a crust as all we desire between here and heaven. A Christian living to indulge the base appetites

of a brute beast, to eat and to drink almost to gluttony and drunkenness, is utterly unworthy of the name. The conquest of the appetites, the entire subjugation of the flesh, must be achieved, for before our great Exemplar said, "It is finished," wherein methinks he reached the greatest height of all, he stood as only upon the next lower step to that elevation, and said, "I thirst." The power to suffer for another, the capacity to be self-denying even to an extreme to accomplish some great work for God—this is a thing to be sought after, and must be gained before our work is done, and in this Jesus is before us our example and our strength.

Thus have I tried to spy out a measure of teaching, by using that one glass for the soul's eye, through which we look upon "I thirst" as the ensign of his true humanity.

II. Secondly, we shall regard these words, "I thirst," as THE TOKEN OF HIS SUFFERING SUBSTITUTION. The great Surety says, "I thirst," because he is placed in the sinner's stead, and he must therefore undergo the penalty of sin for the ungodly. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" points to the anguish of his soul; "I thirst" expresses in part the torture of his body; and they were both needful, because it is written of the God of justice that he is "able to destroy both soul and body in hell," and the pangs that are due to law are of both kinds, touching both heart and flesh. See, brethren, where sin begins, and mark that there it ends. It began with the mouth of appetite, when it was sinfully gratified, and it ends when a kindred appetite is graciously denied. Our first parents plucked forbidden fruit, and by eating slew the race. Appetite was the door of sin, and therefore in that point our Lord was put to pain. With "I thirst" the evil is destroyed and receives its expiation. I saw the other day the emblem of a serpent with its tail in its mouth, and if I carry it a little beyond the artist's intention the symbol may set forth appetite swallowing up itself. A carnal appetite of the body, the satisfaction of the desire for food, first brought us down under the first Adam, and now the pang of thirst, the denial of what the body craved for, restores us to our place.

Nor is this all. We know from experience that the present effect of sin in every man who indulges in it is thirst of soul. The mind of man is like the

daughters of the horseleech, which cry for ever, "Give, give." Metaphorically understood, thirst is dissatisfaction, the craving of the mind for something which it has not, but which it pines for. Our Lord says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," that thirst being the result of sin in every ungodly man at this moment. Now Christ standing in the stead of the ungodly suffers thirst as a type of his enduring the result of sin. More solemn still is the reflection that according to our Lord's own teaching, thirst will also be the eternal result of sin, for he says concerning the rich glutton, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment," and his prayer, which was denied him, was, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." Now recollect, if Jesus had not thirsted, every one of us would have thirsted for ever afar off from God, with an impassable gulf between us and heaven. Our sinful tongues, blistered by the fever of passion, must have burned for ever had not his tongue been tormented with thirst in our stead. I suppose that the "I thirst" was uttered softly, so that perhaps only one and another who stood near the cross heard it at all; in contrast with the louder cry of "Lama sabachthani" and the triumphant shout of "It is finished": but that soft, expiring sigh, "I thirst," has ended for us the thirst which else, insatiably fierce, had preyed upon us throughout eternity. Oh, wondrous substitution of the just for the unjust, of God for man, of the perfect Christ for us guilty, hell-deserving rebels. Let us magnify and bless our Redeemer's name.

It seems to me very wonderful that this "I thirst" should be, as it were, the clearance of it all. He had no sooner said "I thirst," and sipped the vinegar, than he shouted, "It is finished"; and all was over: the battle was fought and the victory won for ever, and our great Deliverer's thirst was the sign of his having smitten the last foe. The flood of his grief has passed the high-water mark, and began to be assuaged. The "I thirst" was the bearing of the last pang; what if I say it was the expression of the fact that his pangs had at last begun to cease, and their fury had spent itself, and left him able to note his lessor pains? The excitement of a great struggle makes men forget thirst and faintness; it is only when all is over that they come back to themselves and note the spending of their strength. The great agony of being forsaken by God was over, and he felt

faint when the strain was withdrawn. I like to think of our Lord's saying, "It is finished," directly after he had exclaimed, "I thirst"; for these two voices come so naturally together. Our glorious Samson had been fighting our foes; heaps upon heaps he had slain his thousands, and now like Samson he was sore athirst. He sipped of the vinegar, and he was refreshed, and no sooner has he thrown off the thirst than he shouted like a conqueror, "It is finished," and quitted the field, covered with renown. Let us exult as we see our Substitute going through with his work even to the bitter end, and then with a "Consummatum est" returning to his Father, God. O souls, burdened with sin, rest ye here, and resting live.

III. We will now take the text in a third way, and may the Spirit of God instruct us once again. The utterance of "I thirst" brought out A TYPE OF MAN'S TREATMENT OF HIS LORD. It was a confirmation of the Scripture testimony with regard to man's natural enmity to God. According to modern thought man is a very fine and noble creature, struggling to become better. He is greatly to be commended and admired, for his sin is said to be seeking after God, and his superstition is a struggling after light. Great and worshipful being that he is, truth is to be altered for him, the gospel is to be modulated to suit the tone of his various generations, and all the arrangements of the universe are to be rendered subservient to his interests. Justice must fly the field lest it be severe to so deserving a being; as for punishment, it must not be whispered to his ears polite. In fact, the tendency is to exalt man above God and give him the highest place. But such is not the truthful estimate of man according to the Scriptures: there man is a fallen creature, with a carnal mind which cannot be reconciled to God; a worse than brutish creature, rendering evil for good, and treating his God with vile ingratitude. Alas, man is the slave and the dupe of Satan, and a black-hearted traitor to his God. Did not the prophecies say that man would give to his incarnate God gall to eat and vinegar to drink? It is done. He came to save, and man denied him hospitality: at the first there was no room for him at the inn, and at the last there was not one cool cup of water for him to drink; but when he thirsted they gave him vinegar to drink. This is man's treatment of his Saviour. Universal manhood, left to itself, rejects, crucifies, and mocks the Christ of God. This was the act too of man at his best, when he is moved to pity; for it seems clear that he

who lifted up the wet sponge to the Redeemer's lips, did it in compassion. I think that Roman soldier meant well, at least well for a rough warrior with his little light and knowledge. He ran and filled a sponge with vinegar: it was the best way he knew of putting a few drops of moisture to the lips of one who was suffering so much; but though he felt a degree of pity, it was such as one might show to a dog; he felt no reverence, but mocked as he relieved. We read, "The soldiers also mocked him, offering him vinegar." When our Lord cried, "Eloi, Eloi," and afterwards said, "I thirst," the persons around the cross said, "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him," mocking him; and, according to Mark, he who gave the vinegar uttered much the same words. He pitied the sufferer, but he thought so little of him that he joined in the voice of scorn. Even when man compassionates the sufferings of Christ, and man would have ceased to be human if he did not, still he scorns him; the very cup which man gives to Jesus is at once scorn and pity, for "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." See how man at his best mingles admiration of the Saviour's person with scorn of his claims; writing books to hold him up as an example and at the same moment rejecting his deity; admitting that he was a wonderful man, but denying his most sacred mission; extolling his ethical teaching and then trampling on his blood: thus giving him drink, but that drink vinegar. O my hearers, beware of praising Jesus and denying his atoning sacrifice. Beware of rendering him homage and dishonouring his name at the same time.

Alas, my brethren, I cannot say much on the score of man's cruelty to our Lord without touching myself and you. Have we not often given him vinegar to drink? Did we not do so years ago before we knew him? We used to melt when we heard about his sufferings, but we did not turn from our sins. We gave him our tears and then grieved him with our sins. We thought sometimes that we loved him as we heard the story of his death, but we did not change our lives for his sake, nor put our trust in him, and so we gave him vinegar to drink. Nor does the grief end here, for have not the best works we have ever done, and the best feelings we ever felt, and the best prayers we have ever offered, been tart and sour with sin? Can they be compared to generous wine? are they not more like sharp vinegar? I wonder he has ever received them, as one marvels why he received this vinegar; and yet he has received them, and smiled upon

us for presenting them. He knew once how to turn water into wine, and in matchless love he has often turned our sour drink-offerings into something sweet to himself, though in themselves, methinks, they have been the juice of sour grapes, sharp enough to set his teeth on edge. We may therefore come before him, with all the rest of our race, when God subdues them to repentance by his love, and look on him whom we have pierced, and mourn for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. We may well remember our faults this day,

"We, whose proneness to forget
Thy dear love, on Olivet
Bathed thy brow with bloody sweat;
"We whose sins, with awful power,
Like a cloud did o'er thee lower,
In that God-excluding hour;
"We, who still, in thought and dead,
Often hold the bitter reed
To thee, in thy time of need."

I have touched that point very lightly because I want a little more time to dwell upon a fourth view of this scene. May the Holy Ghost help us to hear a fourth tuning of the dolorous music, "I thirst."

IV. I think, beloved friends, that the cry of "I thirst" was THE MYSTICAL EXPRESSION OF THE DESIRE OF HIS HEART—"I thirst." I cannot think that natural thirst was all he felt. He thirsted for water doubtless, but his soul was thirsty in a higher sense; indeed, he seems only to have spoken that the Scriptures might be fulfilled as to the offering him vinegar. Always was he in harmony with himself, and his own body was always expressive of his soul's cravings as well as of its own longings. "I thirst" meant that his heart was thirsting to save men. This thirst had been on him from the earliest of his earthly days. "Wist ye not," said he, while yet a boy, "that I must be about my Father's business?" Did he not tell his disciples, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" He thirsted to pluck us from between the jaws of hell, to pay our redemption price, and set us free from the eternal condemnation which hung over us; and when on the cross the work was almost done his thirst was not assuaged, and could not be till he

could say, "It is finished." It is almost done, thou Christ of God; thou hast almost saved thy people; there remaineth but one thing more, that thou shouldst actually die, and hence thy strong desire to come to the end and complete thy labour. Thou wast still straightened till the last pang was felt and the last word spoken to complete to full redemption, and hence thy cry, "I thirst."

Beloved, there is now upon our Master, and there always has been, a thirst after the love of his people. Do you not remember how that thirst of his was strong in the old days of the prophet? Call to mind his complaint in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, "Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein." What was he looking for from his vineyard and its winepress? What but for the juice of the vine that he might be refreshed? "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes,"—vinegar, and not wine; sourness, and not sweetness. So he was thirsting then. According to the sacred canticle of love, in the fifth chapter of the Song of Songs, we learn that when he drank in those olden times it was in the garden of his church that he was refreshed. What doth he say? "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." In the same song he speaks of his church, and says, "The roof of thy mouth is as the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak." And yet again in the eighth chapter the bride saith, "I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." Yes, he loves to be with his people; they are the garden where he walks for refreshment, and their love, their graces, are the milk and wine which he delights to drink. Christ was always thirsty to save men, and to be loved of men; and we see a type of his life-long desire when, being weary, he sat thus on the well and said to the woman of Samaria, "Give me to drink." There was a deeper meaning in his words than she dreamed of, as a verse further down fully proves, when he said to his disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." He derived spiritual refreshment from the

winning of that women's heart to himself.

And now, brethren, our blessed Lord has at this time a thirst for communion with each one of you who are his people, not because you can do him good, but because he can do you good. He thirsts to bless you and to receive your grateful love in return; he thirsts to see you looking with believing eye to his fulness, and holding out your emptiness that he may supply it. He saith, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." What knocks he for? It is that he may eat and drink with you, for he promises that if we open to him he will enter in and sup with us and we with him. He is thirsty still, you see, for our poor love, and surely we cannot deny it to him. Come let us pour out full flagons, until his joy is fulfilled in us. And what makes him love us so? Ah, that I cannot tell, except his own great love. He must love, it is his nature. He must love his chosen whom he has once begun to love, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His great love makes him thirst to have us much nearer than we are; he will never be satisfied till all his redeemed are beyond gunshot of thee enemy. I will give you one of his thirsty prayers—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." He wants you brother, he wants you, dear sister, he longs to have you wholly to himself. Come to him in prayer, come to him in fellowship, come to him by perfect consecration, come to him by surrendering your whole being to the sweet mysterious influences of his Spirit. Sit at his feet with Mary, lean on his breast with John; yea, come with the spouse in the song and say, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." He calls for that: will you not give it to him? Are you so frozen at heart that not a cup of cold water can be melted for Jesus? Are you lukewarm? O brother, if he says, "I thirst" and you bring him a lukewarm heart, that is worse than vinegar, for he has said, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He can receive vinegar, but not lukewarm love. Come, bring him your warm heart, and let him drink from that purified chalice as much as he wills. Let all your love be his. I know he loves to receive from you, because he delights even in a cup of cold water that you give to one of his disciples; how much more will he delight in the giving of your whole self to him? Therefore while he thirsts give him to drink this day.

V. Lastly, the cry of "I thirst" is to us THE PATTERN OF OUR DEATH WITH HIM. Know ye not, beloved,—for I speak to those who know the Lord,—that ye are crucified together with Christ? Well, then, what means this cry, "I thirst," but this, that we should thirst too? We do not thirst after the old manner wherein we were bitterly afflicted, for he hath said, "He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst:" but now we covet a new thirst. A refined and heavenly appetite, a craving for our Lord. O thou blessed Master, if we are indeed nailed up to the tree with thee, give us a thirst after thee with a thirst which only the cup of "the new covenant in thy blood" can ever satisfy. Certain philosophers have said that they love the pursuit of truth even better than the knowledge of truth. I differ from them greatly, but I will say this, that next to the actual enjoyment of my Lord's presence I love to hunger and to thirst after him. Rutherford used words somewhat to this effect, "I thirst for my Lord and this is joy; a joy which no man taketh from me. Even if I may not come at him, yet shall I be full of consolation, for it is heaven to thirst after him, and surely he will never deny a poor soul liberty to admire him, and adore him, and thirst after him." As for myself, I would grow more and more insatiable after my divine Lord, and when I have much of him I would still cry for more; and then for more, and still for more. My heart shall not be content till he is all in all to me, and I am altogether lost in him. O to be enlarged in soul so as to take deeper draughts of his sweet love, for our heart cannot have enough. One would wish to be as a spouse, who, when she had already been feasting in the banqueting-house, and had found his fruit sweet to her taste, so that she was overjoyed, yet cried out, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." She craved full flagons of love though she was already overpowered by it. This is a kind of sweet whereof if a man hath much he must have more, and when he hath more he is under a still greater necessity to receive more, and so on, his appetite for ever growing by that which it feeds upon, till he is filled with all the fulness of God. "I thirst,"—ay, this is my soul's word with her Lord. Borrowed from his lips it well suiteth my mouth.

"I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.
Dear fountain of delight unknown!

No longer sink below the brim;
But overflow, and pour me down
A living and life-giving stream."

Jesus thirsted, then let us thirst in this dry and thirsty land where no water is. Even as the hart panteth after the water brooks, our souls would thirst after thee, O God.

Beloved, let us thirst for the souls of our fellow-men. I have already told you that such was our Lord's mystical desire; let it be ours also. Brother, thirst to have your children save. Brother, thirst I pray you to have your workpeople saved. Sister, thirst for the salvation of your class, thirst for the redemption of your family, thirst for the conversion of your husband. We ought all to have a longing for conversions. It is so with each one of you? If not, bestir yourselves at once. Fix your hearts upon some unsaved one, and thirst until he is saved. It is the way whereby many shall be brought to Christ, when this blessed soul-thirst of true Christian charity shall be upon those who are themselves saved. Remember how Paul said, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." He would have sacrificed himself to save his countrymen, so heartily did he desire their eternal welfare. Let this mind be in you also.

As for yourselves, thirst after perfection. Hunger and thirst after righteousness, for you shall be filled. Hate sin, and heartily loathe it; but thirst to be holy as God is holy, thirst to be like Christ, thirst to bring glory to his sacred name by complete conformity to his will.

May the Holy Ghost work in you the complete pattern of Christ crucified, and to him shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

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The Offense of the Cross

“Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.”
[Galatians 5:11]

The religion of Jesus is the most peaceful, mild, and benevolent religion that was ever propagated. When we compare it with any set of dogmas invented by men, there is not one of them that can stand the least comparison with it for gentleness, mildness, and love. As for the Muslim religion, it is the religion of the vulture; but the religion of Jesus is that of the dove—all is mercy, all is mild; it is, like its Founder, an embodiment of pure benevolence, grace, and truth.

And yet, strange to say, gentle as the gospel is, and inoffensive as its professors have always proved themselves to be, when they have acted rightly—not resisting evil, but submitting to it, whatever it might be—yet there has never been anything which has caused more disturbance in the world than the Christian religion. It is not a sword, and yet it has brought war into the world; it is not a fire, and yet it has consumed many old institutions, and has burned much that men thought would last forever; it is the gospel of peace, and yet it has separated the dearest of friends, and caused terrible feuds and confusions everywhere. Though in itself it is all gentleness, yet it seems as if the flag of the peace were the battle flag, and as if raising up the peaceful cross had been the signal for war, like the blood-red fiery cross, which in the past they passed through Scotland, to summon the clans to battle. Strange, yet strangely true is it, that the cross of Christ has always been an offense, and that it has provoked the fiercest battles and the severest strifes which men have ever had with their fellowmen.

In considering our text, I will, first, discuss with you a little concerning what “the offense of the cross” is; secondly, how men show their offense against the cross; thirdly, I will have a little to say to those who are offended by the cross, to show them their folly; and, lastly, I will conclude with an inference or two, for the special benefit of Christian ministers, and the Church at large.

I. First, let us answer the question, WHAT EXACTLY IS “The OFFENSE

OF THE CROSS”

Our limited time prohibits any attempt to be elaborate, and we begin by saying that “the offense of the cross” lies, first, in the way in it deals with all human wisdom.

The philosopher looks at the cross, and then says, “I cannot see anything wonderful in it, even though I can see more clearly than the poor, humble peasant; I do not care about such a system of religion as that; any simpleton can understand the cross.” So he passes by, and merely sneers at it.

The man who loves controversy comes to the gospel, and finds that there is in it pure stubbornness. Such things are said to be true, and sinners must believe them, or else be damned. “I will not do so” he says; “I will not yield implicit faith to the gospel; I like disputing on points of doctrine; I like contradicting them; I will not listen to your preacher who says, ‘This is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.’ I will not listen to the man who speaks so authoritatively; I like men who will give me enough room to doubt, who let me believe what I like; I prefer to use my reason and common sense.” When you come to talk with him about the religion which says, “Believe that, or else be lost; believe that, or else be shut out of the light of salvation;” he turns on his heel, and says, “I will not believe any such thing.” And when he asks what it is he is to believe, he professes himself to be wiser even than the Word of God. “What!” says he “believe in the atonement? I can’t; it is contrary to my common sense. Believe the doctrine of election? Why, it shocks my humanity! Believe in the total depravity of human nature, and the impossibility of being saved without being born again? Why, I cannot receive such teaching for a single moment. It is contrary to all that I have ever been taught, and different from what any philosopher would ever have invented; so I will not receive it.” And he turns away with an abhorrence of the cross. He cannot stand it because of its great simplicity. If he could describe it as being so wonderful that he could by no means make the common people comprehend it, and that it was only because of his gigantic intellect that he was able to understand it himself, he would not mind accepting it; but as it is so plain and simple, he turns away from it in disgust. He cannot bear the gospel of the cross; it does not have enough worldly wisdom in it for him; and he either does not know or he

forgets that the knowledge of Christ crucified is the most excellent of all the sciences, and that never is reason so glorified as when it humbly sits down under the shadow of the cross.

But there is something in the cross of Christ which hurts men's pride even more than this, and that is, it is opposed to all their ideas of human ability.

The man who is relying on his own strength for salvation, does not like the doctrine of the cross. If anyone preaches a gospel which tells the sinner that he has power to save himself; if he preaches a gospel which says that Christ died to put all men in a "savable" condition, that they only have to exercise the power they have, and they will be able to deliver themselves; if a man preaches something which exalts the skill and strength of the creature, he will never, never offend his unregenerate listeners. But if he starts to cast the sinner down in the dust, and to teach what Christ himself taught, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him;" and that, in the Scriptures, all men are declared to be "dead in transgressions and sins;" then the proud sinner will turn away, and say, "I am not going to be so insulted, as to have all my powers leveled to the ground! Am I to be made into a mere machine, or into a piece of clay, and to lie passive in the Potter's hands? I will not submit to such an indignity." If the minister will give him a little to do himself, and let him sacrifice a little to his own idol, he will drink down the false doctrine as the ox drinks down water; but since we tell him he is powerless, like the poor bleeding man when the Samaritan met him, he says, "I will have nothing to do with you."

And again the cross offends men and women, because it is contrary to their ideas of human worth.

There is not a soul in all the world that, by nature, loves to be stripped of all worth. No! the last thing a man likes to part with is his righteousness. I have known poor sinners stand on Sinai's top until their knees knocked together, yet they have clung to their self-righteousness even there. I have known men stand where God's earthquakes were shaking the ground under their feet, and the thunder and lightning were playing above their heads; yet they still held fast their self-righteousness. It is a hard thing to get that away from men. You know how Bunyan says, in his book *Pilgrims Progress*, that when Great-heart killed Giant Despair, the giant "had, as

they say, as many lives as a cat;” and I am sure that self-righteousness has many more lives than that; it is the hardest thing in the world to kill. You may cut and pull out the evil weed of self-righteousness; but when you think you have gotten the last bit of its root, it will be shooting up again before you can sharpen your knife to cut it out once more. This evil thing is bred in man’s nature. When you preach against it, see how men will snarl at you; they cannot stand that doctrine.

I sometimes receive letters from persons who say, “We wouldn’t be surprised if your entire congregation were living in sin, because you are always preaching against man’s righteousness, and inviting poor sinners to come to Christ by simple faith, and be saved by grace alone.” I daresay they would not be surprised if such a thing were to happen; but I would be surprised if my people, as a whole, did, in fact, live in sin, and I bless God that I have no reason to wonder about that matter, for a holier people you will not find this side heaven than those who receive into their hearts the doctrine of Christ’s imputed righteousness. This I will say of them, that grace has produced in them good fruits, such that they do walk in the fear of the Lord, in love to one another, and in the practice of honesty and godliness. But men of the world cannot stand this teaching, because it makes nothing of the worth of which they think so much about. Tell men that they are very good people; they will like to hear that. Give people a good reason to be proud of themselves, and they will like to listen to you; but that pride is the ruin of thousands and thousands of people. I am sure it is only when we begin to say,

“I’m a poor sinner, and only Jesus Christ is everything to me,”

that we are saved. But as long as we are content with ourselves in our natural sinful condition, there is not the slightest hope for us. So, you see, this is “the offense of the cross,” that we do not let men trust in their own self-worth.

But there is another offense, which is a very painful one, and the world has never yet forgiven the cross for that “offense”—the offense that the cross will not recognize any distinctions between mankind.

The cross makes moral and immoral persons go to heaven by the same road; the cross makes rich and poor enter heaven by the same door; the cross makes the philosopher and peasant walk on the same highway of holiness; the cross procures the same crown for the poor creature with

one talent that the man with ten talents will receive. Therefore, the wise man says, "What! am I to be saved by the same cross which saves a man who does not even know the alphabet?" The very rich and sophisticated lady asks, "Am I to be saved in the same fashion as my servant-girl?" The gentleman says, "Am I to be saved the same way as the common laborer?" And he who boasts of his self-righteousness cries, "What! am I to walk close to a prostitute, to be side by side with a drunkard on the road to heaven? Then, I will not go to heaven at all." Then, sir, you will be lost. There are not two roads to heaven; it is the same road for everyone who goes there; and therefore, the cross has always been offensive to men of wealth, knowledge, and power-very few kings and queens have ever bent humbly before it. Men have covered up the cross with some fine decoration, and they have said that they loved it; but it was not the cross they cared for, rather it was the religious ornament.

II. This brings me now to tell you, in the second place, HOW PERSONS SHOW THEIR OFFENSE AGAINST THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

In times past, they did it by burning, torturing, and tormenting Christians, making them suffer all kinds of indescribable agonies. But that method did not satisfy, so the devil adopts other measures now. He found that the more he oppressed them, like Israel in Egypt, the more they multiplied; so now he acts in another way. How does he do it? Not exactly by open persecution; but "the offense of the cross" shows itself, sometimes, by private persecution. Not all of you hear of the persecution that is going on with regard to the Lord's people. Every now and then, things of this sort come to my attention, though you may not know of them. So many drunken husbands persecute their wives almost incessantly because of their wife's deep love for God! Many young men and women are called to suffer persecution from father and mother and sister and brother, because of Christ! Persecution is not over yet; it works in a sly way, and not openly before the world. It is not openly displayed in our cities, as it was in the past, though there may be many houses in our neighborhoods that reeks of it. It does not display its true colors, but watches for its prey in a covert way. It is not the lion, but the prowling jackal, though it is as wild and as ravenous as ever. And when persecution does not display itself in positive acts, it operates by means of jeers and scoffs, and by the shrug of the shoulder; and, let me say, more men have been ruined by this practice than by the severest slanders. Men who

shrug their shoulders generally do a great deal more harm than they may be aware of. Recently, when sitting at dinner, I had mentioned a person's name, and someone shrugged his shoulders, and said, "Oh!"-well, with that shrug and word the man's character was half gone. If the person had anything to say against the other, why couldn't he simply state it clearly, and not leave us in the dark to guess all kinds of iniquities? Another man will say, "I don't wish to persecute you; you can go to church as often as you like;" yet there is on his face the cold sneer, and on his lip the cruel jest or slander; every idle rumor is circulated, and everything that can be invented against the minister of the gospel and against Christian people-all still showing that there is now, as there was in the days of the apostles, an "offense of the cross."

But I will tell you what Satan's favorite scheme is nowadays; it is not to oppose the cross, but to surround the cross, and try to get the cross to alter its shape a little.

Men who hate the doctrines of the cross, say, "We, too, preach the gospel." They alter it; they misshape it; they make it "another gospel, which is no gospel at all." Let others say, if they will, that yes and no can meet together; that fire and water can kiss each other; that Christ and Belial can be twins: the true minister of Jesus Christ cannot do that. Truth is truth; and whatever is the opposite of it cannot be truth. That which opposes truth must certainly be error and falsehood. But it is the fashion nowadays to try to blend the two things together.

Look at many of the churches; they say that they hold the truth. Look at their doctrines; there you will find all the five points of Calvinism. And if you ask the ministers whether they believe in the doctrine of election? "Certainly," they reply. If you ask them whether they believe all the great cardinal truths of the gospel; they say, "Oh, yes, certainly we believe them; but we don't think that they ought to be preached to the common people." Ah, sirs! you have a fine opinion of yourselves, if you don't think that "the common people" are as good as you are, and that they can receive the doctrines of grace as well as you can. They say, "Oh! but those doctrines are dangerous; they drive the people to Antinomianism-to believing that they can save themselves." My dear friends, they say this; but when we write to them about their improper beliefs, they reply, "Oh, we are as sound as you are!" Yes; but it is one thing to be sound, and another thing to preach sound truth. I will never believe a man to be

better than what he preaches; if a man does not proclaim “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” then we will be greatly opposed to him because he says that he believes it. We would rather he did not believe it at all than that he should conceal his real sentiments. Such men, who hide the truth, prove that they are as much offended with the cross as if they openly tried to refute its doctrines. God send us the day when the pure, unadulterated doctrines of the grace of God, which is in Christ Jesus, will be proclaimed in every church, and heard in every street, and accepted by every professed Christian!

III. Now I come, in the third place, TO SAY SOMETHING TO THOSE WHO ARE OFFENDED BY THE CROSS,

First, let me say that it is very foolish for a man who does not believe the gospel to oppose those who do.

If a man personally does not love the gospel, he should leave others alone that do. He does not love the gospel; and because others do, he hates them. Why, surely, what you do not want yourselves, you might let other people have in peace! You need not oppose them for carrying away what you consider worthless rubbish. Why should you be so offended, and endeavor to make a stand against the truth, since you cannot, in your present condition, get anything out of it?

Then, next, how foolish it is to be offended at the cross, seeing that you cannot stop its progress!

He who would place himself before a fast moving railway car will be crushed, and would be just as foolish as you who are opposing the gospel. If it is true, remember that “truth is mighty, and must prevail.” Who are you to attempt to stand against it? You will be crushed; but let me tell you that, when the railway car runs over you, the wheel will not be raised even an inch by your size. For what are you? A tiny gnat, a creeping worm, which that wheel will crush to less than nothing, and not leave you even a name as having been an opponent of the gospel. There have been men who have stood up, and said, “We will stop the chariot of Christ.” Thousands have looked at them, and have been afraid. Their trumpets have blown loud and long, and some poor Christians have said, “Stand aside! Here comes a man who will stop the chariot of the Lord Jesus.” At one time, it was Tom Paine; then it was Robert Owen; but what became of

them? Did the chariot stop for them? No; it went on just as if there had never been a Tom Paine or a Robert Owen on the earth.

Let all the infidels in the world know assuredly that the gospel will win its way, whatever they may do. Poor creatures! their efforts to oppose it are not worthy of our notice; and we need not fear that they can stop the truth. They are like a gnat who thinks he can quench the sun. Go, tiny insect, and do it, if you can. You will only burn your wings, and die. Likewise, there may be a fly who thinks it could drink the ocean dry. Drink the ocean, if you can; more likely, you will sink in it, and so it will drink you.

You who despise and oppose the gospel; what can you do? It comes on “conquering and to conquer.” I always think that, the more enemies the gospel has, the more it will advance. As the old warrior said, “The more enemies there are, the more there are to be killed, the more there are to be taken prisoners, and the more there are to run away.” Double your numbers, you opposers of the gospel! Come on against us with a still mightier power! Rage even more loudly! Slander us in even a more disgusting manner! Do what you can, victory is ours, for it is predestinated. The massive column of Divine Predestination stands firm, and on its top there are the eagle wings bestowing victory for every believer, and for the whole Church of the Living Christ. God’s truth must and will conquer; therefore how can you, you foolish creature, hope to oppose the gospel because it offends you? The rock, which was cut out without human hands, cannot be broken by you; but if it falls on you, it will grind you to powder.

But another thought, and I will be done with this part of my subject.

O unbeliever! if you hate the gospel, let me solemnly say to you how doubly foolish you are to be offended with Christ, who is the only One who can save you!

How can the drowning man be offended with the rope which is thrown to him, and which is the only means of his escape; how can the dying patient be offended with the cup of medicine which is put to his lips, and which alone can save his body from death; how can the man whose house is burning be offended with the fireman who roughly puts the ladder against his window-likewise, how is it that you would be offended with Christ. Offended with him who would snatch you as “a firebrand from the burning”? Offended with him who alone can quench for you the fire of

hell? Offended with him whose blood alone can wash you white, and give you a place with him in everlasting glory? Offended with him? Then you are indeed mad. No chaos or confusion can ever produce a maniac more foolish than you are.

Ah, you despisers of the gospel, you will wonder and perish! You are offended with the gospel because it says that you have no righteousness or worth in yourself; but you haven't any, then why are you offended? You are offended at the gospel because it does not ask anything of you in order that you may be saved; yet, if it did demand anything of you as a condition of your salvation, you would be lost. It is just the gospel for you; it is made on purpose; it fits your condition; it is adapted to your case; and yet you are offended with it! Oh, how can you be so foolish? Did you ever hear of a man who was offended with a railway car that was carrying him, because it had wheels? Why should you be offended with the gospel chariot because it could not advance except on the wheels of free grace? What! you are offended with the gospel because it humbles you? Don't you know that it is the very best place for you? The devil would have you very proud if he could; but that would be only that he might ruin you.

My dear friends, I beg you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, please consider why you are offended with the gospel. I know it goes against your prejudices; when you first hear it, you do not love it; but, remember, it is your only hope of salvation. Are you offended with the only thing that can save you? Offended with that which can put a crown on your head, a palm-branch in your hand, and give you bliss forever? Then, I think, when you sink into hell, you will look up to heaven, and say, "Ah, Christ! I was offended with you, and now I see that you were the only Savior. I hated your name, of which it is written, 'At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow.' I hated that Savior who was the only Savior able to redeem sinners from sin."

IV. Lastly, I will DRAW ONE OR TWO INFERENCES.

The first is this, If the cross of Christ is an offense, and always was an offense, what is the reason why so many professing Christians have such peace from January to December, and never have any trouble about the Cross?

Old John Berridge said, "If you do not preach the gospel, you may sleep soundly enough; but if you do preach it faithfully, you will hardly have a sound place in your skin, for you will soon have plenty of enemies

attacking you.” How is it that we never hear of any slander against a great many ministers? Everything is easy and comfortable for them; nobody is ever offended with their preaching, in fact, people go out of their church doors, and say, “What a nice sermon! It was just the thing for everybody, and nobody could be offended.” They do not preach the gospel fully, or they would be sure to offend some people. Suppose that somebody says to me, “Do you know that Mrs. So-and-so was highly offended with your last sermon?” That is of no concern to me if I know that I have preached the truth. A celebrated preacher was once said that he had pleased all his listeners. “Ah!” he said, “there is another sermon lost.” The most effective sermons are those which make the enemies of the gospel bite their lips, and gnash their teeth. Rowland Hill used to say, “That preaching is worth very little that cannot make the devil growl. He preaches only a little truth if the old lion is not roaring against him.” Depend on it, Satan hates the gospel as much as he ever has, and likewise, the world hates it as much as it always has. If there is not, nowadays, as much persecution and hatred as there used to be against the Gospel, then it is simply because men do not proclaim the plain, simple truth as their forefathers did. People go to hear nice velvet-tongued preachers; they like the minister to speak smooth things to them.

“I won’t go to hear Mr. So-and-so,” one says, “for he will surely offend me.” Now what is the reason for this? It is because he preaches the whole gospel, the pure truth of God. But do men think that we want to offend them? No, God knows, the hard things we often say cause us more pain than they cause our listeners. But it is good when we care very little for the opinion of men, and when we have learned to live above the world. Once let ministers faithfully proclaim the plain, simple gospel, and we will soon hear the laughter, and scorn, and jeers. It was an ill day when the sons of God made affinity with the daughters of men; and it will be a sad day for the Church of the Living Christ when the world speaks well of it, and everybody commends it. The religion that is most spoken against is usually the religion where Christ dwells the most; but the religion that is rich with worldly wealth, and bounced on the knees of honor, is usually the most corrupt. Preach the gospel boldly, consistently, continuously, strongly, and completely, and you will not have to wait long before you hear something about “the offense of the cross.”

My last remark is this. O my brothers and sisters, we have good reason to

bless and extol our gracious God, if the cross of Christ is not an offense to us!

I hope many here can unite with me in saying that there is nothing in the Bible that offends us, and there is nothing in the gospel that offends us now. If there is anything you do not understand, you do not hate it; if it seems dark and mysterious, you do not reject it, but you are willing to learn all you can about it. Ah, my God! if all I have ever preached is false, I stand prepared to disown it when you will teach me better; if all I have ever learned was a mistake, and I have not learned it from you, then I will not be ashamed to recant it in that hour when you yourself will teach me, and show me my error. We are not ashamed to bring ourselves wholly into the mold of Scripture, to take it just as it stands, to believe it, and to receive it.

My friends, if this describes your attitude towards the Cross and God's Holy Word then you are saved, for no man or woman can say that they accept the gospel in its entirety, loves every bit of it, and receives it in their heart, and can still be a stranger to it. I have heard preachers ignorantly talk about "natural" love to the gospel; there cannot be such a thing. I heard someone say that there was a "natural" love to Christ; it is all rubbish. Nature cannot produce a love for Christ, nor love to any good thing; that must come from God, for all love is from him. There is nothing good in us by nature. Every conviction must, in some way or other, come from the Holy Spirit. Even if it is a temporary one, it must be traced to him, if it is good. Oh, let us adore, and exalt, and magnify the mighty grace that has made us love the gospel! For I am sure, with some of us, there was a time when we hated it as much as any people in all the world ever did. Old John Newton used to say, "You who are called Calvinists-though you are not merely Calvinists, but the old, legitimate successors of Christ-you ought above all men to be very gentle with your opponents, for, remember, according to your own principles, they cannot learn truth unless they are taught of God; and if you have been taught of God, you ought to bless his name; and if they have not, you should not be angry with them, but pray to God to give them a better education." My friends, do not let us make any extra "offense of the cross" by our own bad attitude, but let us show our love to the cross by loving and trying to bless those who have been offended with it.

Ah! poor sinner, what do you say? Are you offended by the cross? No, you

are not, for it is there that you wish to be set free from your sins. Do you desire this moment to come to Christ? You say, "I have no offense against Christ. Oh, that I knew where I might find him! I would come even to where he sits." Well, if you want Christ, Christ wants you; if you desire Christ, Christ desires you. Yes, more than you desire him; if you have one spark of desire for Christ, then Christ has a whole burning mountain of desire for you. He loves you better than you can ever love him. Rest assured that you did not first seek God. If you are seeking Jesus, he has first sought you. Come, then, you destitute, weary, lost, helpless, ruined, chief of sinners; come, put your trust in his blood and his perfect righteousness, and you will go on your way rejoicing in Christ, set free from sin, delivered from iniquity, rendered as safe, though not as happy, as the very angels that now sing high hosannas before the throne of the Most High! Amen.

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The Saviour's Many Crowns

"On his head were many crowns."—Revelation 19:12.

Oh,, well ye know what head this was, and ye have not forgotten its marvellous history. A head which once in infancy reclined upon the bosom of a woman! A head which was meekly bowed in obedience to a carpenter! A head which became in after years a fountain of water, and a reservoir of tears. A head which "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground!" A head which was spit upon, whose hair was plucked: A head which at the last in the grim agony of death, crowned with thorns, gave utterance to the terrible death-shriek—lama sabachthani! A head which afterwards slept in the grave; and—glory be unto him that liveth and was dead, but is alive for evermore—a head which afterwards rose again from the tomb, and looked with radiant eyes of love upon the holy women waiting at the sepulcher. This is the head whereof John speaks in the words of the text. Who would have thought that a head, the visage of which was more marred than that of any other man—a head which suffered more from the tempests of heavenward of

earth than ever mortal brow before, should now be surrounded with these many diadems, these star-bestudded crowns!

My brethren, it needs John himself to expound this glorious vision to you. Alas my eye has not yet seen the heavenly glory, nor has my ear heard the celestial song, I am therefore but as a little child among topless mountains, overawed with grandeur, and speechless with awe. Pray for me that I may utter a few words which the Holy Spirit may comfortably apply to your souls, for if he help me not, I am helpless indeed. With his divine aid, I dare to look upon the glorious diadems of our Lord and King. The crowns upon the head of Christ are of three sorts. First, there are the crowns of dominions, many of which are on his head. Next, there are the crowns of victory, which he has won in many a terrible battle. Then there are the crowns of thanksgiving with which his church and all his people have delighted to crown his wondrous head.

I. First, then, let every believing eye look through the thick darkness and behold Jesus as he sits this day upon the throne of his Father, and let every heart rejoice while it sees the many CROWNS OF DOMINION upon his head. First, and foremost, there sparkles about his brow the everlasting diadem of the King of Heaven. His are the angels. The cherubim and seraphim continually bound forth his praise. At his behest the mightiest spirit delights to fly, and carry his commands to the most distant world". He has but to speak, and it is done. Cheerfully is he obeyed, and majestically doth he reign his high courts are thronged with holy spirits, who live upon his smile, who drink light from his eyes, who borrow glory from his majesty. There is no spirit in heaven so pure that it does not bow before him, no angel so bright that it does not veil its face with its wings, when it draweth near to him. Yea, moreover, the many spirits redeemed, delight to bow before him, day without night they circle his throne, singing—"Worthy is he that was slain and hath redeemed us from our sins by his blood, honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." To be King of heaven were surely enough! The ancients were accustomed to divide heaven, and earth, and hell, into divers monarchies, and allot each of them to distinct kings; and surely heaven were an empire large enough even for an infinite Spirit. Christ is

Lord of all its boundless plains. He laid the precious stones upon which was builded that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; he is the light of that city, he is the joy of its inhabitants, and it is their loving life evermore to pay him honor. Side by side with this bright crown behold another. It is the iron crown of hell, for Christ reigneth there supreme. Not only in the dazzling brightness of heaven, but in the black impenetrable darkness of hell is his omnipotence felt, and his sovereignty acknowledged; the chains which bind damned spirits are the chains of his strength; the fires which burn are the fires of his vengeance; the burning rays that scorch through their eyeballs, and melt their very heart, are flashed from his vindictive eye. There is no power in hell besides his. The very devils know his might. He chaineth the great dragon. If he give him a temporary liberty, yet is the chain in his hand, and he can draw him back lest he go beyond his limit. Hell trembles at him. The very howlings of lost spirits are but deep bass notes of his praise. While in heaven the glorious notes shout forth his goodness; in hell the deep growlings resound his justice, and his certain victory over an his foes. Thus his empire is higher than the highest heaven, and deeper than the lowest hell. This earth also is a province of his wide domains. Though small the empire compared with others, yet from this world hath he perhaps derived more glory than from any other part of his dominions. He reigns on earth. On his head is the crown of creation. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." His voice said, "Let there be light," and there was light. It was his strength that piled the mountains, and his wisdom balances the clouds. He is Creator. If you lift your eye to the upper spheres, and behold yon starry worlds—he made them. They are not self-created. He struck them off like sparks from the anvil of his omnipotence; and there they glitter, upheld and supported by his might. He made the earth and all men that be upon it, the cattle an a thousand hills, and the birds that make glad the air. The sea is his, and he made it also. Leviathan he hath formed, and though that monster maketh the deep to be hoary, yet is he but a creature of his power. Together with this crown of creation there is yet another—the crown of providence, for he sustaineth all things by the word of his power. Everything must cease to be, if it were not for the continual out-going of his strength. The earth must die, the sun must grow dim with age, and nature sink in years, if Christ supplied it not with

perpetual strength. He sends the howling blasts of winter; he, anon, restrains them and breathes the breath of spring; he ripens the fruits of summer, and he makes glad the autumn with his harvest. All things know his will. The heart of the great universe beats by his power; the very sea derives its tide from him. Let him once withdraw his hands, and the pillars of earth must tremble; the stars must fall like fig leaves from the tree, and all things must be quenched in the blackness of annihilation. On his head is the crown of providence. And next to this there glitters also the thrice-glorious crown of grace. He is the King of grace: he gives, or he withholds. The river of God's mercy flows from underneath his throne; he sits as Sovereign in the dispensation of mercy. He hath the key of heaven; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth; he calleth, and the stubborn heart obeys; he willeth, and the rebellious spirit bends its knee; for he is Master of men, and when he wills to bless, none can refuse the benediction. He reigneth in his church amidst willing spirits; and he reigns for his church over all the nations of the world, that he may gather unto himself a people that no man can number who shall bow before the scepter of his love.

I pause here, overcome by the majesty of the subject, and instead of attempting to describe that brow, and those glittering crowns, I shall act the part of a seraph, and bow before that well-crowned head, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, art thou Lord God of hosts! The keys of heaven, and death, and hell, hang at thy girdle; thou art supreme, and unto thee be glory for ever and ever."

And now, my brothers, what say you to this? Do not sundry thoughts at once stir in your hearts? Methinks I hear one say, "If this be so, if Christ hath these many crowns of dominion, how vain it is for me to rebel against him." My hearers, it may be, some of you are striving against Christ. Like Saul of Tarsus, you have become "exceeding mad" against him. Your wife frequents the house of God, and you forbid her. You persecute your child because she follows Jesus. You hate the very name of Christ; you curse his servants; you despise his Word. You would if you could, spit upon his ministers; and, perhaps, burn his people. This know, that you have undertaken a battle in which you are certain of defeat. Who ever above against him and prospered? Go O man and do battle against

the lightning, and hold the thunder-bolt in thine hand; go and restrain the sea, and hush the billows, and hold the winds in the hollow of thine hand; and when thou hast done this, then lift thy puny hand against the King of kings. For he that was crucified is thy Master, and though thou oppose him thou shalt not succeed. In thy utmost malice thou shalt be defeated, and the vehemence of thy wrath shall but return upon thine own head. Methinks I see this day the multitudes of Christ's enemies. They stand up; they take counsel together—"Let us break his bands in sunder; let us cast away his cords from us." Hear ye, O rebels, yonder deep-sounding laugh? Out of the thick darkness of his tabernacle, Jehovah laughs at you. He hath you in derision. He saith "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Come on, ye enemies of Christ, and be dashed in pieces. Come on in your most vehement force, and fall like the waves that are broken against the immovable rock. He ruleth and he will rule; and you one day shall be made to feel his power. For "At the name of Jesus every knee must bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth."

Another thought, right full of comfort springs up to my mind. Believer, look to Christ's thrice-crowned head this day and be comforted. Is providence against thee? Correct thy speech; thou hast erred, God hath not become thine enemy. Providence is not against thee, for Jesus is its King; he weighs its trials and counts its storms. Thy enemies may strive, but they shall not prevail against thee—he shall smite them upon the cheek-bone. Art thou passing through the fire? The fire is Christ's dominion. Art thou going through the floods? They shall not drown thee; for even the floods obey the voice of the Omnipotent Messiah. Wherever thou art called, thou canst not go where Jesus's love reigns not. Commit thyself into his hands. However dark thy circumstance, he can make thy pathway clear. Though night surround thee, he shall surely bring the day. Only trust thou in him; leave thy concerns both little and great in his Almighty hands, and thou shalt yet see how kind his heart, how strong his hand to bring thee out and glorify thee. Repose your confidence in him who is the King of kings. Come bring your burdens each one of you to his feet, and take a song away. If your hearts be heavy bring them here; the golden scepter can lighten them. If your griefs be many, tell them into his ear; his loving eyes can scatter them, and through the thick darkness shall

there be a bright light shining, and you shall see his face and know that all is well.

I am sure there is no more delightful doctrine to a Christian, than that of Christ's absolute sovereignty. I am glad there is no such thing as chance, that nothing is left to itself, but that Christ everywhere hath sway. If I thought that there was a devil in hell that Christ did not govern, I should be afraid that devil would destroy me, If I thought there was a circumstance on earth, which Christ did not over-rule, I should fear that that circumstance would ruin me. Nay, if there were an angel in heaven that was not one of Jehovah's subjects, I should tremble even at him. But since Christ is King of kings, and I am his poor brother, one whom he loves, I give all my cares to him, for he careth for me; and leaning on his breast, my soul hath full repose, confidence, and security.

II. And now, in the second place, Christ hath many CROWN'S OF VICTORY. The first diadems which I have mentioned are his by right. He is God's only begotten and well-beloved Son, and hence he inherits unlimited dominions. But viewed as the Son of Man, conquest has made him great, and his own right hand and his holy arm have won for him the triumph. In the first place, Christ has a crown which I pray that every one of you may wear. He has a crown of victory over the world. For thus saith he himself, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Did you ever think of what a stern battle that was which Christ had to fight with the world? The world first said, "I will extinguish him, he shall not be known;" and it threw on Christ heaps of poverty that there he might be smothered. But he shone in his poverty, and the seamless coat shone with greater light than the robe of the rabbi. Then the world attacked him with its threatenings. Sometimes they dragged him to the brow of a hill to cast him down headlong; at another time they took up stones to stone him. But he who was not to be bidden by poverty, was not to be quenched by threatening. And then the world tried its blandishments; it came with a fair face and presented to him a crown. They would have taken Christ and would have made him a king; but he who cared not for their frowns was regardless of their smiles. He put away the crown from him; he came not to be a king but to suffer and to die. "My kingdom is not of this world," said he, "else would my servants fight." Have you never thought how

through thirty years the world tempted Christ? That temptation of the devil in the wilderness was not the only one which he had to endure. Trials of every shape and size surrounded him, the world emptied its quiver, and shot all its arrows against the breast of the spotless Redeemer; but all holy, all unharmed was he. Still separate from sinners, he walked among them without defilement; feasted among them, and yet did not sanction their gluttony; drank with them, and yet was not a drunkard, acted as they acted in all innocent things, and was the world's man, and yet not a man of the world. He was in the world, but he was not of it; separate, and yet one of themselves; united to our race by closest ties, and yet evermore separate and distinguished from all mankind. I would, my brethren, that we could imitate Christ in our battle with the world. But alas, the world oftentimes gets the upper hand of us. Sometimes we yield to its smiles, and often do we tremble before its frowns. Have hope and courage, believer; be like your Master, be the world's foe and overcome it, yield not, suffer it never to entrap your watchful feet. Stand upright amid all its pressure, and be not moved by all its enchantments. Christ did this, and therefore around his head is that right royal crown of victory; trophy of triumph over the entire forces of the world.

Furthermore, the next crown he wears is the crown by which he has overcome sin. Sin has been more than a match for creatures of every kind. Sin fought the angels and a third part of the stars of heaven fell. Sin defied the perfect Adam and soon overcame him, for even at the first blow he fell. Sin had a stern contest with Jesus our Lord, but in him it found its master. Sin came with all its temptations, but Christ resisted and overcame. It came with its horror and with its curse; Christ suffered, Christ endured, and so destroyed its power. He took the poisoned darts of the curse into his own heart, and there quenched its poison fires by shedding his own blood. By suffering, Christ has become master over sin. The dragon's neck is now beneath his feet. There is not a temptation which he has not known and therefore not a sin which he has not overcome. He has cast down every shape and form of evil, and now for ever stands he more than a conqueror through his glorious sufferings. Oh, my brethren, how bright that crown which he deserves, who hath for ever put away our sin by the sacrifice of himself. My soul enraptured

restrains my voice, and once again I bow before his throne and worship, in spirit, My bleeding Ransomer, my suffering Saviour.

And then again, Christ wears about his head the crown of death. He died, and in that dreadful hour he overcame death, rifled the sepulcher, split the stone which guarded the mouth of the grave, hewed death in pieces and destroyed the arch-destroyer. Christ seized the iron limbs of Death and ground them to powder in his hand. Death swayed his scepter over all the bodies of men, but Christ has opened the gate of resurrection for his redeemed, and in that day when he shall put the trumpet to his lips and blow the resurrection blast, then shall it be seen how Christ is universal monarch over all the domains of death, for as the Lord our Saviour rose, so all his followers must. And then again, Christ is not only Lord of the world, king of sin, and king of death, but he is king of Satan too. He met that arch fiend foot to foot. Fearful was the struggle, for our champion sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground; but he hewed his way to victory through his own body, through the agonies of his own soul. Desperate was the encounter. Head and hands, and feet and heart were wounded, but the Saviour flinched not from the fight. He rent the lion of the pit as though he were a kid, and broke the dragon's head in pieces. Satan was nibbling at Christ's heel, Christ trod on him and smashed his head. Now hath Jesus led captivity captive, and is master over all the hosts of hell. Glorious is that victory! Angels repeat the triumphant strain, his redeemed take up the song; and you, ye blood-bought sons of Adam, praise him too, for he hath overcome all the evil of hell itself.

And yet, once again, another crown hath Christ, and that is the crown of victory over man. Would to God, my hearers, that he wore a crown for each of you. What hard work it is to fight with the evil heart of man. If you wish him to do evil, you can soon overcome him; but if you would overcome him with good, how hard the struggle! Christ could have man's heart, but man would not give it to him. Christ tried him in many a way; he wooed him, but man's heart was hard and would not melt. Moses came, and said, "My Master, let me try and open man's heart;" and he used the fire, and the whirlwind, and the hammer of God; but the heart would not break, and the spirit would not open to Christ. Then Christ came, and he

said, "Hard-heart, I will win thee; O, icy Soul, I will melt thee." And the Soul said. "No, Jesus, I defy thee." But Christ said, "I will do it." And he came once upon a time to the poor Hard-heart, and brought his cross with him. "See, Hard-heart," said he, "I love thee; though thou lovest not me, yet I love thee, and in proof of this, see here; I will hang upon this cross." And as Hard-heart looked on, suddenly fierce men nailed the Saviour to the tree. His hands were pierced; his soul was rent in agony, and looking down on the Hard-heart, Jesus said, "Hard-heart, wilt thou not love me? I love thee; I have redeemed thee from death; though thou me, yet do I die for thee; though thou kickest against me yet will I surely carry thee to my throne." And the Hard-heart said, "Jesus, I can bear it no longer, I yield to thee. thy love has overcome me; oh, I would be thy subject for ever, only remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom, and let me be numbered with thy subjects both now and for ever." My hearers, has Christ ever overcome you? Say, has his love been too much for you? Have you been compelled to give up your sins, woeed by his love divine? Have your eyes been made to run with tears at the thought of his affection for you, and of your own ingratitude? Have you ever thought this over?—"I, the blackest of sinners, have despised him; his Bible I have left unread; his blood I have trampled under foot, and yet he died for me, and loved me with an everlasting love." Surely, this has made you bow your knee; this has made your spirit cry—

"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;
I will be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive to my Lord
To sing the triumphs of his Word."

If this be the case with you, then you may yourself recognize one of the many crowns that are on his head.

III. Now, this brings me to the third point, and may I very earnestly ask your prayers, that, feeble as I am this morning, I may be helped while I endeavor to dwell upon this sweet subject.

I am preaching in my own spirit against wind and tide. There are times when one preaches with pleasure and delight, enjoying the Word, but now I can get nothing for myself, even if I am giving you anything. Pray

for me, that nevertheless the Word may be blessed, that in my weakness God's strength may appear.

The third head deals with the CROWNS OF THANKSGIVING. Surely, concerning these we may well say, "On his head are many crowns." In the first place, all the mighty doers in Christ's church ascribe their crown to him. What a glorious crown is that which Elijah will wear—the man who went to Ahab, and when Ahab said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" reproved him to his very face—the man who took the prophets of Baal, and let not one of them escape, but hewed them in pieces and made them a sacrifice to God. What a crown will he wear who ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire! What a crown, again, belongs to Daniel, saved from the lion's den—Daniel, the earnest prophet of God. What a crown will be that which shall glitter on the head of the weeping Jeremy, and the eloquent Esaias! What crowns are those which shall begirt the heads of the apostles! What a weighty diadem is that which Paul shall receive for his many years of service! And then, my friends, how shall the crown of Luther glitter, and the crown of Calvin; and what a noble diadem shall that be which Whitfield shall wear, and all those men who have so valiantly served God, and who by his might have put to flight the armies of the Aliens, and have maintained the gospel banner erect in troublous times! Nay, but let me point to you a scene. Elijah enters heaven, and where goes he with that crown which is instantly put upon his head? See, he flies to the throne, and stooping there, he uncrowns himself; "Not unto me, not unto me but unto thy name be all the glory!" See the prophets as they steam in one by one; without exception, they put their crowns upon the head of Christ. And mark the apostles, and all the mighty teachers of the church; they all bow there and cast their crowns at his feet, who, by his grace, enabled them to win them.

"I ask them whence their victory came;

They, with united breath,
Ascribe their triumph to the Lamb,
Their conquest to HIS DEATH."

Not only the mighty doers but the mighty sufferers do this. How brilliant are the ruby crowns of the martyred saints. From the stake, from the gibbet, from the fire, they ascended up to God; and among the bright

ones they are doubly bright, fairest of the mighty host that surrounds the throne of the Blessed One. What crowns they wear! I must confess that I have often envied them. It is a happy thing to live in peaceful days; but while happy, it is not honorable. How much more honorable to have died the death of Lawrence, grilled to death upon that fiery gridiron, or to die pierced with spears, with every bone dislocated on the rack! A noble way of serving Christ, to have stood calmly in the midst of the fires, and have clapped one's hands, and cried. "I can do all things, even give my body to be burned for his dear names sake!" What crowns are those which martyr's wear! An angel might blush to think that his dignity was so small compared with that of those riders in chariots of fire. Where are all those crowns? They are on the head of Christ. Not a martyr wears his crown; they all take their blood-red crowns, and then they place them on his brow—the fire crown, the rack crown, there I see them all glitter. For it was his love that helped them to endure; it was by his blood that they overcame.

And then, brethren, think of another list of crowns. They who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. There are a few men whom God has enabled to do much for the church and much for the world. They spend and are spent. Their bodies know no rest, their souls no ease. Like chariots instinct with life, or dragged by unseen but resistless coursers, they fly from duty to duty, from labor to labor. What crowns shall theirs be when they come before God, when the souls they have saved shall enter paradise with them, and when they shall say, "Here am I and the children which thou hast given me!" "What shouts of acclamation, what honors, what rewards shall then be given to the winners of souls! What will they do with their crowns? Why, they will take them from their heads and lay them there where sits the Lamb in the midst of the throne. There will they bow and cry, "Jesus, we were not saviours, thou didst it all; we were but thy servants. The victory belongs not to us but to our Master. We did reap, but thou didst sow, we did cast in the net, but thou didst fill it full. An our success is accomplished through thy strength, and by the power of thy grace." Well may it be said of Christ, "On his head are many crowns."

But see, another host approaches. I see a company of cherubic spirits

flying upwards to Christ; and who are these? I know them not. They are not numbered among the martyrs; I read not their names among the apostles; I do not even distinguish them as having been written amongst the saints of the living God. Who are these? I ask one of them, "Who are you, ye bright and sparkling spirits?" The leader replies, "We are the glorious myriad of infants, who compose the family above. We from our mother's breasts fled straight to heaven, redeemed by the blood of Christ. We were washed from original depravity, and we have entered heaven. From every nation of the earth have we come; from the days of the first infant even to the winding up of earth's history, we in flocks have sped hither like doves to their windows." "How came ye here, ye little ones?" They reply, "through the blood of Christ, and we come to crown him Lord of all." I see the countless multitude surround the Saviour, and flying to him, each one puts its crown upon his head, and then begins to sing again louder than before. But yonder I see another company following them. "And who are ye?" The reply is, "Our history on earth is the very opposite of the story of those bright spirits that have gone before. We lived on earth for sixty, or seventy, or eighty years, until we tottered into our graves from very weakness; when we died there was no marrow in our bones, our hair had grown grey, and we were crisp and dry with age." "How came ye here?" They reply—"After many years of strife with the world, of trials and of troubles, we entered heaven at last." "And ye have crowns I see." "Yes," they say, "but we intend not to wear them." "Whither are ye going then?" "We are going to yonder throne for our crowns have been surely given us by grace, for nothing but grace could have helped us to weather the storm so many, many years." I see the grave and reverend sires pass one by one before the throne, and there they lay their crowns at his blessed feet, and then shouting with the infant throng, they cry, "Salvation unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

And then I see following behind them another class. And who are ye? Their answer is "We are the chief of sinners, saved by grace." And here they come—Saul of Tarsus, and Manasseh, and Rahab, and many of the same class. And how came ye here? They reply, "We have had much forgiven, we were grievous sinners, but the love of Christ reclaimed us, the blood of Christ washed us, and whiter than snow are we, though once

we were black as hell." And whither are ye going? They reply, "We are going to cast our crowns at his feet, and 'Crown him Lord of all.'" Among that throng, my dear hearers, I hope it may be my lot to stand. Washed from many sins, redeemed by precious blood, happy thou that moment be, when I shall take my crown from off my head, and put it on the head of him whom having not seen I love, but in whom believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And it is a happy thought for me, this morning, that many of you will go with me there. Come brother and sisters; in a few more years, many of us who have met Sunday after Sunday in this Music Hall, will walk up in one hand; and without exception, ye saints of God, I am persuaded we shall be prepared there to lay all our honors down, and to ascribe unto him the glory for ever and ever. "Ah, but" says Little-Faith, "I fear I shall never get into heaven, and therefore I shall never crown him." Yes, but Little-Faith, do you know that one of the richest crowns Christ ever wears, and one of the brightest which adorns his brow, is the crown which Little-Faith puts on his head? For Little-Faith when it gets to heaven will say, "O what grace has been shown to me, that though the meanest of the family, I have still been kept—though least of all the saints, yet hell has not prevailed against me—though weaker than the weakest, yet as my days so has my strength been." Will not your gratitude be great? Will not your song be loud, when approaching his dear feet, you lay your honors there and cry, "Blessed be Jesus who has kept my poor soul in all its dangers, and brought me safely at last to himself?" "On his head were many crowns."

I cannot preach any longer, but I must ask you this question, my dear hearers: Have you a crown to put on the head of Jesus Christ to-day? "Yes," says one, "I have. I must crown him for having delivered me out of my last great trouble." "I must crown him," says another, "for he has kept up my spirits when I was well nigh despairing." "I must crown him," says another, "for he has crowned me with lovingkindness and tender mercy." Methinks I see one standing yonder who says, "Would that I could crown him. If he would but save me, I would crown him. Ah, if he would but give himself to me, I would gladly give myself to him. I am too worthless and too vile." Nay, my brother, but does your heart say, "Lord have mercy upon me?" Does your soul now crave pardon and forgiveness through the blood of Christ? Then go boldly near him this day and say to him, "Jesus,

I the chief of sinners am, but I rely upon thee;" and in so saying thou put a crown upon his head which shall make glad his heart, even as in the day when his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals. Make this the day of your espousals to him. Take him to be thy all in all, and then mayest thou look at this text with pleasure and say, "Yes, on his head are many crowns, and I have put one there, and I shall put another there ere long."

God add his blessing, for Jesus sake! Amen.

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Lama Sabachthani?

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Matthew 27:46.

There was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour": this cry came out of that darkness. Expect not to see through its every word, as though it came from on high as a beam from the unclouded Sun of Righteousness. There is light in it, bright, flashing light: but there is a centre of impenetrable gloom, where the soul is ready to faint because of the terrible darkness.

Our Lord was then in the darkest part of his way. He had trodden the winepress now for hours, and the work was almost finished. He had reached the culminating point of his anguish. This is his dolorous lament from the lowest pit of misery—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I do not think that the records of time or even of eternity, contain a sentence more full of anguish. Here the wormwood and the gall, and all the other bitternesses, are outdone. Here you may look as into a vast abyss; and though you strain your eyes, and gaze till sight fails you, yet you perceive no bottom; it is measureless, unfathomable, inconceivable. This anguish of the Saviour on your behalf and mine is no more to be measured and weighed than the sin which needed it, or the love which

endured it. We will adore where we cannot comprehend.

I have chosen this subject that it may help the children of God to understand a little of their infinite obligations to their redeeming Lord. You shall measure the height of his love, if it be ever measured, by the depth of his grief, if that can ever be known. See with what a price he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law! As you see this, say to yourselves: What manner of people ought we to be! What measure of love ought we to return to one who bore the utmost penalty, that we might be delivered from the wrath to come? I do not profess that I can dive into this deep: I will only venture to the edge of the precipice, and bid you look down, and pray the Spirit of God to concentrate your mind upon this lamentation of our dying Lord, as it rises up through the thick darkness—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Our first subject of thought will be the fact; or, what he suffered—God had forsaken him. Secondly, we will note, the enquiry; or, why he suffered: this word "why" is the edge of the text. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, thirdly, we will consider the answer; or, what came of his suffering. The answer flowed softly into the soul of the Lord Jesus without the need of words, for he ceased from his anguish with the triumphant shout of, "It is finished." His work was finished, and his bearing of desertion was a chief part of the work he had undertaken for our sake.

I. By the help of the Holy Spirit, let us first dwell upon THE FACT; or, what our Lord suffered. God had forsaken him. Grief of mind is harder to bear than pain of body. You can pluck up courage and endure the pang of sickness and pain, so long as the spirit is hale and brave; but if the soul itself be touched, and the mind becomes diseased with anguish, then every pain is increased in severity, and there is nothing with which to sustain it. Spiritual sorrows are the worst of mental miseries. A man may bear great depression of spirit about worldly matters, if he feels that he has his God to go to. He is cast down, but not in despair. Like David, he dialogues with himself, and he enquires, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him." But if the Lord be once withdrawn, if the comfortable

light of his presence be shadowed even for an hour, there is a torment within the breast, which I can only liken to the prelude of hell. This is the greatest of all weights that can press upon the heart. This made the Psalmist plead, "Hide not thy face from me; put not thy servant away in anger." We can bear a bleeding body, and even a wounded spirit; but a soul conscious of desertion by God is beyond conception unendurable. When he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it, who can endure the darkness?

This voice out of "the belly of hell" marks the lowest depth of the Saviour's grief. The desertion was real. Though under some aspects our Lord could say, "The Father is with me"; yet was it solemnly true that God did forsake him. It was not a failure of faith on his part which led him to imagine what was not actual fact. Our faith fails us, and then we think that God has forsaken us; but our Lord's faith did not for a moment falter, for he says twice, "My God, my God." Oh, the mighty double grip of his unhesitating faith! He seems to say, "Even if thou hast forsaken me, I have not forsaken thee." Faith triumphs, and there is no sign of any faintness of heart towards the living God. Yet, strong as is his faith, he feels that God has withdrawn his comfortable fellowship, and he shivers under the terrible deprivation.

It was no fancy, or delirium of mind, caused by his weakness of body, the heat of the fever, the depression of his spirit, or the near approach of death. He was clear of mind even to this last. He bore up under pain, loss of blood, scorn, thirst, and desolation; making no complaint of the cross, the nails, and the scoffing. We read not in the Gospels of anything more than the natural cry of weakness, "I thirst." All the tortures of his body he endured in silence; but when it came to being forsaken of God, then his great heart burst out into its "Lama sabachthani?" His one moan is concerning his God. It is not, "Why has Peter forsaken me? Why has Judas betrayed me?" These were sharp griefs, but this is the sharpest. This stroke has cut him to the quick: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was no phantom of the gloom; it was a real absence which he mourned.

This was a very remarkable desertion. It is not the way of God to leave

either his sons or his servants. His saints, when they come to die, in their great weakness and pain, find him near. They are made to sing because of the presence of God: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Dying saints have clear visions of the living God. Our observation has taught us that if the Lord be away at other times, he is never absent from his people in the article of death, or in the furnace of affliction. Concerning the three holy children, we do not read that the Lord was ever visibly with them till they walked the fires of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace; but there and then the Lord met with them. Yes, beloved, it is God's use and wont to keep company with his afflicted people; and yet he forsook his Son in the hour of his tribulation! How usual it is to see the Lord with his faithful witnesses when resisting even unto blood! Read the Book of Martyrs, and I care not whether you study the former or the later persecutions, you will find them all lit up with the evident presence of the Lord with his witnesses. Did the Lord ever fail to support a martyr at the stake? Did he ever forsake one of his testifiers upon the scaffold? The testimony of the church has always been, that while the Lord has permitted his saints to suffer in body he has so divinely sustained their spirits that they have been more than conquerors, and have treated their sufferings as light afflictions. The fire has not been a "bed of roses," but it has been a chariot of victory. The sword is sharp, and death is bitter; but the love of Christ is sweet, and to die for him has been turned into glory. No, it is not God's way to forsake his champions, nor to leave even the least of his children in the trial hour.

As to our Lord, this forsaking was singular. Did his Father ever leave him before? Will you read the four Evangelists through and find any previous instance in which he complains of his Father for having forsaken him? No. He said, "I know that thou hearest me always." He lived in constant touch with God. His fellowship with the Father was always near and dear and clear; but now, for the first time, he cries, "why hast thou forsaken me?" It was very remarkable. It was a riddle only to be solved by the fact that he loved us and gave himself for us and in the execution of his loving purpose came even unto this sorrow, of mourning the absence of his God.

This forsaking was very terrible. Who can fully tell what it is to be

forsaken of God? We can only form a guess by what we have our-selves felt under temporary and partial desertion. God has never left us, altogether; for he has expressly said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"; yet we have sometimes felt as if he had cast us off. We have cried, "Oh, that I know where I might find him!" The clear shinings of his love have been withdrawn. Thus we are able to form some little idea of how the Saviour felt when his God had for-saken him. The mind of Jesus was left to dwell upon one dark subject, and no cheering theme consoled him. It was the hour in which he was made to stand before God as consciously the sin-bearer, according to that ancient prophecy, "He shall bear their iniquities." Then was it true, "He hath made him to be sin for us." Peter puts it, "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Sin, sin, sin was every where around and about Christ. He had no sin of his own; but the Lord had "laid on him the iniquity of us all." He had no strength given him from on high, no secret oil and wine poured into his wounds; but he was made to appear in the lone character of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world; and therefore he must feel the weight of sin, and the turning away of that sacred face which cannot look thereon.

His Father, at that time, gave him no open acknowledgment. On certain other occasions a voice had been heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; but now, when such a testimony seemed most of all required, the oracle was dumb. He was hung up as an accursed thing upon the cross; for he was "made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"; and the Lord his God did not own him before men. If it had pleased the Father, he might have sent him twelve legions of angels; but not an angel came after the Christ had quitted Gethsemane. His despisers might spit in his face, but no swift seraph came to avenge the indignity. They might bind him, and scourge him, but none of all the heavenly host would interpose to screen his shoulders from the lash. They might fasten him to the tree with nails, and lift him up, and scoff at him; but no cohort of ministering spirits hastened to drive back the rabble, and release the Prince of life. No, he appeared to be forsaken, "smitten of God, and afflicted," delivered into the hands of cruel men, whose wicked hands worked him misery without stint. Well might he ask, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But this was not all. His Father now dried up that sacred stream of peaceful communion and loving fellowship which had flowed hitherto throughout his whole earthly life. He said himself, as you remember, "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Here was his constant comfort: but all comfort from this source was to be withdrawn. The divine Spirit did not minister to his human spirit. No communications with his Father's love poured into his heart. It was not possible that the Judge should smile upon one who represented the prisoner at the bar. Our Lord's faith did not fail him, as I have already shown you, for he said, "My God, my God": yet no sensible supports were given to his heart, and no comforts were poured into his mind. One writer declares that Jesus did not taste of divine wrath, but only suffered a withdrawal of divine fellowship. What is the difference? Whether God withdraw heat or create cold is all one. He was not smiled upon, nor allowed to feel that he was near to God; and this, to his tender spirit, was grief of the keenest order. A certain saint once said that in his sorrow he had from God "necessaries, but not suavities"; that which was meet, but not that which was sweet. Our Lord suffered to the extreme point of deprivation. He had not the light which makes existence to be life, and life to be a boon. You that know, in your degree, what it is to lose the conscious presence and love of God, you can faintly guess what the sorrow of the Saviour was, now that he felt he had been forsaken of his God. "If the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do?" To our Lord, the Father's love was the foundation of everything; and when that was gone, all was gone. Nothing remained, within, without, above, when his own God, the God of his entire confidence, turned from him. Yes, God in very deed forsook our Saviour.

To be forsaken of God was much more a source of anguish to Jesus than it would be to us. "Oh," say you, "how is that?" I answer, because he was perfectly holy. A rupture between a perfectly holy being and the thrice holy God must be in the highest degree strange, abnormal, perplexing, and painful. If any man here, who is not at peace with God, could only know his true condition, he would swoon with fright. If you unforgiven ones only knew where you are, and what you are at this moment in the

sight of God, you would never smile again till you were reconciled to him. Alas! we are insensible, hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and therefore we do not feel our true condition. His perfect holiness made it to our Lord a dreadful calamity to be forsaken of the thrice holy God.

I remember, also, that our blessed Lord had lived in unbroken fellowship with God, and to be forsaken was a new grief to him. He had never known what the dark was till then: his life had been lived in the light of God. Think, dear child of God, if you had always dwelt in full communion with God, your days would have been as the days of heaven upon earth; and how cold it would strike to your heart to find yourself in the darkness of desertion. If you can conceive such a thing as happening to a perfect man, you can see why to our Well-beloved it was a special trial. Remember, he had enjoyed fellowship with God more richly, as well as more constantly, than any of us. His fellowship with the Father was of the highest, deepest, fullest order; and what must the loss of it have been? We lose but drops when we lose our joyful experience of heavenly fellowship; and yet the loss is killing: but to our Lord Jesus Christ the sea was dried up—I mean his sea of fellowship with the infinite God.

Do not forget that he was such a One that to him to be without God must have been an overwhelming calamity. In every part he was perfect, and in every part fitted for communion with God to a supreme degree. A sinful man has an awful need of God, but he does not know it; and therefore he does not feel that hunger and thirst after God which would come upon a perfect man could he be deprived of God. The very perfection of his nature renders it inevitable that the holy man must either be in communion with God, or be desolate. Imagine a stray angel! a seraph who has lost his God! Conceive him to be perfect in holiness, and yet to have fallen into a condition in which he cannot find his God! I cannot picture him; perhaps a Milton might have done so. He is sinless and trustful, and yet he has an overpowering feeling that God is absent from him. He has drifted into the nowhere—the unimaginable region behind the back of God. I think I hear the wailing of the cherub: "My God, my God, my God, where art thou?" What a sorrow for one of the sons of the morning! But here we have the lament of a Being far more capable of fellowship with the Godhead. In proportion as he is more fitted to receive

the love of the great Father, in that proportion is his pining after it the more intense. As a Son, he is more able to commune with God than ever a servant-angel could be; and now that he is forsaken of God, the void within is the greater, and the anguish more bitter.

Our Lord's heart, and all his nature were, morally and spiritually, so delicately formed, so sensitive, so tender, that to be without God, was to him a grief which could not be weighed. I see him in the text bearing desertion, and yet I perceive that he cannot bear it. I know not how to express my meaning except by such a paradox. He cannot endure to be without God. He had surrendered himself to be left of God, as the representative of sinners must be, but his pure and holy nature, after three hours of silence, finds the position unendurable to love and purity; and breaking forth from it, now that the hour was over, he exclaims, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" He quarrels not with the suffering, but he cannot abide in the position which caused it. He seems as if he must end the ordeal, not because of the pain, but because of the moral shock. We have here the repetition after his passion of that loathing which he felt before it, when he cried, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the holiness of Christ amazed at the position of substitute for guilty men.

There, friends; I have done my best, but I seem to myself to have been prattling like a little child, talking about something infinitely above me. So I leave the solemn fact, that our Lord Jesus was on the tree forsaken of his God.

II. This brings us to consider THE ENQUIRY or, why he suffered.

Note carefully this cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is pure anguish, undiluted agony, which crieth like this; but it is the agony of a godly soul; for only a man of that order would have used such an expression. Let us learn from it useful lessons. This cry is taken from "the Book." Does it not show our Lord's love of the sacred volume, that when he felt his sharpest grief, he turned to the Scripture to find a fit utterance for it? Here we have the opening sentence of the twenty-second

Psalm. Oh, that we may so love the inspired Word that we may not only sing to its score, but even weep to its music!

Note, again, that our Lord's lament is an address to God. The godly, in their anguish, turn to the hand which smites them. The Saviour's outcry is not against God, but to God. "My God, my God": he makes a double effort to draw near. True Sonship is here. The child in the dark is crying after his Father—"My God, my God." Both the Bible and prayer were dear to Jesus in his agony.

Still, observe, it is a faith-cry; for though it asks, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" yet it first says, twice over, "My God, my God." The grip of appropriation is in the word "my"; but the reverence of humility is in the word "God." It is "'My God, my God,' thou art ever God to me, and I a poor creature. I do not quarrel with thee. Thy rights are unquestioned, for thou art my God. Thou canst do as thou wilt, and I yield to thy sacred sovereignty. I kiss the hand that smites me, and with all my heart I cry, 'My God, my God.'" When you are delirious with pain, think of your Bible still: when your mind wanders, let it roam towards the mercy seat; and when your heart and your flesh fail, still live by faith, and still cry, "My God, my God."

Let us come close to the enquiry. It looked to me, at first sight, like a question as of one distraught, driven from the balance of his mind—not unreasonable, but too much reasoning, and therefore tossed about. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Did not Jesus know? Did he not know why he was forsaken? He knew it most distinctly, and yet his manhood, while it was being crushed, pounded, dissolved, seemed as though it could not understand the reason for so great a grief. He must be forsaken; but could there be a sufficient cause for so sickening a sorrow? The cup must be bitter; but why this most nauseous of ingredients? I tremble lest I say what I ought not to say. I have said it, and I think there is truth—the Man of Sorrows was overborne with horror. At that moment the finite soul of the man Christ Jesus came into awful contact with the infinite justice of God. The one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, beheld the holiness of God in arms against the sin of man, whose nature he had espoused. God was for him and with him in a certain

unquestionable sense; but for the time, so far as his feeling went, God was against him, and necessarily withdrawn from him. It is not surprising that the holy soul of Christ should shudder at finding itself brought into painful contact with the infinite justice of God, even though its design was only to vindicate that justice, and glorify the Law-giver. Our Lord could now say, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" and therefore he uses language which is all too hot with anguish to be dissected by the cold hand of a logical criticism. Grief has small regard for the laws of the grammarian. Even the holiest, when in extreme agony, though they cannot speak otherwise than according to purity and truth, yet use a language of their own, which only the ear of sympathy can fully receive. I see not all that is here, but what I can see I am not able to put in words for you.

I think I see, in the expression, submission and resolve. Our Lord does not draw back. There is a forward movement in the question: they who quit a business ask no more questions about it. He does not ask that the forsaking may end prematurely, he would only understand anew its meaning. He does not shrink, but the rather dedicates himself anew to God by the words, "My God, my God," and by seeking to review the ground and reason of that anguish which he is resolute to bear even to the bitter end. He would fain feel anew the motive which has sustained him, and must sustain him to the end. The cry sounds to me like deep submission and strong resolve, pleading with God.

Do you not think that the amazement of our Lord, when he was "made sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21), led him thus to cry out? For such a sacred and pure being to be made a sin-offering was an amazing experience. Sin was laid on him, and he was treated as if he had been guilty, though he had personally never sinned; and now the infinite horror of rebellion against the most holy God fills his holy soul, the unrighteousness of sin breaks his heart, and he starts back from it, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why must I bear the dread result of contact I so much abhor?

Do you not see, moreover, there was here a glance at his eternal purpose, and at his secret source of joy? That "why" is the silver lining of the dark

cloud, and our Lord looked wishfully at it. He knew that the desertion was needful in order that he might save the guilty, and he had an eye to that salvation as his comfort. He is not forsaken needlessly, nor without a worthy design. The design is in itself so dear to his heart that he yields to the passing evil, even though that evil be like death to him. He looks at that "why," and through that narrow window the light of heaven comes streaming into his darkened life.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Surely our Lord dwelt on that "why," that we might also turn our eyes that way. He would have us see the why and the wherefore of his grief. He would have us mark the gracious motive for its endurance. Think much of all your Lord suffered, but do not overlook the reason of it. If you cannot always understand how this or that grief worked toward the great end of the whole passion, yet believe that it has its share in the grand "why." Make a life-study of that bitter but blessed question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus the Saviour raises an inquiry not so much for himself as for us; and not so much because of any despair within his heart as because of a hope and a joy set before him, which were wells of comfort to him in his wilderness of woe.

Bethink you, for a moment, that the Lord God, in the broadest and most unreserved sense, could never, in very deed, have forsaken his most obedient Son. He was ever with him in the grand design of salvation. Towards the Lord Jesus, personally, God himself, personally, must ever have stood on terms of infinite love. Truly the Only Begotten was never more lovely to the Father than when he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! But we must look upon God here as the Judge of all the earth, and we must look upon the Lord Jesus also in his official capacity, as the Surety of the covenant, and the sacrifice for sin. The great Judge of all cannot smile upon him who has become the substitute for the guilty. Sin is loathed of God; and if, in order to its removal his own Son is made to bear it, yet, as sin, it is still loathsome, and he who bears it cannot be in happy communion with God. This was the dread necessity of expiation; but in the essence of things the love of the great Father to his Son never ceased, nor ever knew a diminution. Restrained in its flow it must be, but lessened at its fountain-head it could not be. Therefore,

wonder not at the question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

III. Hoping to be guided by the Holy Spirit, I am coming to THE ANSWER, concerning which I can only use the few minutes which remain to me. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What is the outcome of this suffering? What was the reason for it? Our Saviour could answer his own question. If for a moment his manhood was perplexed, yet his mind soon came to clear apprehension; for he said, "It is finished"; and, as I have already said, he then referred to the work which in his lonely agony he had been performing. Why, then, did God forsake his Son? I cannot conceive any other answer than this—he stood in our stead. There was no reason in Christ why the Father should forsake him: he was perfect, and his life was without spot. God never acts without reason; and since there were no reasons in the character and person of the Lord Jesus why his Father should forsake him, we must look elsewhere. I do not know how others answer the question. I can only answer it in this one way.

"Yet all the griefs he felt were ours,
Ours were the woes he bore;
Pangs, not his own, his spotless soul
With bitter anguish tore.
"We held him as condemn'd of heaven,
An outcast from his God;
While for our sins he groaned, he bled,
Beneath his Father's rod."

He bore the sinner's sin, and he had to be treated, therefore, as though he were a sinner, though sinner he could never be. With his own full consent he suffered as though he had committed the transgressions which were laid on him. Our sin, and his taking it upon himself, is the answer to the question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

In this case we now see that His obedience was perfect. He came into the world to obey the Father, and he rendered that obedience to the very uttermost. The spirit of obedience could go no farther than for one who feels forsaken of God still to cling to him in solemn, avowed allegiance, still declaring before a mocking multitude his confidence in the afflicting

God. It is noble to cry, "My God, my God," when one is asking, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" How much farther can obedience go? I see nothing beyond it. The soldier at the gate of Pompeii remaining at his post as sentry when the shower of burning ashes is falling, was not more true to his trust than he who adheres to a forsaking God with loyalty of hope.

Our Lord's suffering in this particular form was appropriate and necessary. It would not have sufficed for our Lord merely to have been pained in body, nor even to have been grieved in mind in other ways: he must suffer in this particular way. He must feel forsaken of God, because this is the necessary consequence of sin. For a man to be forsaken of God is the penalty which naturally and inevitably follows upon his breaking his relation with God. What is death? What was the death that was threatened to Adam? "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Is death annihilation? Was Adam annihilated that day? Assuredly not: he lived many a year afterwards. But in the day in which he ate of the forbidden fruit he died, by being separated from God. The separation of the soul from God is spiritual death; just as the separation of the soul from the body is natural death. The sacrifice for sin must be put in the place of separation, and must bow to the penalty of death. By this placing of the Great Sacrifice under forsaking and death, it would be seen by all creatures throughout the universe that God could not have fellowship with sin. If even the Holy One, who stood the Just for the unjust, found God forsaking him, what must the doom of the actual sinner be! Sin is evidently always, in every case, a dividing influence, putting even the Christ himself, as a sin-bearer, in the place of distance.

This was necessary for another reason: there could have been no laying on of suffering for sin without the forsaking of the vicarious Sacrifice by the Lord God. So long as the smile of God rests on the man the law is not afflicting him. The approving look of the great Judge cannot fall upon a man who is viewed as standing in the place of the guilty. Christ not only suffered from sin, but for sin. If God will cheer and sustain him, he is not suffering for sin. The Judge is not inflicting suffering for sin if he is manifestly succouring the smitten one. There could have been no vicarious suffering on the part of Christ for human guilt, if he had continued consciously to enjoy the fall sunshine of the Father's presence.

It was essential to being a victim in our place that he should cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Beloved, see how marvellously, in the person of Christ, the Lord our God has vindicated his law! If to make his law glorious, he had said, "These multitudes of men have broken my law, and therefore they shall perish," the law would have been terribly magnified. But, instead thereof, he says, "Here is my Only Begotten Son, my other self; he takes on himself the nature of these rebellions creatures, and he consents that I should lay on him the load of their iniquity, and visit in his person the offences which might have been punished in the persons of all these multitudes of men: and I will have it so." When Jesus bows his head to the stroke of the law, when he submissively consents that his Father shall turn away his face from him, then myriads of worlds are astonished at the perfect holiness and stern justice of the Lawgiver. There are, probably, worlds innumerable throughout the boundless creation of God, and all these will see, in the death of God's dear Son, a declaration of his determination never to allow sin to be trifled with. If his own Son is brought before him, bearing the sin of others upon him, he will hide his face from him, as well as from the actually guilty. In God infinite love shines over all, but it does not eclipse his absolute justice any more than his justice is permitted to destroy his love. God hath all perfections in perfection, and in Christ Jesus we see the reflection of them. Beloved, this is a wonderful theme! Oh, that I had a tongue worthy of this subject! but who could ever reach the height of this great argument?

Once more, when enquiring, Why did Jesus suffer to be forsaken of the Father? we see the fact that the Captain of our salvation was thus made perfect through suffering. Every part of the road has been traversed by our Lord's own feet. Suppose, beloved, the Lord Jesus had never been thus forsaken, then one of his disciples might have been called to that sharp endurance, and the Lord Jesus could not have sympathized with him in it. He would turn to his Leader and Captain, and say to him, "Didst thou, my Lord, ever feel this darkness?" Then the Lord Jesus would answer, "No. This is a descent such as I never made." What a dreadful lack would the tried one have felt! For the servant to bear a grief his Master never knew would be sad indeed.

There would have been a wound for which there was no ointment, a pain for which there was no balm. But it is not so now. "In all their affliction he was afflicted." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Wherein we greatly rejoice at this time, and so often as we are cast down. Underneath us is the deep experience of our forsaken Lord.

I have done when I have said three things. The first is, you and I that are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and are resting in him alone for salvation, let us lean hard, let us bear with all our weight on our Lord. He will bear the full weight of all our sin and care. As to my sin, I hear its harsh accusings no more when I hear Jesus cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" I know that I deserve the deepest hell at the hand of God's vengeance; but I am not afraid. He will never forsake me, for he forsook his Son on my behalf. I shall not suffer for my sin, for Jesus has suffered to the full in my stead; yea, suffered so far as to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Behind this brazen wall of substitution a sinner is safe. These "munitions of rock" guard all believers, and they may rest secure. The rock is cleft for me; I hide in its rifts, and no harm can reach me. You have a full atonement, a great sacrifice, a glorious vindication of the law; wherefore rest at peace, all you that put your trust in Jesus.

Next, if ever in our lives henceforth we should think that God hath deserted us, let us learn from our Lord's example how to behave ourselves. If God hath left thee, do not shut up thy Bible; nay, open it, as thy Lord did, and find a text that will suit thee. If God hath left thee, or thou thinkest so, do not give up prayer; nay, pray as thy Lord did, and be more earnest than ever. If thou thinkest God has forsaken thee, do not give up thy faith in him; but, like thy Lord, cry thou, "My God, my God," again and again. If thou hast had one anchor before, cast out two anchors now, and double the hold of thy faith. If thou canst not call Jehovah "Father," as was Christ's wont, yet call him thy "God." Let the personal pronouns take their hold—"My God, my God." Let nothing drive thee from thy faith. Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim. As for me, if ever I am lost, it shall be at the foot of the cross. To this pass have I come, that if I never see the face of God with acceptance, yet I will believe that he will be

faithful to his Son, and true to the covenant sealed by oaths and blood. He that believeth in Jesus hath everlasting life: there I cling, like the limpet to the rock. There is but one gate of heaven; and even if I may not enter it, I will cling to the posts of its door. What am I saying? I shall enter in; for that gate was never shut against a soul that accepted Jesus; and Jesus saith, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The last of the three points is this, let us abhor the sin which brought such agony upon our beloved Lord. What an accursed thing is sin, which crucified the Lord Jesus! Do you laugh at it? Will you go and spend an evening to see a mimic performance of it? Do you roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel, and then come to God's house, on the Lord's-day morning, and think to worship him? Worship him! Worship him, with sin indulged in your breast! Worship him, with sin loved and pampered in your life! O sirs, if I had a dear brother who had been murdered, what would you think of me if I valued the knife which had been crimsoned with his blood? —if I made a friend of the murderer, and daily consorted with the assassin, who drove the dagger into my brother's heart? Surely I, too, must be an accomplice in the crime! Sin murdered Christ; will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the Incarnate God; can you love it? Oh, that there was an abyss as deep as Christ's misery, that I might at once hurl this dagger of sin into its depths, whence it might never be brought to light again! Begone, O sin! Thou art banished from the heart where Jesus reigns! Begone, for thou hast crucified my Lord, and made him cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" O my hearers, if you did but know yourselves, and know the love of Christ, you would each one vow that you would harbour sin no longer. You would be indignant at sin, and cry,

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Lord, I will tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee,"

May that be the issue of my morning's discourse, and then I shall be well content. The Lord bless you! May the Christ who suffered for you, bless you, and out of his darkness may your light arise! Amen.

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The Shame and Spitting

"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."—Isaiah 50:6.

Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself or of some other? We cannot doubt but what Isaiah here wrote concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Is not this one of the prophecies to which our Lord Himself referred in the incident recorded in the eighteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel at the thirty-first verse? "Then he took unto him he twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him and put him to death." Such a remarkable prophecy of scourging and spitting as this which is now before us must surely refer to the Lord Jesus; its highest fulfillment is assuredly found in Him alone.

Of whom else, let me ask, could you conceive the prophet to have spoken if you read the whole chapter? Of whom else could he say in the same breath, "I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair" (vv. 3, 6). What a descent from the omnipotence which veils the heavens with clouds to the gracious condescension which does not veil its own face, but permits it to be spat upon! No other could thus have spoken of Himself but He who is both God and man. He must be divine: how else could He say, "Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness" (v. 2)? And yet he must at the same time be a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," for there is a strange depth of pathos in the words, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Whatever others may say, we believe that the speaker in this verse is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, the Son of God and the Son of man, our Redeemer. It is the Judge of Israel whom they have smitten with a rod upon the cheek who here plaintively declares the griefs

which He has undergone. We have before us the language of prophecy, but it is as accurate as though it had been written at the moment of the event. Isaiah might have been one of the Evangelists, so exactly does he describe what our Savior endured.

I have already laid before you in the reading of the Scriptures some of the passages of the New Testament wherein the scourging and the shame of our Lord Jesus are described. We saw Him first at the tribunal of His own countrymen in Matthew 26, and we read, "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him: and others smote him with the palms of their hands." It was in the hall of the high priest, among His own countrymen, that first of all the shameful deeds of scorn were wrought upon Him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." His worst foes were they of His own household; they despised and abhorred Him, and would have none of Him. His own Father's husbandmen said among themselves—"This is the heir; let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." This was His treatment at the hand of the house of Israel.

The same treatment, or the like thereto, was accorded Him in Herod's palace, where the lingering shade of a Jewish royalty still existed. There what I might venture to call a pattern mixture of Jew and Gentile power held court, but our Lord fared no better in the united company. By the two combined the Lord was treated with equal derision (Luke 23:11). "Herod with his men of war set him at naught, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe."

Speedily came His third trial, and He was delivered altogether to the Gentiles. Then Pilate, the governor, gave Him up to the cruel process of scourging. Scourging as it has been practiced in the English army is atrocious, a barbarism which ought to make us blush for the past, and resolve to end it for the future. How is it that such a horror has been tolerated so long in a country where we are not all savages? But the lash is nothing among us compared with what it was among the Romans. I have heard that it was made of the sinews of oxen, and that in it were twisted the knucklebones of sheep, with slivers of bone, in order that every stroke might more effectually tear its way into the poor quivering flesh, which was mangled by its awful strokes. Scourging was such a punishment that

it was generally regarded as worse than death itself, and indeed, many perished while enduring it, or soon afterwards. Our blessed Redeemer gave His back to the smiters, and the plowers made deep furrows there. O spectacle of misery! How can we bear to look thereon? Nor was that all, for Pilate's soldier's, calling all the band together, as if there were not enough for mockery unless all were mustered, put Him to derision by a mock enthronement and a mimic coronations and when they had thus done they again buffeted and smote Him, and spat in His face. There was no kind of cruelty which their heartlessness could just then invent which they did not exercise upon His blessed Person: their brutal sport had full indulgence, for their innocent victim offered neither resistance nor remonstrance. This is His own record of His patient endurance. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

Behold your King! I bring Him forth to you this morning in spirit and cry, "Behold the Man!" Turn hither all your eyes and hearts and look upon the despised and rejected of men! Gaze reverently and lovingly, with awe for His sufferings and love for His Person. The sight demands adoration. I would remind you of that which Moses did when he saw the bush that burned and was not consumed—fit emblem of our Lord on fire with griefs and yet not destroyed; I bid you turn aside and see this great sight, but first attend to the mandate—"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." All round the cross the soil is sacred. Our suffering Lord has consecrated every place whereon He stood, and therefore our hearts must be filled with reverence while we linger under the shadow of His passion.

May the Holy Spirit help you to see Jesus in four lights at this time. In each view He is worthy of devout attention. Let us view Him first as the representative of God; secondly, as the substitute of His people, thirdly, as the servant of Jehovah; and fourthly, as the Comforter of his redeemed.

I. First, I invite you to gaze upon your despised and rejected Lord as **THE REPRESENTATIVE OF GOD**. In the Person of Christ Jesus, God Himself came into the world, making a special visitation to Jerusalem and the

Jewish people, but at the same time coming very near to all mankind. The Lord called to the people whom He had favored so long and whom He was intent to favor still. He says, in the second verse, "I came" and "I called." God did in very deed come down into the midst of mankind.

Be it noted, that when our Lord came into this world as the Representative of God, He came with all His divine power about Him. The chapter before us says, "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness." The Son of God, when He was here, did not perform those exact miracles, because He was bent upon marvels of beneficence rather than of judgment. He did not repeat the plagues of Egypt, for He did not come to smite, but to save; but He did greater wonders and wrought miracles which ought far more powerfully to have won men's confidence in Him because they were full of goodness and mercy. He fed the hungry, He healed the sick, He raised the dead, and He cast out devils. He did equal marvels to those which were wrought in Egypt when the arm of the Lord was made bare in the eyes of all the people. It is true He did not change water into blood, but He turned water into wine. It is true He did not make their fish to stink, but by His word He caused the net to be filled even to bursting with great fishes. He did not break the whole staff of bread as He did in Egypt, but He multiplied loaves and fishes so that thousands of men and women and children were fed from His bounteous hand. He did not slay their first-born, but He restored the dead. I grant you that the glory of the Godhead was somewhat hidden in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, but it was still there, even as the glory was upon the face of Moses when he covered it with a veil. No essential attribute of God was absent in Christ, and every one might have been seen in Him if the people had not been willfully blind. He did the works of His Father, and those works bore witness of Him that He was come in His Father's name. Yes, God was personally in the world when Jesus walked the blessed fields of the Holy land, now, alas, laid under the curse for rejecting Him.

But when God thus came among men He was unacknowledged. What saith the prophet? "Wherefore when I came was there no man? when I called was there none to answer?" A few, taught by the Spirit of God,

discerned Him and rejoiced; but they were so very few that we may say of the whole generation that they knew Him not. Those who had some dim idea of His excellence and majesty yet rejected Him. Herod, because he feared that He was King, sought to slay Him. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed. He was emphatically and beyond all others "despised and rejected of men." Though, as I have said, the Godhead in Him was but scantily veiled, and gleams of its glory burst forth ever and anon, yet still the people would have none of it, and the cry, "Away with him. away with him, let him be crucified," was the verdict of the age upon which He descended. He called and there was none to answer; He spread out His hands all the day long unto a rebellious people who utterly rejected Him.

Yet our Lord when He came into the world was admirably adapted to be the Representative of God, not only because He was God Himself, but because as man His whole human nature was consecrated to the work, and in Him was neither flaw nor spot. He was untouched by any motive other than the one desire of manifesting the Father and blessing the sons of men. Oh, beloved, there was never One who had His ear so near the mouth of God as Jesus had. His Father had no need to speak to Him in dreams and visions of the night, for when all His faculties were wide awake there was nothing in them to hinder His understanding the mind of God; and therefore every morning when His Father wakened Him He spoke into His ear. Jesus sat as a scholar at the Father's feet that He might learn first, and then teach. The things which He heard of the Father He made known unto men. He says that He spoke not His own words but the words of Him that sent Him, and He did not His own deeds, but "my Father," saith He, "that dwelleth in me, he doeth the work." Now, a man thus entirely agreeable to the mind and will of the great God was fitted to be the Representative of God. Both the alliance of His manhood with the Godhead and its perfect character qualified it to be the fittest dwelling of God among men. Yes, dear friends, our Savior came in a way which should at once have commanded the reverent homage of all men. Even His great Father said, "They will reverence my Son." Enough of the Godhead was manifested to impress and no more, lest it should alarm. With a soul of gentlest mold and a body like our own He

was altogether adapted to be the Representative of God. His errand, too, was all gentleness and love, for He came to speak words in season to the weary, and to comfort those that were cast down: surely such an errand should have secured Him a welcome. His course and conduct were most conciliatory, for He went among the people, and ate with publicans and sinners; so gentle was He that He took little children in His arms, and blessed them; for this, if for nothing else, they ought to have welcomed Him right heartily and rejoiced at the sight of Him. Our text tells us how contrary was their conduct towards Him to that which He deserved instead of being welcomed He was scourged, and instead of being honored He was scorned. Cruelty smote His back and plucked off the hair from His face, while derision jeered at Him and cast its spittle upon Him. Shame and contempt were poured upon Him, though He was God Himself. That spectacle of Christ spat upon, and scourged represents what man virtually does to his God, what he would do to the Most High if he could. Hart well puts it—

See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in his lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face.

When our parents broke the command of their Maker, obeying the advice of the devil rather than the Word of God, and preferring a poor apple to the divine favor, they did as it were spit into the face of God; and every sin committed since has been a repetition of the same contempt of the Eternal One. When a man will have his pleasure, even though it displeases God, he as good as declares that he despises God, prefers himself, and defies the wrath of the Most High. When a man acts contrary to the command of God he does as good as say to God, "This is better for me to do than what Thou bidst me do. Either Thou art mistaken, in thy prohibitions, or else Thou dost willfully deny me the highest pleasure, and I, being a better judge of my own interests than Thou art, snatch at the pleasure which Thou dost refuse me. I judge Thee either to be unwise or unkind." Every act of sin does despite to the sovereignty of God: it denies Him to be supreme and refuses Him obedience. Every act of sin does dishonor to the love and wisdom of God, for it seems to say that it would have been greater love to have permitted us to do evil than to have

commanded us to abstain from it. All sin is in many ways an insult to the majesty of the thrice Holy God, and He regards it as such.

Dear friends, this is especially the sin of those who have heard the gospel and yet reject the Savior, for in their case the Lord has come to them in the most gracious form, and yet they have refused Him. The Lord might well say, "I have come to you to save you, and you will not regard me. I have come saying to you, 'Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth,' and you close your eyes in unbelief. I have come saying, 'Let us reason together: though your sins be as crimson, they shall be as wool,' but you will not be cleansed from your iniquity. I have come with the promise, 'All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto men.' What is your reply?" In the case of many the answer is, "We prefer our own righteousness to the righteousness of God." If that is not casting spittle into the face of God I know not what is, for our righteousnesses are well described as "filthy rags," and we have the impudence to say that these are better than the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Or if we do not say this when we reject the Savior we tell Him that we do not want Him, for we do not need a Savior: this is as good as to say that God has played the fool with the life and death of His own Son. What greater derision can be cast upon God than to consider the blood of atonement to be a superfluity? He who chooses sin sooner than repentance prefers to suffer the wrath of God rather than be holy and dwell in heaven forever. For the sake of a few paltry pleasures men forego the love of God, and are ready to run the risk of an eternity of divine wrath. They think so little of God that He is of no account with them at all. All this is in reality a scorning and despising of the Lord God, and is well set forth by the insults which were poured upon the Lord Jesus.

Woe's me that it should ever be so. My God! My God! To what a sinful race do I belong. Alas, that it should treat thine infinite goodness so spitefully! That Thou shouldst be rejected at all, but especially that Thou shouldst be rejected when dressed in robes of love and arrayed in gentleness and pity is horrible to think upon. Do you mean it, O men? Can you really mean it? Can you deride the Lord Jesus who died for men? For which of His works do ye stone Him, when He lived only to do good? For which of His griefs do you refuse Him, when He died only that He

might save? "He saved others, himself he cannot save," for He had so much love that He could spare Himself. I can understand your resisting the thunder of Jehovah's power, for I know your insanity; but can you resist the tenderness of Jehovah's love? If you do I must charge you with brutality, but therein I wrong the brutes, to whom such crimes are impossible. I may not even call this cruel scorning diabolical, for it is a sin which devils never did commit, perhaps would not have committed had it been possible to them. They have never trifled with a Redeemer, nor rejected the blood of the seed of Abraham. Shall the favored race spit upon its friend? God grant we may be brought to a better mind. But there is the picture before you. God Himself set at naught, despised, rejected, put to shame, perpetually dishonored in the Person of His dear Son. The sight should breed repentance in us. We should look to Him whom we have scourged, and mourn for Him. O Holy Spirit, work this tender grace in all our hearts.

II. And now, secondly, I want to set the Lord Jesus before you in another light, or rather beseech Him to shine in His own light before your eyes:—**AS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR HIS PEOPLE.** Recollect when our Lord Jesus Christ suffered thus it was not on His own account nor purely for the sake of His Father, but He "was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." There has risen up a modern idea which I cannot too much reprobate, that Christ made no atonement for our sin except upon the cross: whereas in this passage of Isaiah we are taught as plainly as possible that by His bruising and His stripes, as well as by His death, we are healed. Never divide between the life and the death of Christ. How could He have died if He had not lived? How could He suffer except while He lived? Death is not suffering, but the end of it. Guard also against the evil notion that you have nothing to do with the righteousness of Christ, for He could not have made an atonement by His blood if He had not been perfect in His life. He could not have been acceptable if He had not first been proven to be holy, harmless, and undefiled. The victim must be spotless, or it cannot be presented for sacrifice. Draw no nice lines and raise no quibbling questions, but look at your Lord as He is and bow before Him.

Understand, my dear brothers and sisters, that Jesus took upon Himself our sin, and being found bearing that sin He had to be treated as sin should be treated. Now, of all the things that ever existed sin is the most shameful thing that can be. It deserves to be scourged, it deserves to be spit upon, it deserves to be crucified; and because our Lord had taken upon Himself our sin, therefore must He be put to shame, therefore must He be scourged. If you want to see what God thinks of sin, see His only Son spat upon by the soldiers when He was made sin for us. In God's sight sin is a shameful, horrible, loathsome, abominable thing, and when Jesus takes it He must be forsaken and given up to scorn. This sight will be the more wonderful to you when you recollect who it was that was spat upon, for if you and I, being sinners, were scourged, and smitten, and despised, there would be no wonder in it; but He who took our sin was God, before whom angels bow with reverent awe, and yet, seeing the sin was upon Him, He was made subject to the most intense degree of shame. Seeing that Jesus stood in our stead, it is written of the eternal Father that "He spared not his own Son." "It pleased the Father to bruise him: he hath put him to grief"; He made His soul an offering for sin. Yes, beloved, sin is condemned in the flesh and made to appear exceeding shameful when you recollect that, even though it was only laid on our blessed Lord by imputation, yet it threw Him into the very depths of shame and woe ere it could be removed.

Reflect, also, upon the voluntariness of all this. He willingly submitted to the endurance of suffering and scorn. It is said in the text, "He gave his back to the smiters." They did not seize and compel Him, or; if they did, yet they could nor have done it without His consent. He gave His back to the smiters He gave His cheek to those that plucked off the hair. He did not hide His face from shame and spitting: He did not seek in any way to escape from insults. It was the voluntariness of His grief which constituted in great measure the merit of it. That Christ should stand in our stead by force were a little thing, even had it been possible; but that He should stand there of His own free will, and that being there He should willingly be treated with derision, this is grace indeed. The Son of God was willingly made a curse for us, and at His own desire was made subject to shame on our account. I do not know how you feel in listening to me, but while I am speaking I feel as if language ought scarcely to

touch such a theme as this: it is too feeble for its task. I want you to get beyond my words if you can, and for yourselves meditate upon the fact that He who covers the heavens with blackness, yet did not cover His own face, and He who binds up the universe with the girdle which holds it in one, yet was bound and blindfolded by the men He had Himself made; He whose face is as the brightness of the sun that shineth in its strength was once spit upon. Surely we shall need faith in heaven to believe this wondrous fact. Can it have been true, that the glorious Son of God was jeered and jested at? I have often heard that there is no faith wanted in heaven, but I rather judge that we shall want as much faith to believe that these things were ever done as the patriarchs had to believe that they would be done. How shall I sit down and gaze upon Him and think that His dear face was once profaned with spittle? When all heaven shall lie prostrate at His feet in awful silence of adoration will it seem possible that once He was mocked? When angels and principalities, and powers shall all be roused to rapture of harmonious music in His praise, will it seem possible that once the most abject of men plucked out the hair? Will it not appear incredible that those sacred hands, which are "as gold rings set with the beryl," were once nailed to a gibbet, and that those cheeks which are "as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers," should have been battered and bruised? We shall be quite certain of the fact, and yet we shall never cease to wonder, that His side was gashed, and His face was spit upon? The sin of man in this instance will always amaze us. How could you commit this crime? Oh, ye sons of men, how could ye treat such an One with cruel scorn? O thou brazen thing called sin, thou hast, indeed, as the prophet saith, "a whores forehead"; thou hast a demons heart, hell burns within thee. Why couldst thou not spit upon earthly splendors? Why must heaven be thy scorn? Or if heaven, why not spit on angels! Was there no place for thy spittle but His face? His face! Woe is me! His face! Should such loveliness receive such shame as this? I could wish that man had never been created, or that being created, he had been swept into nothingness rather than have lived to commit such horror.

Yet, here is matter for our faith to rest upon, Beloved, trust yourselves in the hands of your great Substitute. Did He bear all this shame? Then there must be more than enough merit and efficacy in this, which was the prelude of His precious death—and especially in His death itself—there

must be merit sufficient to put away all transgression, iniquity, and sin. Our shame is ended, for He has borne it! Our punishment is removed: He has endured it all. Double for all our sins has our Redeemer paid. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, and let peace take full possession of thy weeping heart.

III. But time fails us, and therefore we will mention, next, the third light in which it is our desire to see the Savior. Beloved, we desire to see the Lord Jesus Christ AS THE SERVANT OF GOD. He took upon Himself the form of a servant when He was made in the likeness of man. Observe how He performed this service right thoroughly, and remember we are to look upon this third picture as our copy, which is to be the guide of our life. I know that many of you are glad to call yourselves the servants of God; take not the name in vain. As Jesus was, so are you also in this world, and you are to seek to be like Him.

First, as a servant, Christ was personally prepared for service. He was thirty years and more here below, learning obedience in His Father's house, and the after years were spent in learning obedience by the things which He suffered. What a servant He was, for He never went about His own errands nor went by His own will, but He waited always upon His Father. He was in constant communication with heaven, both by day and by night. He says, "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." The blessed Lord or ever the day broke heard that gentle voice which called Him, and at its whisper He arose before the sunrise, and there the dawning found Him, on the mountain side, waiting upon God in wrestling prayer, taking His message from the Father that He might go and deliver it to the children of men. He loved man much, but He loved His Father more, and He never came to tell out the love of God without having as man received it fresh from the divine heart. He knew that His Father heard Him always, and He lived in the spirit of conscious acceptance. Have you ever noticed that sometimes a passage will begin, "At that time Jesus answered and said," and yet there is no notice that He had been speaking to anybody before, or that anybody had been speaking to Him? What He said was an answer to a voice which no ear heard but His own, for He was always standing with opened ear, listening to the eternal voice. Such service did Jesus render, and you must

render the same. You cannot do your Lord's will except you live near to Him. It is of no use trying to preach with power unless we get our message from our heavenly Father's own Self. I am sure you as hearers know the difference between a dead word which comes from a man's own brain and lip, and a living word which the preacher delivers fresh as the manna which fell from heaven. The word should come from the minister like bread hot from the oven, or better still, like a seed with life in it; not as a parched grain with the germ dead and killed, but as a living seed which roots itself in your souls, and springs up to a harvest. This made our Lord such a good servant that He listened to His Father's voice and yielded Himself to the Father's will to perfection.

Our text assures us that this service knew no reserve in its consecration. We generally draw back somewhere. I am ashamed to say it, but I mourn that I have done so. Many of us could give to Christ all our health and strength, and all the money we have, very heartily and cheerfully; but when it comes to a point of reputation we feel the pinch. To be slandered, to have some filthy thing said of you; this is too much for flesh and blood. You seem to say, "I cannot be made a fool of, I cannot bear to be regarded as a mere impostor"; but a true servant of Christ must make himself of no reputation when he takes upon himself the work of his Lord. Our blessed Master was willing to be scoffed at by the lewdest and lowest of men. The abjects jeered at Him; the reproach of them that reproached God fell upon Him. He became the song of the drunkard, and when the rough soldiery detained Him in the guard-room they heaped up their ridicule, as though He were not worthy of the name of man.

They bow their knees to me, and cry, "Hail, King":

Whatever scoffs or scornfulness can bring,

I am the floor. the sink, where they it fling:

Was ever grief like mine?

The soldiers also spit upon that face

Which angels did desire to have the grace

And prophets once to see, but found no place:

Was ever grief like mine?

Herod and Pilate were the very dross of men, and yet He permitted them to judge Him. Their servants were vile fellows, and yet He resigned

Himself to them. If He had breathed upon them with angry breath, He might have flashed devouring fire upon them, and burned them up as stubble; but His omnipotent patience restrained His indignation, and He remained as a sheep before her shearers. He allowed His own creatures to pluck His hair and spit in His face. Such patience should be yours as servants of God. We are to be willing to be made nothing of, and even to be counted as the offscouring of all things. It is pitiful for the Christian to refuse to suffer, and to become a fighting man, crying, "We must stand up for our rights." Did you ever see Jesus in that posture? There is a propensity in us to say, "I will have it out." Yes, but you cannot picture Jesus in that attitude. I defy a painter to depict Him so: it is somebody else, and not Christ. No! He said, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

There is something more here than perfect consecration in the mere form of it, for its heart and essence are manifest in an obedient delight in the will of the Father. The words seem to me to express alacrity. It is not said that He reluctantly permitted His enemies to pluck His hair, or smite His back, but it is written, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." He could not delight in it; how could He delight in suffering and shame? These things were even more repugnant to His sensitive nature than they can be to us; and yet, "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." He was ready for this dreadful treatment, for He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" He was ready for the cup of gall, and willing to drink it to its dregs, though it was bitterness itself to Him. He gave His back to the smiters.

All this while—now follow me in this next point—there was no flinching in Him. They spat in His face, but what says He in the seventh verse. "I have set my face like a flint." If they are about to defile His face He is resolved to bear it; He girds up His loins and makes Himself more determined. Oh, the bravery of our Master's silence! Cruelty and shame could not make Him speak. Have not your lips sometimes longed to speak out a denial and a defense? Have you not felt it wise to be quiet, but then the charge has been so excessively cruel, and it has stung you so

terribly that you hungered to resent it. Base falsehoods aroused your indignation, and you felt you must speak and probably you did speak, though you tried to keep your lips as with a bridle while the wicked were before you. But our own beloved Lord in the omnipotence of His patience and love would not utter a word, but like a lamb at the slaughter He opened not His mouth. He witnessed a good confession by His matchless silence. Oh, how might—how gloriously mighty was His patience! We must copy it if we are to be His disciples. We, too, must set our faces like flints, to move or to sit still, according to the Father's will, to be silent or to speak, as most shall honor Him. "I have set my face like a flint," saith He, even though in another place He cries, "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

And do you notice all the while the confidence and quiet of His spirit? He almost seems to say, "You may spit upon Me, but you cannot find fault with Me. You may pluck my hair, but you cannot impugn my integrity; you may lash my shoulders, but you cannot impute a fault to Me. Your false witnesses dare not look Me in the face: let Me know who is mine adversary, let him come near to Me. Behold, Adonai Jehovah will keep Me, who is he that shall condemn me! Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up." Be calm then, O true servant of God! In patience possess your soul. Serve God steadily and steadfastly though all men should belie you. Go to the bottom of the service, dive even to the very depth, and be content even to lie in Christ's grave, for you shall share in Christ's resurrection. Do not dream that the path to heaven is up the hill of honor, it winds down into the valley of humiliation. Imagine not that you can grow great eternally by being great here. You must become less, and less, and less, even though you should be despised and rejected of men, for this is the path to everlasting glory.

I have not time to expound the last two verses of the chapter, but they read you a noble lesson. "He gave his back to the smiters"; if, then, any of you walk in darkness and have no light, this is no new thing for a servant of God. The chief of all servants persevered, though men despised Him. Follow Him, then. Stay yourselves upon God as He did, and look for a bright ending of your trials. He came out into the light ultimately, and there He sits in inconceivable splendor at His Father's right hand, and so

shall all the faithful come out of the cloud and shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Only bear on with resolute patience, and glory shall be your reward, even as it is His.

IV. Lastly, I am to set Him forth in His fourth character, as THE COMFORTER OF HIS PEOPLE; but I must ask you to do this, while I just, as it were, make a charcoal sketch of the picture I would have painted.

Remember, first, our blessed Lord is well qualified to speak a word in season to him that is weary, because He Himself is lowly, and meek, and so accessible to us. When men are in low spirits they feel as if they could not take comfort from persons who are harsh and proud. The Comforter must come as a sufferer; He must come in a lowly broken spirit, if He would cheer the afflicted. You must not put on your best dress to go and visit the daughter of poverty, or go with your jewels about you to show how much better off you are than she. Sit down by the side of the downcast man and let him know that you are meek and lowly of heart. Your Master "gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair," and therefore He is the Comforter you want.

Remark not only His lowliness, but His sympathy. Are you full of aches and pains this morning? Jesus knows all about them, for He "gave his back to the smiters." Do you suffer from what is worse than pain, from scandal and slander? "He hid not his face from shame and spitting." Have you been ridiculed of late? Have the graceless made fun of your godliness? Jesus can sympathize with you, for you know what unholy mirth they made out of Him. In every pang that rends your heart your Lord has borne His share. Go and tell Him. Many will not understand you. You are a speckled bird, differing from all the rest, and they will all peck at you; but Jesus Christ knows this, for He was a speckled bird, too. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," but not separate from such as you. Get you to Him and He will sympathize with you.

In addition to His gentle spirit and His power to sympathize, there is this to help to comfort us—namely, His example, for He can argue thus with

you, "I gave my back to the smiters. Cannot you do the like? Shall the disciple be above his Master?" If I can but get on the doorstep of heaven and sit down in the meanest place there I shall feel I have an infinitely better position than I deserve, and shall I think of my dear, blessed Lord and Master giving His face to be spit upon, and then give myself airs, and say, "I cannot bear this scorn, I cannot bear this pain!" What, does the King pass over the brook Kedron, and must there be no brook Kedron for you? Does the Master bear the cross, and must your shoulders never be galled? Did they call the Master of the house "Beelzebub," and must they call you "Reverend Sir?" Did they laugh at Him, and scoff at Him, and must you be honored? Are you to be "gentleman" and "lady" where Christ was "that fellow"? For His birth they loaned Him a stable, and for His burial He borrowed a grave. O friends, let pride disappear, and let us count it our highest honor to be permitted to stoop as low as ever we can.

And, then, His example further comforts us by the fact that He was calm amid it all. Oh, the deep rest of the Saviors heart! They set Him up upon that mock throne, but He did not answer with an angry word; they put a reed into His hand, but He did not change it to an iron rod, and break them like potters' vessels, as He might have done. There was no wincing and no pleading for mercy. Sighs of pain were forced from Him, and He said, "I thirst," for He was not a stoic; but there was no fear of man, or timorous shrinking of heart.

The King of Martyrs well deserves to wear the martyr's crown, for right royally did He endure: there was never a patience like to His. That is your copy, brother, that is your copy, sister—you must write very carefully to write as well as that. You had need your Master held your hand; in fact, whenever children in Christ's school do write according to His copy, it is always because He holds their hand by His Spirit.

Last of all, our Savior's triumph is meant to be a stimulus and encouragement to us. He stands before us this morning as the Comforter of His people. Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself lest ye be weary and faint in your minds; for though He was once abased and despised, yet now He sitteth at the right hand of God, and reigns over all things; and the day is coming when every knee

shall bow before Him, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. They that spat upon Him will rue the day. Come hither, ye that derided Him! He has raised you from the dead, come hither and spit upon Him now! Ye that scourged Him, bring your rods, see what ye can do in this day of his glory! See, they fly before Him, they invoke the hills to shelter them, they ask the rocks to open and conceal them. Yet it is nothing but His face, that selfsame face they spat upon, which is making earth and heaven to flee away. Yea, all things flee before the majesty of his frown who once gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. Be like Him, then, ye who bear His name; trust Him, and live for Him, and you shall reign with Him in glory forever and ever. Amen.

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The Wounds of Jesus

"He shewed them his hands and his feet."—Luke 24:40.

I have selected this sentence as the text, although I shall not strictly adhere to it. What was to be seen on Christ's hands and feet? We are taught that the prints of the nails were visible, and that in his side there was still the gash of the spear. For did he not say to Thomas? "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." I wish to draw your attention to the ample fact, that our Lord Jesus Christ, when he rose again from the dead had in his body the marks of his passion. If he had pleased he could readily have removed them. He rose again from the dead, and he might have erased from his body everything which could be an indication of what he had suffered and endured before he descended into the tomb. But, no! Instead thereof, there were the pierced hands and feet, and there was the open side. What was the reason for this? There was no absolute necessity for it: it could easily have been dispensed with, What, then, were the reasons? I shall endeavor to enter into this subject, and I hope we may draw some profitable instructions therefrom.

First, what influence did the exhibition of the hands and feet have upon the disciples? Secondly, why is it that Jesus Christ, now in heaven, bears with him the scars in his flesh? And, then, thirdly, is there any lesson to us in the fact that Jesus Christ still wears his wounds? I think there is.

I. First, then, OF WHAT USE WAS THE EXHIBITION OF THOSE WOUNDS TO THE DISCIPLES? I reply at once that they were infallible proofs that he was the same person. He said, "Behold my hands and feet, that it is, I, myself." It was to establish his identity, that he was the very same Jesus whom they had followed, whom at last they had deserted, whom they had beheld afar off crucified and slain, and whom they had carried to the tomb in the gloom of the evening; it was the very same Christ who was now before them, and they might know it, for there was the seal of his sufferings upon him. He was the same person; the hands and feet could testify to that. You know, beloved, had not some such

evidence been visible upon our Saviour, it is probable that his disciples would have been unbelieving enough to doubt the identity of his person. Have you never seen men changed, extremely changed in their external appearance. I have known a man, perhaps, five or six years ago; he has passed through a world of suffering and pain, and when I have seen him again, I have declared, "I should not have known you if I had met you in the street." Now, when the disciples parted with Jesus it was at the Lord's Supper. They then walked with him into the garden. There did the Saviour sweat, "as it were great drops of blood." Do you not imagine that such a wrestling, such a bloody sweat as that, must have had some effect upon his visage. It had surely had enough to mar it before. But now the ploughshares of grief were sharpened, and anguish made deep furrows upon him. There must have been lines of grief upon his brow, deeper than they had ever seen before. This would have produced a change great enough to make them forget his countenance. Nor was this all. You know he had to undergo the flagellation at the pillar of the Praetorium, and then to die. Can you imagine that a man could pass through the process of death, through such astonishing agony as that which the Saviour endured, and yet that there should be no change in his visible appearance? I can conceive that in passing through such a furnace as this, the very lineaments of Christ's face would seem to have been melted, and would have need to be restruct ere the disciples could discern that he was the same.

Besides that? when Jesus rose, he rose, you know, as he now sits in heaven. His body was flesh and bone, but, nevertheless, it had miraculous powers; it was capable of entering into a room without the ordinary modes of access. We find our Saviour standing in the midst of his disciples, the doors being shut. I believe that Jesus had a body such as we are to have in the next world. Jesus Christ was not a phantom or spectra. His body was not a spirit; it was a real body. And so in heaven imagine not that we are to be spirits. We are to be spirits until the great resurrection day; but, then, our spirit is afterwards to receive a spiritual body; it is to be clothed upon; it is not for ever to be a naked, bodiless spirit. That body will be to all intents and purposes the same body which shall be laid in the tomb. It is sown in dishonor, and the same it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, and the same it is raised in power. Mark,

Jesus was flesh still! All flesh is not the same flesh: all bodies have not the same qualities. So our Saviour's flesh was flesh that could not suffer,—flesh that had extraordinary powers about it,—flesh however, that could eat, although it was under no necessity to do so. And such may be the body, the glorified body, which shall be given to us when we shall rise at the first resurrection, and shall be made like unto our head. But, now, think! If Christ had to undergo in his countenance those matchless transformations, that must have been, first of all, connected with his bloody sweat, then, with his agony, and after that, with the transforming, or, if I may use such a word, the transmutation of his body into a spiritual body, can you not conceive that his likeness would be changed, that the disciples would scarcely know him if there had not been some deeply graven marks whereby they would be able to discover him? The disciples looked upon the very face, but, even then they doubted. There was a majesty about him which most of them had not seen. Peter, James, and John, had seen him transfigured, when his garments were whiter than any fuller could make them; but the rest of the disciples had only seen him as a man of sorrows; they had not seen him as the glorious Lord, and, therefore, they would be apt to doubt whether he was the same. But these nail-prints, this pierced side, these were marks which they could not dispute, which unbelief itself could not doubt. And they all were convinced and confessed that he was the Lord; and even faithless Thomas, was constrained to cry, " My Lord and my God!"

II. Let us turn to the second question: Why SHOULD CHRIST WEAR THESE WOUNDS IN HEAVEN AND OF WHAT AVAIL ARE THEY? Let me give you some thoughts upon the matter.

I can conceive, first, that the wounds of Christ in heaven will be a theme of eternal wonder to the angels. An old writer represents the angels as saying, "Oh, Lord of glory, what are these wounds in thy hand?" They had seen him depart from heaven, and they had gone with him as far as they might go, singing, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth.'" Some of them had watched him through his pilgrimage, for "he was seen of angels." But when he returned, I doubt not that they crowded round him, bowed before him in adoration, and then put the holy question, "What are these wounds in thy hand?" At any rate they were enabled to behold

for themselves in heaven the man who suffered, and they could see the wounds which were produced in his body by his sufferings; and I can readily imagine that this would cause them to lift their songs higher, would prolong their shouts of triumph, and would cause them to adore him with a rapture of wonderment, such as they had never felt before. And I doubt not that every time they look upon his hands, and behold the crucified man exalted by his Father's side, they are afresh wrapt in wonder, and again they strike their harps with more joyous lingers at the thought of what he must have suffered who thus bears the scars of his hard-fought battles.

Again, Christ wears these scars in his body in heaven as his ornaments. The wounds of Christ are his glories, they are his jewels and his precious things. To the eye of the believer Christ is never so glorious, never so surpassing fair, as when we can say of him, "My beloved is white and ruddy," white with innocence, and ruddy with his own blood. He never seems so beautiful as when he can see him as the rose and the lily; as the lily, matchless purity, and as the rose, crimsoned with his own gore. We may talk of Christ in his beauty, in divers places raising the dead and stilling the tempest, but oh! there never was such a matchless Christ as he that did hang upon the cross. There I behold all his beauties, all his attributes developed, all his love drawn out, all his character expressed in letters so legible, that even my poor stammering heart call read those lines and speak them out again, as I see them written in crimson upon the bloody tree. Beloved, these are to Jesus what they are to us; they are his ornaments, his royal jewels, his fair array. He does not care for the splendor and pomp of kings. The thorny crown is his diadem—a diadem such as no monarch ever wore. It is true that he bears not now the scepter of reed, but there is a glory in it that there never flashed from scepter of gold. It is true he is not now buffeted and spit upon: his face is not now marred more than that of any other man by grief and sorrow, for he is glorified and full of blessedness; but he never seems so lovely as when we see him buffeted of men for our sakes, enduring all manner of grief, bearing our iniquities, and carrying our sorrows. Jesus Christ finds such beauties in his wounds that he will not renounce them, he will wear the court dress in which he wooed our souls, and he will wear the royal purple of his atonement throughout eternity.

Nor are these only the ornaments of Christ: they are his trophies—the trophies of his love. Have you never seen a soldier with a gash across his forehead or in his cheek? Why every soldier will tell you the wound in battle is no disfigurement—it is his honor. "If" said he, "I received a wound when I was retreating, a wound in the back, that were to my disgrace, If I have received a wound in a victory, then it is an honorable thing to be wounded." Now, Jesus Christ has scars of honor in his flesh and glory in his eyes He has other trophies He has divided the spoil with the strong: he has taken the captive away from his tyrant master; he has redeemed for himself a host that no man can number, who are all the trophies of his victories: but these scars, these are the memorials of the fight, and these the trophies, too.

For do you not know it was from the side of Jesus that Death sucked its death. Jesus did hang upon the cross, and Death thought to get the victory. Aye, but in its victory it destroyed itself. There are three things in Christ that Death never met with before, all of which are fatal to it. There was in Christ innocence. Now; as long as man was innocent, he could not die. Adam lived as long as he was innocent. Now Christ was about to die; but Death sucked in innocent blood; he sucked in his own poison and he died. Again, blessedness is that which takes away the sting of death. Now Christ, even when he was dying, was "God over all, blessed for ever." All that Death had ever killed before was under the curse; but this man was never by nature under the curse, because for our sakes he was not born into this world a cursed man. He was the seed of woman it is true, but still not of carnal generation. He did come under the curse when he took upon himself our sins, but not for his own sins. He was in himself blessed. Death sucked in blessed blood: he had never done that before—all others have been under the curse—and that slew Death. It was innocence combined with blessedness that was the destruction of Death. Yet another thing. Death had never met before with any man who had life in himself. But when Death drank Christ's blood it drank life. For his blood is the life of the soul, and is the seed of life eternal. Wheresoever it goeth, doth it not give life to the dead? And Death, finding that it had drunk into its own veins life in the form of Jesus' blood gave up the ghost; and Death itself is dead, for Christ hath destroyed it, by the sacrifice of

himself; he hath put it away; he hath said, "Oh death, where is thy sting? oh grave, where is thy victory?" But now, since it was from these very wounds that Death sucked in its own death, and that hell was destroyed; since these were the only weapons of a weaponless Redeemer, he wears and bears them as his trophies in heaven. David laid up Goliath's sword before the Lord for ever. Jesus lays up his wounds before the Lord, for his wounds were his weapons, and this is why he wears them still.

I was thinking while coming here of Jesus Christ in heaven with his wounds, and another thought struck me. Another reason why Jesus wears his wounds is, that when he intercedes he may employ them as powerful advocates. When he rises up to pray for his people, he needs not speak a word; he lifts his hands before his Father's face; he makes bare his side, and points to his feet. These are the orators with which he pleads with God—these wounds. Oh, he must prevail. Do you not see that Christ without his wounds, in heaven might be potent enough. but there would not be that glorious simplicity of intercession which now you see. He has nothing to do but to shew his hands. Him the Father heareth always. His blood crieth and is heard, His wounds plead and prevail.

Let us think again. Jesus Christ appears in heaven as the wounded one, this shews again that he has not laid aside his priesthood. You know how Watts paraphrases the idea He says,
"Looks like a lamb that has been slain,
And wears his priesthood still."

If the wounds had been removed we might have forgotten that there was a sacrifice; and, mayhap, next we might have forgotten that there was a priest. But the wounds are there: then there is a sacrifice, and there is a priest also, for he who is wounded is both himself, the sacrifice and the priest. The priesthood of Melchisedec is a glorious subject. He who reads that with the eye of faith, and is blessed with the Spirit, will find much cause for joy when he contrasts the priesthood of Christ with that of Aaron. The priesthood of Aaron began, and it finished; but the priesthood of Melchisedec had no beginning, and it had no end. He was, we are told, "Without beginning of days, and without end of years;" without father, without mother, without descent. Such is the priesthood of Christ' It shall

never end. He himself is without beginning, and his priesthood is without end. When the last ransomed soul is brought in. when there shall be no more prayers to offer, Christ shall still be a priest. Though he has no sacrifice now to slay, for he is the sacrifice himself, "once for all," yet still he is a priest, and when all his people as the result of that sacrifice shall be assembled around his glorious throne, he shall still be the priest. "For thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." I take it that this is a further reason why he still bears his wounds in heaven.

There is another and a terrible reason why Christ wears his wounds still. It is this. Christ is coming to judge the world. Christ has with himself to-day the accusers of his enemies. Every time that Christ lifts his hands to heaven, the men that hate him, or despise him, are accused. The Jewish nation is brought in guilty every day. The cry is remembered, "His blood be on us and on our children;" and the sin of casting Christ away, and rejecting him, is brought before the mind of the Most High. And when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world in righteousness, seated on the great white throne, that hand of his shall be the terror of the universe." They shall look on him whom they have pierced," and they shall mourn for their sins. They would not mourn with hopeful penitence in time, they shall mourn with sorrowful remorse throughout eternity. When the multitude are gathered together, when in the valley of Jehoshaphat Christ shall judge the nations, what need he to summon accusers? His own wounds are his witnesses. Why need he to summon any to convict men of sin? His own side bears their handiwork. Ye murderers, did you not do this? Ye sons of an evil generation did ye not pierce the Saviour? Did ye not nail him to the tree? Behold these holes in my hand, and this stab in my side; these are swift witnesses against you to condemn you I There is a terrible side, then to this question. A crucified Christ with his wounds still open will be a terrible sight for an assembled universe. "Well," but says one of my congregation "What is that to us? We have not crucified the Saviour." No but let me assure You that his blood shall be on you. If ye die unbelievers his blood shall be required at your hand. The death of Christ was wrought by the hand of manhood, of all and entire manhood. Others did it for you, and though you gave no consent verbally, yet you do assent in your heart every day. As long as you hate Christ you give an assent to his death. As long as you

reject his sacrifice, and despise his love, you give evidence in your hearts that you would have crucified the Lord of glory had you been there. Nay, and you do yourself, so fares you can, crucify him afresh and put him to an open shame. When you laugh at his people, when you despise his word, and mock at his ordinances, you are driving nails into his hands, and thrusting the spear into his side; therefore those open hands and that pierced side shall be witnesses against you, even against you, if ye die rejecting him, and enter into eternity enemies to Christ by wicked works.

I think I have thus supplied severe excellent reasons. But now there is one more which I shall offer to your consideration before I come to the lesson which you shall learn. Christ v, ears those marks in his hands that, as believers, you may never forget that he has died. We shall need, perhaps, nothing to refresh our memories in heaven. but still' even if we should, we have it here. When we shall have been in heaven many a thousand years we shall still have the death of Christ before us, we shall see him reigning. But can you not conceive that the presence of the wounded Christ will often stir up the holy hearts of the celestial beings to a fresh outpouring of their grateful songs? They begin the song thus, "Unto him that liveth." Jesus looks upon them and shows his hand and they add, "and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and death." They would not forget that he died; but certainly that part of the song where it said, "and was dead," will have all the more sweetness, because there he sits with the very marks of his passion—with the nail-prints of his crucifixion. If we shall be in heaven at all constituted as we are on earth, we shall need some visible token to keep us continually in remembrance. Here, you know, the most spiritual saint needs the bread and wine—sweet emblems of the Saviour's body. There we shall have nothing to do with emblems, for we shall have the sight of him. And I say, if we be in heaven anything like what we are here, I can imagine that the presence of Jesus may be highly beneficial, may be gloriously precious to the saints in reviving their love continually, and causing their hearts, which are like fountains of love, to bubble up afresh, and send out again the living water of gratitude and thanksgiving. At any rate, I know this thought is very delightful to me, that I shall see the man that did hang on Calvary's cross, and that I shall see him as he did inane there. I delight to see my Saviour in all the glories of his Father, but I long to go back and

see him as he was, as well as he is. I think I should sometimes envy Peter and the rest of them that they should have seen him crucified. Yes, I should say, I see him glorified, but you saw the most marvellous sight. To see a God is an every-day sight with glorified beings, but to see a God covered with his blood, this is an extraordinary thing. To see Christ glorified, that we may see each day, but to have seen him on that special occasion, made obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross, that was an extraordinary sight which even angels themselves could see but once. You and I cannot see that. But those wounds are there still manifest and visible, and we shall be delighted with the rapturous sight of the Lord in glory, with his wounds still fresh upon him. May the Lord grant that we may all be there to see it. May we refresh ourselves with that glorious sight. I can say that I would part with all the joys of sense to view his face. Everything that is good on earth I would give away without a wish, without one single lingering thought, if I might but behold his face, and lie in his bosom, and see the dear pierced hands and the wide-open side. We must wait his pleasure. A few more rolling suns shall do it. The moon shall rise and wane for us a few more times, and then
"We shall see his face, and never, never sin
But from the rivers of his grace, drink endless pleasures in."

III. This brings me now to the third point. WHAT DOES CHRIST MEAN BY SHOWING TO US HIS HANDS AND FEET? He means this that suffering is absolutely necessary. Christ is the head, and his people are the members. If suffering could have been avoided, surely our glorious Head ought to have escaped; but inasmuch as he shows us his wounds, it is to tell us, that we shall have wounds too. Innocence ought to escape suffering. Did not Pilate mean as much when he said, "I find no fault in him, therefore let him go?" But innocence did not escape suffering. Even the captain of our salvation must be made perfect through suffering; therefore, we who are guilty, we who are far from being perfect, must not wonder that we have to be wounded too. Shall the head be crowned with thorns, and do you imagine that the other members of the body are to be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Jesus Christ swim through seas of his own blood to win the crown, and are you and I to walk to heaven dryshod in silver slippers? No, the wounds of Christ are to teach us that

suffering is necessary. In fact, that doctrine was taught upon Mount Calvary. There are only three sorts of men that have ever lived—a good man, a bad man, and the God-man. Now, on Calvary's cross, I see three characters, I see the thief, the representative of the bad. I see the penitent thief, the representative of the righteous, and I see the God-man in the midst. All three must suffer. Do not imagine, for a moment, that wicked men get through this world without suffering. Oh, no. The path to hell is very rough, though it seems smooth. When men will damn themselves, they will not find it a very pleasurable task. The cutting the throat of one's soul is not such a pleasant operation. The drinking the poison of damnation is not, after all, an enviable task. The path of the sinner may seem to be happy, but it is not. It is a gilded deceit. He knows there is bitterness in his bowels, even here on earth. Even the wicked must suffer. But, mark, if any out of the world would have escaped it would be the God-man; but the God-man did not escape. He shows us his wounds; and do you think that you shall remain unwounded? Not if you are his, at any rate. Men sometimes escape on earth; but the true-born child of God must not, and would not, if he might, for if he did, he would then give himself cause to say, "I am no part of the body; if I were a part of the body, my head suffered, and so must I suffer, for I am part of his living body." That is the first lesson he teaches us, the necessity of suffering.

But next he teaches us his sympathy with us in our suffering. "There," says he, "see this hand! I am not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. I have suffered, too. I was tempted in all ways like as you are. Look here! there are the marks—there are the marks. They are not only tokens of my love, they are not only sweet forget-me-nots that bind me to love you for ever. But besides that they are the evidence of my sympathy. I can feel for you. Look—look—I have suffered. Have you the heart-ache? Ah, look yon here, what a heartache I had when this heart was pierced Do you suffer, even unto blood wrestling against sin? So did I. I have sympathy with you." It was this that sustained the early martyrs. One of them declared that while he was suffering he fixed his eyes on Christ; and when they were pinching his flesh dragging it off with the hot harrows, when they were putting him to agonies so extraordinary, that I could not dare to mention them here, lest some of you should faint even under the very narrative, he said, "My soul

is not insensible but it loves." What a glorious speech was that! It loves—it loves Christ. It was not insensible, but love gave it power to overcome suffering, a power as potent as insensibility. "For," said he, "my eyes are fixed on him that suffered for me, and I can suffer for him; for my soul is in his body; I have sent my heart up unto him. He is my brother, and there my heart is. Plough my flesh, and break my bones; smash them with veer irons, I can bear it all, for Jesus suffered, and he suffers in me now; but he sympathises with me, and this makes me strong." Yes, beloved, lay hold on this in all times of your agony. When you are sweating, think of his bloody sores. When you are bruised, think of the whips that tore his flesh. And when you are aging, think of his death. And when God hides his face for a little from you, think of "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" This is why he wears his wounds in his hands, that he may show that he sympathises with you.

Another thing. Christ wears these wounds to show that suffering is an honorable thing. To suffer for Christ is glory. Men will say, "It is glorious to make others suffer." When Alexander rides over the necks of princes, and treads nations beneath his feet, that is glorious. The Christian religion teaches us it is glorious to be trodden on, glorious to be crushed, glorious to suffer. This is hard to learn. There we see it in our glorified Master. He makes his wounds his glory, and his sufferings are part of the drapery of his regal attire in Paradise Now, then, it is an honorable thing to suffer. Oh, Christian, when you are overtaken by strange troubles, be not afraid. God is near you. It was Christ's honor to suffer, and it is yours too. The only degree that God gives to his people is the degree of "Masters in tribulation." If you would be one of God's nobles you must be knighted. Men are knighted with a blow of the sword. The Lord knights us with the sword of affliction; and when we fight hard in many a battle, he makes us barons of the kingdom of heaven, he makes us dukes and lords in the kingdom of sorrowful honor, not through honor of man, but through dishonor of man, not through joy, but through suffering, and grief, and agony, and death. The highest honor that God can confer upon his children is the blood-red crown of martyrdom. When I read, as I have been reading lately, the story of the catacombs of Rome, and those short but very pithy inscriptions that are written over the graves of the martyrs, I felt sometimes as if I could envy them. I do not envy them their racks,

their hot irons, their being dragged at the heels of horses; but I do envy them when I see them arrayed in the blood-red robe of martyrdom. Who are they that stand nearest to the eternal throne, foremost of the saints in light? Why, the noble army of martyrs. And just as God shall give us grace to suffer for Christ, to suffer with Christ, and to suffer as Christ, just so much does he honor us. The jewels of a Christian are his afflictions. The regalia of the kings, that God hath made, are their troubles, their sorrows, and their griefs. Let us not, therefore, shun being honored. Let us not turn aside from being exalted. Griefs exalt us, and troubles lift us.

Lastly, there is one sweet thought connected with the wounds of Christ that has charmed my soul, and made my heart run over with delight. It is this: I have sometimes thought that if I am a part of Christ's body I am a poor wounded part; if I do belong to that all-glorious whole, the church, which is his fullness, the fullness of him that filleth all in all, yet have I said within me, "I am a poor maimed part, wounded, full of putrifying sores." But Christ did not leave even his wounds behind him, even those he took to heaven. "Not a bone of him shall be broken," and the flesh when wounded shall not be discarded,—shall not be left. He shall carry that with him to heaven, and he shall glorify even the wounded member. Is not this sweet, is not this precious to the troubled child of God? This, indeed, is a thought from which one may suck honey. Poor, weak, and wounded though I am, he will not discard me. His wounds are healed wounds, mark! they are not running sores; and so, though we be the wounded parts of Christ, we shall be healed; though we shall seem to ourselves in looking back upon what we were upon earth only as wounds, only parts of a wounded body, still we shall rejoice that he has healed those wounds, and that he has not cast us away. Precious, precious truth! The whole body he will present before his Father's face, and wounded though he be, he shall not cast his own wounds away. Let us take comfort, then, in this; let us rejoice therein. We shall be presented at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Mark, Christ's wounds are no spots to him, no wrinkles, they are ornaments; and even those parts of his church on earth that despair of themselves, thinking themselves to be as wounds shall be no spots, no wrinkles in the complete church above, but even they shall be the ornaments and the glory of Christ. Let us now look up by faith and see Jesus, the Wounded Jesus, sitting on his throne. Will not

this help us to gird up our loins to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

I cannot send you away without this last remark. Poor sinner, thou art troubled on account of sin. There is a sweet thought for thee. Men are afraid to go to Christ, or else they say, "My Sins are so many I cannot go to him; he will be angry with me." Do you see his hands outstretched to you to night? He is in heaven, and he still says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Are you afraid to come? Then, look at his hand—look at his hand, will not that induce you? "Oh," but you say, "I cannot think that Christ can have it in his heart to remember such a worm as I." Look at his side, there is easy access to his heart. His side is open, and even your poor prayers may be thrust into that side, and they shall reach his heart, holy though it be. Only do thou look to his wounds, and thou shalt certainly find peace through the blood of Jesus. There were two monks of late years in different cells in their convent. They were reading the Bible. One of them found Christ while reading the Scriptures, and he believed with a true evangelical faith. The other one was timid, and could scarcely think it true; the scheme of salvation seemed so great to him he could scarcely lay hold upon it. But, at last, he lay upon the point to die, and he sent for the other to come and sit by him, and to shut the door; because if the superior had heard of that of which they were about to speak, he might have condemned them both. When the monk had sat down, the sick man began to tell how his sins lay heavy on him; the other reminded him of Jesus. "If you would be saved, brother, you must look to Jesus who did hang upon the cross. His wounds must save." The poor man heard and he believed. Almost immediately afterwards came in the superior, with the brethren and the priests; and they began to grease him in extreme unction. This poor man tried to push them away; he could not bear the ceremony, and as well as he could he expressed his dissent. At last his lips were opened, and he said in Latin, "Tu vulnera Jesu!"—thy wounds, oh Jesus! thy wounds, oh Jesus!—clasped his hands, lifted them to heaven, fell back and died. Oh, I would that many a Protestant would die with these words on his lips. There was the fullness of the gospel in them. Thy wounds, oh Jesus! thy wounds;

these are my refuge in my trouble. Oh sinner, may you be helped to believe in his wounds! They cannot fail; Christ's wounds must heal those that put their trust in him.

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The Curse Removed

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. - Galatians 3:13

The law of God is a divine law, holy, heavenly, perfect. Those who find fault with the law, or in the least degree depreciate it, do not understand its design, and have no right idea of the law itself. Paul says, "the law is holy, but I am carnal; sold under sin." In all we ever say concerning justification by faith, we never intend to lower the opinion which our hearers have of the law, for the law is one of the most sublime of God's works. There is not a commandment too many; there is not one too few; but it is so incomparable, that its perfection is a proof of its divinity. No human lawgiver could have given forth such a law as that which we find in the decalogue. It is a perfect law; for all human laws that are right are to be found in that brief compendium and epitome of all that is good and excellent toward God, or between man and man.

But while the law is glorious, it is never more misapplied than when it is used as a means of salvation. God never intended men to be saved by the law. When he proclaimed it on Sinai, it was with thunder, fire, and smoke; as if he would say, "O man, hear my law; but thou shalt tremble while thou hearest it." Hear it! It is a law which hath the blast of a terrible trumpet, even like the day of destruction, of which it is but the herald, if thou offendest it, and findest none to bear the doom for thee. It was written on stone; as if to teach us that it was a hard, cold, stony law—one which would have no mercy upon us, but which, if we break it, would fall upon us, and dash us into a thousand pieces. O ye who trust in the law for

your salvation! ye have erred from the faith; ye do not understand God's designs; ye are ignorant of every one of God's truths. The law was given by Moses to make men feel themselves condemned, but never to save them; its very intention was to "conclude us all in unbelief, and to condemn us all, that he might have mercy upon all." It was intended by its thunders to crush every hope of self-righteousness, by its lightnings to scathe and demolish every tower of our own works, that we might be brought humbly and simply to accept a finished salvation through the one mighty Mediator who has "finished the law, and made it honorable, and brought in an everlasting righteousness," whereby we stand, stand complete before our Maker at last, if we be in Christ. All that the law doth, you will observe, is to curse; it can not bless. In all the pages of revelation you will find no blessings that the law ever gave to one that offended it. There were blessings, and those were comparatively small, which might be gained by those who kept it thoroughly; but no blessing is ever written for one offender. Blessings we find in the gospel; curses we find in the law.

This afternoon we shall briefly consider, first, the curse of the law; secondly, the curse removed; thirdly, the great Substitute who removed it—"He was made a curse for us." And then we shall come, in the last place, solemnly to ask each other, whether we are included in the mighty number for whom Christ did bear iniquities, and for whom "He was made a curse."

I. First, then, THE CURSE OF THE LAW. All who sin against the law are cursed by the law; all who rebel against its commands are cursed—cursed instantly, cursed terribly.

1. We shall regard that curse, first as being a universal curse, resting upon every one of the seed of Adam. Perhaps some here will be inclined to say, "Of course the law of God will curse all those who are loose in their lives, or profane in their conversation. We can all of us imagine that the swearer is a cursed man, cursed by God. We can suppose that the wrath of God rests upon the head of the man who is filthy in his life, and whose conversation is not upright, or who is a degraded man, under the ban of society." But ah! my friend, it is not quite so easy to get at the real truth,

which is this, that the curse of God rests upon every one of us, as by nature we stand before him. Thou mayest be the most moral in the world, but yet the curse of God is upon thee; thou mayest be lovely in thy life, modest in thy carriage, upright in thy behavior, almost Christlike in thy conduct, yet, if thou hast not been born again, and regenerated by sovereign grace, the curse of God still rests upon thine head. If thou hast but committed one sin in thy life, God's justice is so inexorable, that it condemns a man for one solitary offense; and though thy life should henceforth be one continued career of holiness, if thou hast sinned but once, unless thou hast an interest in the blood of Christ, the thunders of Sinai are launched at thee, and the lightnings of terrible vengeance flash all around thee.

Ah! my hearers, how humbling is this doctrine to our pride, that the curse of God is on every man of the seed of Adam; that every child born in this world is born under the curse, since it is born under the law; and that the moment I sin, though I transgress but once, I am from that moment condemned already; for "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."—cursed without a single hope of mercy, unless he find that mercy in the Substitute "who was made a curse for us." It is an awful thought, that the trail of the serpent is on the whole earth; that the poison is in the fountain of every heart; that the stream of the blood in all our veins is corrupt; that we are all condemned; that each one of us, without a single exception, whether he be philanthropist, senator, philosopher, divine, prince, or monarch, is under the curse unless he has been redeemed from it by Christ.

2. The curse, too, we must remark, while universal, is also just. This is the great difficulty. There are many persons who think that the curse of God upon those who are undeniably wicked is, of course, right; but that the curse of God upon those who for the most part appear to be excellent, and who may have sinned but once, as an act of injustice. We answer, "Nay, when God pronounces the curse, he doth it justly; he is a God of justice; 'just and right is he.'" And mark thee, man, if thou art condemned, it shall be by the strictest justice; and if thou hast sinned but once, the curse is righteous when it lights upon thy head. Dost thou ask me how this is? I

answer, Thou sayest thy sin is little; then, if the sin be little, how little trouble it might have taken thee to have avoided it! If thy transgression be but small, at how small an expense thou mightest have refrained from it! Some have said, "Surely the sin of Adam was but little; he did but take an apple." Ay, but in its littleness was its greatness. If it was a little thing to take the fruit, with how little trouble might it have been avoided! And because it was so small an act, there was couched within it the greater malignity of guilt. So, too, thou mayest never have blasphemed thy God, thou mayest never have desecrated his Sabbath; yet, insomuch as thou hast committed a little sin, thou art justly condemned, for a little sin hath in it the essence of all sin; and I know not but that what we call little sins may be greater in God's sight than those which the world universally condemns, and against which the hiss of the execration of humanity continually rises. I say, God is just, although from his lips should rush thunders to blast the entire universe; God is just, although he curses all. Tremble, man, and "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish by the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

So the curse is universal, and it is just.

3. But let us notice, next, the curse is also fearful. Some there be who think it little to be cursed of God; but O! if they knew the fearful consequences of that curse; they would think it terrible indeed. It were enough to make our knees knock together, to chill our blood, and start each individual hair of our head upon its end, if we did but know what it is to be under the curse of God. What does that curse include? It involves death, the death of this body; that is by no means an insignificant portion of its sentence. It includes spiritual death, a death of that inner life which Adam had—the life of the spirit, which hath now fled, and can only be restored by that holy Spirit who "quickeneth whom he will." And it includes, last of all, and worst of all, that death eternal, a dwelling forever in the place

"Where solemn groans, and hollow moans,
And shrieks of tortured ghosts,"

make up the only music. Death eternal includes all that can be gathered in that terrible, that awful—we had almost said unutterable—word "hell." This is a curse which rests on every man by nature. We make no exception of rank or degree; for God has made none. We offer no hope of exception of character or reputation; for God has made none. The whole of us are shut up to this, that (so far as the law is concerned) we must die—die here and die in the next world, and die a death which never dies; feel a worm which shall gnaw forever, and a fire which never can be extinguished, even by a fold of tears of future penitence. There we must be forever, O! forever lost. Could we estimate that curse, I say again, the torments that tyrants could inflict we might well afford to ridicule, the injuries that this body can sustain we might well afford to despise, compared with that awful avalanche of threatening which rushes down with fearful force from the mountain of God's truth. Condemnation—that curse of God—abideth on us all.

4. We hasten from this point, beloved, for it is fearful work to speak upon it; but yet we must not depart from it entirely, till we have hinted at one thought more; and that is, that the curse of God which comes upon sinful men is a present curse. O! my dear hearers, could I lay hold of your hands, if ye be not converted, I would labor with tears and groans to get you to grasp this thought. It is not so much a condemnation in the future that you have to dread as a damnation now. Yes, sitting where thou art, my hearer, if thou art out of Christ, thou art condemned now; thy condemnation is sealed; thy death-warrant has been stamped by the great seal of the Majesty of heaven; the angel's sword of vengeance is already unsheathed, and over thy head this afternoon. Whosoever thou mayest be, if thou art out of Christ, there hangeth a sword over thee, a sword suspended by a hair, which death shall cut; and then that sword shall descend, dividing thy soul from thy body, and sending both of them to pains eternal. O! ye might start up from your seats with fear, if ye did but know this, some of you. Ye are reputable, ye are respectable, ye are honorable, perhaps right honorable, and yet condemned men, condemned women. On the walls of heaven ye are proscribed, written up there as deicides, who have slain the Saviour—as rebels against God's government, who have committed high treason against him; and perhaps even now the dark-winged angel of death is spreading his pinions upon

the blast, hastening to hurry you down to destruction. Say not, O sinner, that I would affright thee; say, rather, that I would bring thee to the Saviour; for whether thou hearest this or not, or believest it or not, thou canst not alter the truth thereof—that thou art now, if thou hast not given thyself to Christ, "condemned already;" and wherever thou sittest, thou art but still in thy condemned cell; for this whole earth is but one huge prison-house, wherein the condemned one doth drag along a chain of condemnation, till death takes him to the scaffold, where the fearful execution of terrific woe must take place upon him. Now condemned and forever condemned; hear that word. "The curse of the law!"

II. But now I must speak, in the second place, of THE REMOVAL OF THAT CURSE. This is a sweet and pleasant duty. Some of you, my dear friends, will be able to follow me in your experience, while I just remind you how it was, that in your salvation Christ removed the curse.

1. First, you will agree with me when I say that the removal of the curse from us is done in a moment. It is an instantaneous thing. I may stand here one moment under the curse; and if the Spirit look upon me, and I breathe a prayer to heaven—if by faith I cast myself on Jesus—in one solitary second, ere the clock hath ticked, my sins may be all forgiven. Hart sung truly, when he said—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation if full, through his blood."

You will remember in Christ's life, that most of the curses he wrought—yea, I believe all—were instantaneous cures. See! there lies a man stretched on his couch, from which he hath not risen for years. "Take up thy bed, and walk," said Christ in majesty. The man takes up that bed, and without the intervention of weeks of convalescence at once carries it, leaping like a hart. There is another. From his closed lips a sound hath scarcely ever escaped; he is dumb; Christ toucheth his lips; "Ephphatha, be opened;" and he sings at once. He does not barely speak, but he speaks plain; the tongue of the dumb sings. Ay, and even in the cases where

Christ healed death itself, he did it instantaneously. When that beautiful creature lay asleep in death upon the bed, Jesus went to her; and though her dark ringlets covered up her eyes, which were now glazed in death, Jesus did but take her clay-cold hand in his, and say, "Talitha cumi! damsel, I say unto thee, Arise;" and no sooner had he said it, than she sat up, and opened her eyes; and to show that she was not merely half alive, or half restored, she rose up, and ministered to him. We do not say that the great work of conversion is instantaneous; that may take some time; for Christ commences in the heart a work, which is to be carried on through life in sanctification; but the justification, the taking away the curse, is done in a single moment. "Unwrite the curse," says God. It is done. The acquittal is signed and sealed; it taketh not long.

"Fully discharged by Christ I am,
From sin's tremendous curse and blame."

I may stand here at this moment, and I may have believed in Christ but five minutes ago; still, if I have believed in Christ but that short space of time, I am as justified, in God's sight, as I would be should I live until these hairs are whitened by the sunlight of heaven, or as I shall be when I walk among the golden lamps of the city of palaces. God justifieth his people at once; the curse is removed in a single moment. Sinner, hear that! Thou mayest now be under condemnation; but ere thou canst say "now" again, thou mayest be able to say—"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus." We may be fully absolved in a moment.

2. Mark, beloved, in the next place, that this removal of the curse from us, when it does take place, is an entire removal. It is not a part of the curse which is taken away. Christ doth not stand at the foot of Sinai, and say, "Thunders! diminish your force;" he doth not catch here and there a lightning, and bind its wings; nay, but when he cometh he bloweth away all the smoke, he putteth aside all the thunder, he quencheth all the lightning; he removeth it all. When Christ pardoneth, he pardoneth all sin; the sins of twice ten thousand years he pardons in an hour. Thou mayest be old and gray-headed, and hitherto unpardoned; but though thy sins exceed in number the stars spread in the sky, one moment takes

them all away. Mark that "all!" That sin of midnight; that black sin which, like a ghost, has haunted thee all thy life; that hideous crime; that unknown act of blackness which hath darkened thy character; that awful stain upon thy conscience—they shall be all taken away. And though thou hast a stain upon that hand—a stain which thou hast often sought to wash out by all the mixtures that Moses can give thee—thou shalt find, when thou art bathed in Jesus' blood, that thou shalt be able to say, "All clean, my Lord, all clean; not a spot now; all is gone; I am completely washed from head to foot; the stains are all removed." It is the glory of this removal of the curse that it is all taken away; there is not a single atom left. Hushed now is the law's loud thunder; the sentence is entirely reversed, and there is no fear left.

3. We must say again upon this point, that when Christ removes the curse, it is an irreversible removal. Once let me be acquitted, who is he that condemns me? There be some in these modern times who teach that God justifieth, and yet, after that, condemns the same person whom he has justified. We have heard it asserted pretty boldly, that a man may be a child of God to-day—hear it, ye heavens, and be astonished—and be a child of the devil to-morrow; we have heard it said, but we know it is untrue, for we find nothing in Scripture to warrant it. We have often asked ourselves, Can men really believe that, after having been "begotten again to a lively hope," that birth in God, through Christ, and by his Spirit, can yet fail? We have asked ourselves, Can men imagine that, after God hath once broken our chains, and set us free, he will call us back, and bind us once again, like Prometheus, to the great rocks of despair? Will he once blot out the handwriting that is against us, and then record the charge again? Once pardoned, then condemned? We trow, that had Paul been in the way of such men, he would have said, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" There is no condemnation to us, being in Christ Jesus; we "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It is a sweet thought, that Satan himself can never rob me of my pardon. I may lose my copy of it, and lose my comfort; but the original pardon is filed in heaven. It may be that gloomy doubts may arise, and I may fear to think myself forgiven: but

"Did Jesus upon me shine?
Then Jesus is for ever mine."

"O! my distrustful heart!
How small thy faith appears.
Far greater, Lord, thou art,
Than all my doubts and fears.
'Midst all my sin, and fear, and woe,
Thy Spirit will not let me go."

I love, at times, to go back to the hour when I hope I was forgiven through a Saviour's blood. There is much comfort in it to remember that blessed hour when first we knew the Lord.

"Dost mind the place, the spot of ground,
Where Jesus did thee meet?"

Perhaps thou dost; perhaps thou canst look back to the very place where Jesus whispered thou wast his. Canst thou do so? O! how much comfort it will give thee! for, remember, once acquitted, acquitted forever. So saith God's word. Once pardoned, thou art clear; once set at liberty, thou shalt never be a slave again; once hath Sinai been appeased, it shall never roar twice. Blessed be God's name! we are brought to Calvary, and we shall be brought to Zion too. At last shall we stand before God; and even there we shall be able to say—

"Great God! I am clean;
Through Jesus' blood I'm clean."

III. And now we are brought, in the third place, to observe THE GREAT SUBSTITUTE by whom the curse is removed.

The curse of God is not easily taken away; in fact, there was but one method whereby it could be removed. The lightnings were in God's hand; they must be launched; he said they must. The sword was unsheathed; it must be satisfied; God vowed it must. How, then, was the sinner to be saved? The only answer was this. The Son of God appears; and he says,

"Father! launch thy thunderbolts at me; here is my breast—plunge that sword in here; here are my shoulders—let the lash of vengeance fall on them;" and Christ, the Substitute, came forth and stood for us, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It is our delight to preach the doctrine of substitution, because we are fully persuaded that no gospel is preached where substitution is omitted. Unless men are told positively and plainly that Christ did stand in their room and stead, to bear their guilt and carry their sorrows, they never can see how God is to be "just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly."

We have heard some preach a gospel, something after this order—that though God is angry with men, yet out of his great mercy, for the sake of something that Christ has done, he does not punish them, but remits the penalty. Now, we hold, that this is not of God's gospel; for it is neither just to God, nor safe to man. We believe that God never remitted the penalty, that he did not forgive the sin without punishing it, but that there was blood for blood, and stroke for stroke, and death for death, and punishment for punishment, without the abatement of a solitary jot or tittle; that Jesus Christ, the Saviour, did drink the veritable cup of our redemption to its very dregs; that he did suffer beneath the awful crushing wheels of divine vengeance, the self-same pains and sufferings which we ought to have endured. O! the glorious doctrine of substitution! When it is preached fully and rightly, what a charm and what power it hath. O! how sweet to tell sinners, that though God hath said, "Thou must die," their Maker stoops his head to die for them and Christ incarnate breathes his last upon a tree, that God might execute his vengeance, and yet might pardon all believers in Jesus because he has met all the claims of divine justice on their account.

Should there be one here who does not understand substitution, let me repeat what I have said. Sinner, the only way thou canst be saved is this. God must punish sin; if he did not, he would undeify himself; but if he has punished sin in the person of Christ for thee, thou art fully absolved, thou art quite clear; Christ hath suffered what thou oughtest to have suffered, and thou mayest rejoice in that. "Well," sayest thou, "I ought to have died." Christ hath died! "I ought to have been sent to hell." Christ did not go there to endure that torment forever; but he suffered an

equivalent for it, something which satisfied God. The whole of hell was distilled into his cup of sorrows; he drank it. The cup which his father gave him, he drank to its dregs.

"At one tremendous draught of love,
He drank destruction dry."

for all who believe in him. All the punishment, all the curse, on him was laid. Vengeance now was satisfied; all was gone, and gone for ever; but not gone without having been taken away by the Saviour. The thunders have not been reserved, they have been launched at him, and vengeance is satisfied, because Christ has endured the full penalty of all his people's guilt.

IV. Now we come to answer that last question: HOW MANY AMONG US CAN SAY, THAT "CHRIST HATH REDEEMED US FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW, HAVING BEEN MADE A CURSE FOR US?"

The first part of our discourse has been entirely doctrinal; some of you have not cared for it, because you did not feel you were interested in it. It was natural it should be so. At the reading of a will, doth the servant stay to listen? Nay, there is nothing for her; but if a man be a son, how doth he open his ear to catch the sound, to know if there be an estate for him; and however ill the lawyer may read that will, how anxious he is to catch every word, and know if there is a portion for him among the children! Now, beloved, let us read the will again, to see if you belong to those for whom Christ made a satisfaction. The usual way with most of our congregation is this—they write themselves down for Christ's long before God has done it. You make a profession of religion, you wear a Christian's cloak, you behave like a Christian, you take a seat in a Christian church or chapel, and you think you are christianized at once; whereas one half of our congregations who fancy themselves to be Christians have made a great mistake; never were they more apart from any character than from being true Christians. Let me beg you not to suppose yourselves to be believers, because your parents were so, or because you belong to an orthodox church. Religion is a thing which we must have for ourselves; and it is a question which we all ought to ask, whether we are all interested in the

atonement of Christ, and have a portion in the merits of his agonies?

Come, then, I will put a question to thee. First, let me ask thee this, my friend—Wast thou ever condemned by the law in thine own conscience? "Nay, sayest thou, "I know not what thou meanest." Of course thou dost not; and thou hast no hope, then, that thou art safe. But I will ask thee yet again: Hast thou been condemned by the law in thy conscience? Hast thou ever heard the word of God saying in thy own soul, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them?" And hast thou felt that thou wast cursed? Didst thou ever stand before God's bar, like a poor condemned criminal before the judge, ready for execution? Hast thou, as John Bunyan would have had it, ever had the rope upon thy neck? Hast thou ever seen the black cap put upon the face of thy Judge? Hast thou ever thought thyself about to be turned off from the gallows? Hast thou ever walked the earth, as if at every step the earth would open beneath thee, and swallow thee up? Hast thou ever felt thyself to be a worthless, ruined, sin-condemned, law-condemned, conscience-condemned sinner? Hast thou ever fallen down before God, and said: "Lord, thou art just; though thou slay me, I will say, Thou art just; for I am sinful, and I deserve thy wrath?" As the Lord liveth, if thou hast never felt that, thou art a stranger to his grace; for the man who acquits himself God condemneth; and if the law condemn thee, God will acquit thee. So long as thou hast felt thyself condemned, thou mayest know that Christ died for condemned ones, and shed his blood for sinners; but and if thou foldest thine arms in self-security, if thou sayest: "I am good, I am righteous, I am honorable," be thou warned of this—thine armor is the weaving of a spider; it shall be broken in pieces; the garments of the righteousness are light as the web of the gossamer, and shall be blown away by the breath of the Eternal, in that day when he will unspin all that nature hath ever woven. Ay, I bid thee now take heed; if thou hast never been condemned by the law, thou hast never been acquitted by grace.

And now another question I will ask thee: Hast thou ever felt thyself to be acquitted by Christ? "No," saith one, "I never expected to feel that; I thought that we might know it perhaps when we came to die—that a few eminent Christians might then possibly know themselves to be forgiven;

but I think, sir, you are very enthusiastic to ask me whether I have ever felt myself to be forgiven." My dear friend, you mistake. Do you think, if a man had been a galley-slave, chained to an oar for many a year, if he were once set free he would not know whether he were free or not? Do you think that a slave who had been toiling for years, when once he trod upon the land of freedom, if you should say to him: "Do you know that you are emancipated?" Do you think he would not know it? Or a man that has been dead in his grave, if he were awakened to life, do you think he would not know it? There may be times when he hath forgotten the season; but he will know himself to be alive; he will feel and know himself to be free. Tell me it is enthusiastic to ask you whether you have ever felt your chains broken? Sirs, if you have never felt your chains fall off from you, then be it know that your chains are on you; for when God breaketh our chains from off us, we know ourselves to be free. The most of us, when God did set us free from our prison-house, did leap for very joy; and we remember the mountains and the hills did burst forth before us into singing, and the trees of the field did clap their hands. We shall never forget that gladsome moment; it is impressed upon our memory; we shall remember it till life's latest hour. I ask thee, again, Didst thou ever feel thyself forgiven? And if thou sayest "No," then thou hast no right to think thou art. If Jesus hath never whispered in thine ear, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions," thou hast no right to think thyself pardoned. O! I beseech thee, examine thyself, and know whether thou hast been condemned by the law, and whether thou hast been acquitted by Christ!

And, lastly, my friends, I may have, and doubtless have, many present here who have simply come to spend an hour, but who have no care, no interest, no concern about their own souls—who are, perhaps, utterly and entirely careless as to whether they are condemned or not. O! if I could speak to you as I would wish, I would speak—

"As though I ne'er might speak again,
A dying man to dying men."

When I remember that I shall likely enough never see the faces of many of you again, I feel that there is a deep and an awful responsibility lying

on me to speak to such of you as are careless. There are some of you who are putting off the evil day; and you are saying, "If I be condemned, I care not for it." Ah! my friend, if I saw thee carelessly asleep on thy bed, when the flames were raging in thy chamber, I would shout in thine ear, or I would drag thee from thy couch of slumber. If I knew that while thou hadst a bad disease within thee, thou wouldst not take the medicine, and that if thou didst not take it thou wouldst die, I would implore thee on my knees to take that medicine that would save thee. But, alas! here you are; you are in danger of destruction, many of you, and you have a disease within you that must soon destroy your lives; and yet what careless, hardened, thoughtless creatures you are, just caring for the body, and not seeking for Christ! As the angel put his hand upon Lot, and said, "Look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, but flee to the mountain," so would I do to you. I would come to each of you, and say, "My brother, carelessness may avail thee now; but carelessness will not stop the voice of death when he speaks. Indifference may silence my voice in your conscience; but when that gloomy skeleton tyrant comes to address thee, indifference will not do then. Now thou mayest laugh; now thou mayest dance; now thou mayest be merry; now thy cup may be full to the brim; but what wilt thou do in that day, when the heavens are clothed with glory, when the books are opened, when the great white throne is set, and when thou comest to be condemned or acquitted before thy Maker? Do, I beseech thee, do forestall the day. I beg of thee, for Christ's sake, bethink thyself even now before thy Judge; conceive him there in yonder heavens upon his throne; imagine that now thou art looking upon him. Oh! my hearer, what wilt thou do? Thou art before the judgment-throne, without Christ; thou art there naked. 'Rocks! hide me! hide me! hide me! I am naked!' But thou art dragged out, sinner! What wilt thou do now? Thou art dragged naked before thy Judge. I see thee bend thy knee; I hear thee cry, 'O Jesus, clothe me now!' 'Nay,' saith Jesus, 'the robe now is hung up forever, not to be worn by thee.' 'Saviour! spread thy wings over me!' 'Nay,' saith he, 'I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.'" Do I talk realities, or mere fictions? Why, realities; and yet if I were reading a novel to you, you would be lost in tears; but when I tell you God's truth, that soon his chariot shall descend to earth, and he shall judge us all, you sit unmoved

and careless of that event. But oh! be it known to every careless sinner, death and judgment are not the things they fancy; everlasting wrath and eternal severance from God are not such light things to endure as they have conceived. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall abide with everlasting torments?"

But to close: have I one here who is saying, "What must I do to be saved, for I feel myself condemned?" Hear thou Christ's own words—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Dost thou ask me what it is to believe? Hear, then, the answer. To believe is to look to Jesus. that little word "look" expresses beautifully what a sinner is to do. There is little in its appearance, but there is much in its meaning. Believing is letting the hands lie still, and turning the eyes to Christ. We can not be saved by our hands; but we are saved through our eyes, when they look to Jesus. Sinner! it is no use for thee to try and save thyself; but to believe in Christ is the only way of salvation; and that is, throwing self behind your back, and putting Christ right before thee.

I never can find a better figure than the negro's one: to believe is to fall flat down upon the promise, and there to lie. To believe is as a man would do in a stream. It is said, that if we were to fold our arms, and lie motionless, we could not sink. To believe is to float upon the stream of grace. I grant you, you shall do afterward; but you must live before you can do. The gospel is the reverse of the law. The law says, "Do and live;" the gospel says, "Live first, then do." The way to do, poor sinner, is to say, "Here, Jesus, here I am; I give myself to thee." I never had a better idea of believing than I once had from a poor countryman. I may have mentioned this before; but it struck me very forcibly at the time, and I can not help repeating it. Speaking about faith he said, "The old enemy has been troubling me very much lately; but I told him that he must not say any thing to me about my sins, he must go to my Master, for I had transferred the whole concern to him, bad debts and all." That is believing. Believing is giving up all we have to Christ, and taking all Christ has to ourselves. It is changing houses with Christ, changing clothes with Christ, changing our unrighteousness for his righteousness, changing our sins for his merits. Execute the transfer, sinner; rather, may God's grace execute it,

and give thee faith in it; and then the law will be no longer thy condemnation, but it shall acquit thee. May Christ add his blessing! May the Holy Spirit rest upon us! And may we meet at last in heaven! Then will we "sing to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

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Daily Blessings For God's People

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. - Psalm 68:19-20

We observe that this Psalm is a very difficult one. One of the ablest commentators calls it a titanic Psalm. It is truly a giant Psalm, and to master it means much labour. Yet it is by no means difficult to understand when it cometh to practical duties, and to those doctrines which are vital. For instance, the two verses before us are very simple and do not need any explanation, but only need to be impressed upon our memory. So is it always throughout Holy Scripture; wherever there are difficult places, they do not touch vital truths. The matter of our salvation is plain enough. The Book of Revelation may be difficult, but not the Gospel according to Matthew. With regard to the future, there may be many clouds, but with regard to that blessed day which is past, which was the crisis of the world's history, when our Saviour hung upon the tree, the darkness is past, and the true light shineth there. Don't, therefore, busy yourselves most about those things which are most difficult, for they are usually of least importance. Concern your heart most with the simplicities of the gospel, for it is there, in the way, the truth, and the life, that the essential matter lies.

Let us come to these two verses, and remark that they remind us first of the mercies of life. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with

benefits." They then assure us of the mercies of death. "He that is our God is the God of our salvation, and unto God belong the issues from death." And then the two verses tell us of the common occupation of both life and death, namely, the blessing of God, whose mercy continues to us in both states. Blessed be Jehovah, whether I receive the daily load of his benefits, or whether he open for me the gates of the grace.

Let us begin then, and contemplate for a few moments: -

I. THE MERCIES OF OUR LIFE.

The text saith, "He daily loadeth us with benefits." Let us keep to the English version just now. Take the words of it. What is it that he gives us? Benefits. We have a very beautiful word in the English language - benevolence. You know that means good wishing, bene volens. He may be a benevolent man who is not able to do any act of kindness, to give any of his substance away for lack of any. But God's goodness to us is not merely bene volens, in which he wishes us well, but it is beneficence or good doing. His gifts and benefits are deeds of goodness, acts of goodness. He doth to us that which is good. He doth not only wish us well, and speak to us well, and direct us well, but he doeth well unto us. He doth not only say, "I pity thy last estate," but he delivers the lost out of their ruin. He doth not say, as the churl doth, "Be thou warmed, and be thou filled," and do no more, but, wishing us well, he doth well unto us; he warms our hearts with his love, and fills them with his mercy, and sends us on our way rejoicing. It is true God speaks us well. What more could he say than, to us, he has said in his blessed Word? It is true he wishes us well. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live." But the essence of his goodness lies in this, that he goes beyond wishes and words into acts.

Begin, brethren, with the greatest of his acts. "He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." In that gift he hath already given us all things, and from that blessed pledge he has never gone back, but he has given us all that we want for this life, and for the life to come, for ye have grace and glory, and hath abounded in each. The upper springs fail not, neither do the nether springs. If Christ is our perpetual bread and

wine, so, too, our common bread, in answer to our prayer, is given us according to his assurance, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." Will you try to think of the benefits which you have received, dear brother, dear sister? Turn them over now in your mind - the benefits that you have actually yourself received - not only read of, and heard of, and had promises of, but that you have received. Oh! the benefits of early education! the being restrained from, sin. Oh! the benefits of conviction! of being enlightened and made to see the guilt off sin. Oh! the sweet benefit of being led to the Saviour! made to stand at the cross foot, where the blood speaks better things than that of Abel. Oh! the benefit of perfect pardon and of righteousness, which covers us and justifies in the sight of God! What an unspeakable benefit is regeneration! Who shall prize the benefit of adoption? Who is he that shall describe the benefit of daily education in the things of God - of preservation from falling into final, vital sin - of sanctification carried on from day to day? We have benefits that we know of, but we probably have ten times as many that we know not of. Some of them come in at the front door of the house; some of the richest of them seem to steal in at the back door. They are among the most precious bounties that fly in with so soft a wing that we hear them not when they come. Ye shall sooner count the hairs on your head, or the dust upon the sand beach, than you shall be able to estimate the number of his benefits.

Leave that word then, and note the next. It is said in the text concerning God's benefits, that he loads us with them - loads us with benefits. He does not put a little upon us of his goodness, but much; very much, until it becomes a load. Have you never known what it is to be bowed right down with such goodness? I have, I freely confess it - I have desired to praise him, but a sense of love so bowed me down that I could only adopt the language of the psalmist and say, "Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Zion." It seemed as if "words were but air, and tongues but clay, and his compassion's so divine," that it was impossible to speak of them. His mercies, as our hymn said just now, come as think and as fast as the moments do. In fact, it is literally so. Every moment needs heavings of the lungs, pulsings of the blood. The slightest circumstance might prevent one or the other. God's continued benefits come to us even in the simple form of preserved life. We are constantly exposed to peril. "Plagues and

death around us fly."God preserves us from perils to the body. Our thoughts - whither might they go? They might in a moment lead us into heresies and foul blasphemies. It is no little thing to be preserved from that spiritual pestilence that walketh both in darkness and the noonday. Glory be to God, who sends us temporal and spiritual benefits so numerous, and each one so weighty, that eye cannot say less than this, "That he daily loadeth us with his benefits, until we seem bowed down to the earth under a joyful sense of obligation to his mercy." "He loadeth us with benefits."

Oh! are any of you inclined to murmur? Do you think God deals hard with you? Well, you are what you are by his grace. Though you are not what you wish to be, yet remember you are not what, if strict justice were carried out, you would be. In the poor-house you might be - few admire that residence. In the prison you might be - God preserves you from the sin that would bring you there. In the lunatic asylum you might be - better men and women than you are have come to that. At the grave's mouth you might be - on the sick bed, on the verge of eternity. God's holiest saints have not been spared from the grave. In hell you might be - amongst the lost, wailing, but hopelessly wailing, gnashing your teeth in utter despair. O God, when we think of what we are not, because thy grace has kept us from it, we cannot but say, "Thou hast loaded us with benefits."

But then think of what you are, you Christians. You are God's children; you are joint-heirs with Christ. "All things are yours"; ay, and "things to come," you have guaranteed too - preservation to the end, and you have, after the end of this life, glory without end. The "many mansions" are for you; the palms and harps of the glorified are for you. You have a share in all that Christ has, and is, and shall be. In all the gifts of his ascension you have a part; in the gifts that come to us through his session at the right hand of God, you have your share; and in, the glories of the Second Advent, the grand hope of the Church of God, you shall partake. See how, in the present, and in the past, and in the future, he loadeth you with benefits. There are two great words already.

But the next word is equally large. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily

loadeth us with benefits." A poor man shall call at your door, and you shall give to him all he wants for food, and cover him, and give him something to make glad his heart withal. If you do it once, you reckon that you have done well. Supposing he should call again to-morrow, you might find it in your heart to do the same. But suppose he called upon you seven days in the week: I am afraid that by degrees that would become seven times too often, for we count, when we have done men a good turn, that someone else should see to them next time. If we load them especially with benefits, we say, "Don't encroach; don't ride a willing horse too fast. You must not come again so often. You weary me." Ah! this is man; but look at God. He daily loadeth us with benefits. How many days has he done that with some of us? Thirty years? "Ah!" saith one, "I can talk of sixty years" - yes, and some of you of seventy and eighty years. Well, he has loaded you with benefits every day. You have never been above the rank of a pauper, so far as your God is concerned. But I will put it differently. You have been a gentleman commoner upon the goodness of God all your life. It has been your lot, like that of Mephibosheth, to sit daily at the King's table and give a portion from him. And yet you murmur. You have been unbelieving, proud, idle; all sorts of ill-tempers have you shown. Yet has he daily loaded you with benefits. It has sometimes seemed to be a wrestling between our sin and God's love, but up to this hour his love has conquered. We have drawn mightily upon his exchequer, but that exchequer has never been exhausted. The load of mercy which was used yesterday won't do for to-day. Like manna, it must come fresh and fresh, and the blessing is that it does come fresh and fresh. When God draws the curtain and stands in the sunlight, mercy streams in on the sunbeam; and when he shuts the eyelids of the day and the evening comes, it is mercy that puts its finger upon our eyelids and bids us rest. He "daily loadeth us with benefits" - every day; and he loads us with benefits not only on bright days, but on dark days. When we are sick, and tossing to and fro upon the bed, he still is loading us with benefits, only in another form. He sends sometimes his choicest mercies to us in black-edged envelopes. The very brightest gems of heaven come to us, and we know them not. They sparkle not until faith's eye has seen them. Nature has not perceived their excellence. How he loadeth us with benefits on Sabbath days! There is a dear brother who is almost always here, who, when he sees me on Sunday mornings, generally makes use of

some such exclamation as this, "Every day is good to me, but the Sabbath day is seven good days in one. It is blest seven times over." And, indeed, it so is. He loadeth us with benefits on the Sabbath. But then we have our Monday mercies and our Tuesday mercies too; and right on to the close on Saturday night the Lord continues to heap on his mercies one after another, that he may make us feel that we shall sooner weary with thanking him than he will weary in giving us cause for thankfulness.

There is one other word - a very little one, but a sweet one too: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits." "Us." Personal matters bring sweetness to our soul, and herein lieth the wonder. That God should load David with benefits was marvellous to David, but not to me. The marvel to me is that he should load me with benefits. Beloved brethren and sisters, I do not feel your imperfections, and, therefore, I do not so much perceive the sovereignty of God in dealing graciously with you, but I know some of my own shortcomings, and they seem to me to be greater than those of others; therefore, do I with gratitude admire the abounding mercy of God that he should load me with benefits.

"Why do I meet to hear his voice,
And enter where there's room;
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

There may be some whose consciences will allow them to think that their praying made the distinction. I am not able to believe that, but I am compelled to feel that, if I enjoy the things of Christ that others do not, it is of the Lord's mercy, and not of any goodness in me, but entirely of his infinite grace. Let us bless the Lord at this hour because he loadeth us with benefits when he might have passed us by. He might have suffered us to go on heaping up our transgressions until the measure thereof had been filled, and then he might have made us reap for ever that which we had sown. Instead of this, he has made us - many of us - however unlikely persons - to be his chosen ones, and he hath loaded us with benefits.

I have spoken very simply entirely with the view that those hearts that have tasted that the Lord is gracious may now wake up all their powers to

praise and bless the name of the Most High. We must not pass away from this, however, without observing that our translation is not literal - indeed, is not the meaning of the passage. Those of you who will look at your Bibles will perceive that the words "who" and "with benefits", are put in it italics to show that they are not in the Hebrew, but have been supplied by the translators, as they thought them necessary to the sense; and some of the best interpreters say that the passage means this, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burdens"; and I have little doubt that that is the correct translation. It is not so much that he loads us, as that he lifts our load for us, and bears it for us. Well, at any rate, that is a sweet rendering, "He daily bears our burden"; and it is a rendering which is a word of rebuke to some of you. Did you not come into this tabernacle tonight with your burdens on your back? Well, it was wrong you should ever have them. "Cast all your care on him, for he careth for you." A man who has a burden-bearer certainly need not bear the burden himself. Faith is never burdened, because she knows where to lay her burden. She hath a burden, but she puts it on the Almighty God. But unbelief, with a far less load than faith carries easily, is bowed down to the dust. Arise, O child of God, whatever thy burden is, and by an act of faith cast it upon God. You have done your little all; leave it now. Your fretfulness will not alter things. You cannot change he night, nor make one hair white or black. Why fret and worry? The world went on very well before you were born; it will when you are dead. Leave the helm. Whenever you have been foremost you made a mistake. He that carves for himself will cut his fingers; but when God has been foremost, and you have been content to follow, you have never had any mistake then; and when God has been your shepherd, you have been constrained to say, "I shall not want." Oh! then, have done with burden-bearing, and take up the language of the text, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burdens."

And then the text adds that he is "the God of our salvation." In this life we ought to praise him. His daily mercies are all sweetened with this reflection - that we are saved souls. Our morsel may be dry, but we dip it in this dainty sauce of his salvation. It is true I am poor, but I am saved. It is true I am sick, but I am saved. It is true I am obscure and unknown, but I am saved; and the salvation of God sweetens all. Then is it added to

that, it is "our" salvation. He that can grasp the salvation which is in Christ and say, "This is mine," is rich to all the intents of bliss, and has his daily life gilded with joy.

And then it is added beyond that, "our God." God is ours. He that is our God is the God of salvation. His omnipotence and omniscience, his immutability and his faithfulness - all his attributes are ours. The Father is ours; the Son is ours; the Spirit is ours. The God of election is ours; the God of redemption is ours; the God of sanctification is ours. Oh! with all this, how can we be cast down? Why should we repine! We have certainly abounding cause for blessing and praising the Lord. Those are the mercies of life. And now for a few minutes let us contemplate: -

II. THE MERCIES OF DEATH.

"Unto God belong the issues from death." This may mean several things. We will include its meanings under these heads. Unto God belong escapes from death. Oh! blessed be his name, we may come very near the grave, and the jaws of death may be open to receive us; but the pit cannot shut her mouth upon us until our hour is come.

"Plagues of death around me fly.
Till he please, I cannot die.
Not a single shaft can hit,
Until the God of love see fit.

"What though a thousand at thy side,
At thy right hand ten thousand, died?
Our God, his chosen people saves,
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves."

Whatever occurs around us, we need not be alarmed. We are immortal until our work is done. And amidst infectious or contagious diseases, if we are called to go there, we may sit as easily as though in balmy air. It is not ours to preserve our life by neglecting our duty. It is better to die in service than live in idleness - better to glorify God and depart, than rot above ground in neglecting what he would have us to do. Unto God

belong the issues from death. We may, therefore, go without temerity into any danger where duty calls us.

But then unto God belong the issues that lead actually down to death. It may be we shall not die. There are some who are comforted much by the belief that Christ will come, and they shall not die. I do not profess to be among the number. I would as soon die as not, and rather, I think, if I might have my choice, for herein would be a greater conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in actually passing through the grave and rising again, than will fall to the lot of those who do not die. At all events, those who die not shall have no preference beyond them that sleep. So the Apostle tells us. "To" die is "gain"; and we will look upon it as such. But whenever we die, if we die, it will be at God's bidding. No one hath the key of death but the Lord of life. A thousand angels could not hurl us to the grave. All the devils in hell cannot destroy the least lamb in Christ's flock. Till God saith "Return," our spirit shall not leave the body; and we may be well content to depart when God saith the time is come. Oh! how blessed it is to think that the arrows of death are in the quiver of God, and they cannot be shot forth unless as the Lord wills it! Unto the Lord belong the issues from death.

Think of this, then, about your departed friends The Master took them home. Think about your own departure. It is not to be arranged by your folly, not by the malice of the wicked. It will all be planned and designed by the infinite love of God.

But the text may mean something more. Unto God belong the issues from death; that is, the coming up from death again. We place the bodies of the saints in the territory of death, but they are only put there, as it were, because there is a lien upon them for a time. They must come out. They must be delivered. for his word says, if we believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, "so also them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." There shall not be a bone or a piece of a bone of one of the saints kept by the enemy as a trophy of his conquest over the Saviour. Christ shall vanquish death entirely, and from the sepulchre he shall snatch all the trophies of the grave. We shall rise again, beloved. What though our bodies rot? What though they feed plants, and in due time feed animals,

and pass through innumerable permutations and combinations? Yet he that made us can re-make us; and the voice that bade us live shall bid these bodies live again. "Unto God belong the issues from death." In this we are comforted - to fall asleep, because the angel of the churches shall guard our dust.

And then this further thought. The issues from death grasp all that comes after death. The spirit issues from death - never touched by it indeed. Leaving the body behind a while, the spirit enters into a glory, waiting for the fulness. Then when Christ descends, and the trumpet sounds, and the dead in Christ rise in the first resurrection, then shall the re-united manhood enter into the fulness of the glory with a manifested Saviour. These issues from death belong to God, and God secures them to his people. He shall give them to them for whom he has appointed them. He shall give them to those whom he has made worthy by his grace to be partakers of this heritage. They belong to him - not to us by merit, but they are his gifts by covenant and by grace. Oh! then, how sweet it is to think, "The path down to the grave, my God has planted it. It is all his - all his own; and when my turn shall come to go into that garden wherein is the sepulchre, I shall be in my Father's territory." Jesus Christ is Lord of the sick-bed. He makes the bed of his people in their affliction. Even down to the borders of the grave - to the edge of Jordan's river - it is all Immanuel's land; and he often makes it the land of Beulah. And then, when I dip my foot in that chill stream, it is still my Master's country. I am not out of the presence of the Lord of life now I am coming to the land of death-shade and through the river, but it is the Master's river still, and, on the other side, it is my Lord's own land. When the shining ones shall meet me to conduct me up to the jewelled "city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," I shall be always at home, always in my Father's country, never an exile, never come upon a tract of territory over which he hath no power. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for he is with me. His rod and his staff, even there have they sway, and they shall comfort me." Be of good cheer, beloved. "Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life," and, life being ended, you shall "dwell in the house of your God for ever." In life and in death, you shall prove the tokens of his special love. And now we wind up with this. Here is: -

III. THE COMMON OCCUPATIONS OF BOTH CONDITIONS.

"I will praise thee in life
I will praise thee in death
I will praise thee as long
As thou lendest me breath."

"I will praise thee for ever and ever." The one occupation of a Christian is to praise his God. Now, in order to do this, we must maintain by God's grace a grateful, happy, praiseful frame of mind; and we must endeavour to express that condition of mind by songs of gratitude. This should be our morning's work. Should there not be the morning song? This should be the evening's work. Let it be our vespers to bless and praise God. Israel had the morning lamb and the evening lamb. Let us make both ends of the day bright with his praise, and during the day. We are in a wrong state of mind if we are not in a thankful state of mind. Depend upon it, there is something wrong with you if you cannot praise God. "Oh!" says one, "what, in trouble?" Yes, in every bitter trouble too, for Job could say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." "But are we never to be sorrowful?" Yes, yet always rejoicing. How can that be? Ah! the Lord teach you it! It is a work of grace. Cast down, but yet, for all that, rejoicing in the Lord! He lifts up the light of his countenance upon us, even when heart and flesh are failing us. I say again, there is something amiss with us when our heart does not praise God. Do as much as you can also. When your heart is glad, try to praise him with your lip. Do you work alone? Sing. Perhaps, if you work in company, you cannot; but sing with the heart. Men of the world, I am afraid, sing more than we do. I do not admire the most of their songs. They do not seem to have much sense about them - at least the modern ones. But let us sing some of the songs of Zion. You do not want to put your harps on the willows, but if they are there, take them down and praise the Lord, who leadeth you with benefits in life and in death. Therefore, habitually praise him. And, brethren and sisters, all our actions, as well as our thoughts and words, should tend to, the praise of him who always blesses us. You may stop praising God when he stops having mercy upon you - not till then; and as there is always a new mercy

coming to your doors let new praise be going up out of your hearts." But how can I praise God by my actions? saith one. "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him." I try to praise God by preaching to-night. Some of you will go to your trades. Well, praise God at your trades. Any work, any lawful calling may be to the Christian priest - (and all Christians are priests) - the exercise of his sacred functions. You may make your smock-frock, if you will, a vestment; you shall make your meal a sacrament; you shall make everything in the house like the pots that were before the altar; the bells upon the horses shall be "holiness unto the Lord."

And, dear brethren, to close. Let me remark that if we praise God ourselves by word and life, we ought to try to bring others to praise him too. You do not praise God, indeed, unless you want others to do so. It is a mark of sincere thankfulness that it desires others to assist it in the expression of its joy. Blessed be the Lord, this same Psalmist here, who says for himself, "Blessed he the Lord", is the writer of the 67th Psalm. You know how he says there, "Let the people praise thee - yea, let all the people praise thee! Oh! let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" Then he says again, "Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee!" Do your utmost to be the means, in God's hands, of bringing others to praise him. Tell them what he has done for you. Tell them of his saving grace. Invite sinners to Christ. Let it be: -

"All your business here below
To say, "Behold the Lamb!"

and in this way you will be setting other tongues a-praising God, so that when your tongue is silent, there shall be others that will take up the strain. Labour for this, beloved, every one of you. Labour for the extension of the choir that shall sing the praises of the Saviour I trust we shall never fall into that narrow-minded spirit which seems to say, "It is enough for me if I am saved, and if those that go to my little place of worship are all right. It is quite enough." No, Master, thy throne is not to be set up in some little conventicle in a back street, and there alone. Thou art not to reign in some little corner of a city, and there alone Thou art not to take this island of Great Britain, and reign in it alone; nor in

Europe - in one quarter of the earth alone. Let the whole earth be filled with his praise! And what Christian heart will refuse to say, "Amen and amen"? God grant it may be so! Amen.

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Daniel: A Pattern For Pleaders

O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. - Daniel 9:19

Daniel was a man in very high position in life. It is true he was not living in his own native land, but, in the providence of God, he had been raised to great eminence under the dominion of the country in which he dwelt. He might, therefore, naturally have forgotten his poor kinsmen; many have done so. Alas! we have known some that have even forgotten their poor fellow Christians when they have grown in grace, and have thought themselves too good to worship with the poorer sort when they themselves have grown rich in this world's goods. But it was not so with Daniel. Though he had been made a president of the empire, yet he was still a Jew; he felt himself still one with the seed of Israel. In all the afflictions of his people he was afflicted, and he felt it his honour to be numbered with them, and his duty and his privilege to share with them all the bitterness of their lot. If he could not become despised and as poor as they, if God's providence had made him to be distinguished, yet his heart would make no distinction: he would remember them and pray for them, and would plead that their desolation might yet be removed.

Daniel was also a man very high in spiritual things. Is he not one of God's three mighties in the Old Testament? He is mentioned with two others in a celebrated verse as being one of three whose intercessions God would have heard if he had heard any intercessions. But though thus full of grace himself (and for that very reason) he stooped to those who were in a low state. Rejoicing as he did before God as to his own lot, he sorrowed

and cried by reason of those from whom joy was banished. It is a sad fault with those Christians who think themselves full of grace, when they begin to despise their fellows. They may rest assured they are greatly mistaken in the estimate they have formed of themselves. But it is a good sign when thine own heart is fruitful and healthy before God, when thou dost condescend to those that backslide, and search after such as are weak, and bring again such as were driven away. When thou hast, like thy Master, a tender sympathy for others, then art thou rich in divine things. Daniel showed his intimate sympathy with his poorer and less gracious brethren in the way of prayer. He would have shown that sympathy in other ways had occasions occurred, and no doubt he did; but this time the most fitting way of proving his oneness with them was in becoming an intercessor for them.

My object here and now will be to stir up the people of God, and especially the members of this church, to abound exceedingly in prayer; more and more to plead with God for the prosperity of his Church, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

First, our text gives us a model of prayer; and secondly, it and its surroundings give us encouragement for prayer. First, then, our text gives us: -

I. A MODEL OF PRAYER.

I think I may notice this first as to the antecedents of the prayer. This prayer of Daniel was not offered without consideration. He did not come to pray as some people do, as though it were a thing that required no forethought whatever. We are constantly told we ought to prepare our sermons, and I surely think that if a man does not prepare his sermons he is very blameworthy. But are we never to prepare when we speak to God, and only when we speak to man? Is there to be no preparation of the heart of man from God when we open our mouth before the Lord? Do not you think we often do, both in private and public, begin to pray without any kind of consideration, and the words come, and then we try to quicken the words rather than the desires coming, and the words coming like garments to clothe them withal?

But Daniel's considerations lay in this first, he studied the books. He had with him an old manuscript of the prophet Jeremiah. He read that through. Perceiving such and such things spoken of, he prayed for them. Perceiving such and such a time given, and knowing that that time was almost come, he prayed the more earnestly! Oh! that you studied your Bibles more! Oh! that we all did! How we could plead the promises! How we could plead the promises! How often we should prevail with God when we could hold him to his word, and say, "Fulfil this word unto thy servant, whereon thou hast caused me to hope." Oh! it is grand praying when our mouth is full of God's word, for there is no word that can prevail with him like his own. You tell a man, when you ask him for such and such a thing, "You yourself said you would do so and so." You have him then. And so when you can lay hold on the covenant angel with this consecrated grip, "Thou hast said! thou hast said!" then have you every opportunity of prevailing with him. May our prayers then spring out of our scriptural studies; may our acquaintance with the Word be such that we shall be qualified to pray a Daniel prayer.

He had, moreover, it is clear if you read the prayer again, studied the history of his people. He gives a little outline of it from the day in which they came out of Egypt. Christian people should be acquainted with the history of the Church - if not with the Church of the past, certainly with the Church of today. We make ourselves acquainted with the position of the Prussian army, and we will buy new maps about once a week to see all the places and the towns. Should not Christians make themselves acquainted with the position of Christ's army, and revise their maps to see how the kingdom of God is progressing in England, in the United States, on the Continent, or in the mission stations throughout the world? All our prayers would be much better if we knew more about the Church, and especially about our own Church. I am afraid I must say it - I am afraid there are some members of the Church that do not know what is doing - hardly know what is meant by some of our enterprises. Brethren, know well the Church's needs as far as you can ascertain them; and then, like Daniel, your prayer will be a prayer founded upon information; and with the promises of God and the fact of the Church's wants, you will pray prayers of the spirit, and of the understanding. Let that stand for earnest

consideration.

But next, Daniel's prayer was mingled with much humiliation. According to the Oriental custom which expresses the inward thought and feeling by the outward act, he put on a coarse garment made of hair, black, called sackcloth; and then taking handfuls of ashes, he cast them on his head and over the cloth that covered him, and then he knelt down in the very dust in secret, and these outward symbols were made to express the humiliation which he felt before God. We always pray best when we pray out of the depths; when the soul gets low enough she gets a leverage; she can then plead with God. I do not say we ought to ask to see all the evil of our own hearts. One good man prayed that prayer very often. He is mentioned in some of the Puritan writers - a minister of the gospel. It pleased God to hear his prayer, and he never rejoiced afterwards. It was with great difficulty that he was even kept from suicide, so deep and dreadful was the agony he experienced when he did begin to see his sin as he wanted to see it. It is best to see as much of that as God would have us see of it. You cannot see too much of Christ, but you might see even too much of your sin. Yet, brethren, this is rarely the case. We need to see much our deep needs, our great sins, for ah! that prayer shall go highest that comes from the lowest. To stoop well is a grand art in prayer. To pour out the last drop of anything like self-righteousness; to be able to say from the very heart, "Not for our righteousness' sake do we plead with thee, O God, for we have sinned, and our fathers too." Put the negative, the weightiest negative, upon any idea of pleading human merit. When thou canst do this, then art thou in the right way to pray a prayer that will move the arm of God, and bring thee down a blessing. Oh! some of you ungodly ones have tried to pray, but you have not bowed yourselves. Proud prayers may knock their heads on mercy's lintel, but they can never pass through the portal. You cannot expect anything of God unless you put yourself in the right place, that is, as a beggar at his footstool; then will he hear you, and not until then.

Daniel's prayer instructs us in the next point. It was excited by zeal for God's glory. We may sometimes pray with wrong motives. If I seek the conversion of souls in my ministry, is not that a good motive? Yes, it is; but suppose I desire the conversion of souls in order that people may say,

"What a useful minister he is," that is a bad motive, which spoils it all. If I am a member of a Christian Church, and I pray for its prosperity, is not that right? Certainly; but if I desire its prosperity merely that I and others may be able to say, "See our zeal for the Lord! See how God blesses us rather than others!" that is a wrong motive. The motive is this, "Oh! that God could be glorified, that Jesus might see the reward of his sufferings! Oh! that sinners might be saved, so that God might have new tongues to praise him, new hearts to love him! Oh! that sin were put an end to, that the holiness, righteousness, mercy, and power of God might be magnified!" This is the way to pray; when thy prayers seek God's glory, it is God's glory to answer thy prayers. When thou art sure that God is in the case, thou art on a good footing. If thou art praying for that which will greatly glorify him, thou mayest rest assured thy prayer will speed. But if it do not speed, and it be not for his glory, why, then thou mayest be better content to be without it than with it. So pray thou, but keep thy bowstring right; it will be unfit to shoot the arrow of prayer unless this be thy bowstring, "God's glory, God's glory" - this above all; first, last, and midst; the one object of my prayer.

Then coming closer to the prayer, I would have you notice how intense Daniel's prayer was. "O Lord, hear: O Lord, forgive: O Lord, hearken and do, defer not for thine own sake." The very repetitions here express vehemence. It is a great fault of some people in public prayer when they repeat the name, "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," so often - it often amounts to taking God's name in vain, and is, indeed, a vain repetition. But when the reiteration of that sacred name comes out of the soul, then it is no vain repetition; then it cannot be repeated too often, and is not open to anything like the criticism which I used just now. So you will notice how the prophet here seems to pour out his soul with "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," as if, if the first knock at mercy's door does not open it, he will knock again, and make the gate to shake, and then the third time come with another thundering stroke if, perhaps, he may succeed. Cold prayers ask God to deny them: only importunate prayers will be replied to. When the Church of God cannot take "No" for an answer, she shall not have "No" for an answer. When a pleading soul must have it; when the Spirit of God works mightily in him so that he cannot let the angel go without a blessing, the angel shall not go till he has given the blessing to such a

pleading one. Brethren, if there be only one among us that can pray as Daniel did, with intensity, the blessing will come. Let this encourage any earnest man or woman here that fears that others are not excited to prayer as they should be. Dear brother, do you undertake it? Dear sister, in God's name, do you undertake it? and God will send a blessing to many through the prayer of one. But how much better would it be if many a score of men here, ay, the entire Church of God, were stirred up to this, that we give him no rest until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth! Oh! that our prayers could get beyond praying, till they got to agonizing. As soon as Zion travailed - you know that word - as soon as she travailed she brought forth children. Not till it comes to travail - not till then - may we expect to see much done. God send us such travailing to each one of us, and then the promise is near to fulfilling.

But coming still to the text, and a little more closely, I want to observe that this remarkable prayer was a prayer of understanding as well as earnestness; for some people in their earnestness talk nonsense, and I think I have heard prayers which God might understand, but I am sure I did not. Now here is a prayer which we can understand as well as God. It begins thus, "O Lord, hear." He asks an audience. This is how the petitioner does if he comes before an earthly majesty: he asks to be heard. He begins with that, "O Lord, hear. I am not worthy to be heard: if thou shut me and my case out of hearing, it will be just." He asks an audience: he gets it, and now he goes at once to his point without delay, "O Lord, forgive." He knows what he wants. Sin was the mischief, the cause of all the suffering: he puts his hand on it. Oh! it is grand when one knows what one is praying for. Many prayers maunder and wander - the praying person evidently thinks he is doing a good thing in saying certain good phrases, but the prayer that hits the target in the centre is the prayer it is good to pray. God teach us to pray so. "O Lord, forgive."

Then observe how he presses the point home. "O Lord, hearken and do." If thou hast forgiven - he does not stop a minute, but here comes another prayer quick on the heels of it. Do, good Lord, interpose for the rebuilding of Jerusalem - do interpose for the redemption of thy captive people; do interpose for the re-establishment of sacred worship. It is well when our prayers can fly fast, one after another, as we feel we are gaining

ground. You know in wrestling (and that is a model of prayer) much depends on the foothold, but oftentimes there is much depending upon swiftness and celerity of action. So in prayer. "Hear, me, my Lord! Thou hast heard me, forgive me. Have I come so far, then work for me - work the blessings I want." Follow up your advantage; build another prayer on the answer that you have. If you have received a great blessing, say, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him; because he has heard me once, therefore will I call again." Such a prayer proves the thoughtfulness of him who prays. It is a prayer offered in the spirit, and with understanding also.

And now one other thing. The prayer of Daniel was a prayer of holy nearness. You catch that thought in the expression, "O my God." Ah! we pray at a distance oftentimes: we pray to God as if we were slaves lying at his throne-foot; as if we might, perhaps, be heard, but we did not know. But when God helps us to pray as we should we come right to him, even to his feet, and we say, "Hear me, O my God." He is God; therefore, we must be reverent. He is my God; therefore, we may be familiar; we may come close to him. I believe some of the expressions that Martin Luther used in prayer, if I were to use them, would be little short of blasphemy, but as Martin Luther used them I believe they were deeply devout and acceptable with God, because he knew how to come close to God. You know how your little child climbs your knee: he gives you a kiss, and he will say to you many little things that if a person in the market were to say, you could not bear; they must not be said. No other being may be so familiar with you as your child. But oh! a child of God - when his heart is right - how near he gets to his God; he pours out his childlike complaint in childlike language before the Most High. Brethren, this is to be noted well, that though he is thus pleading and in the position of humility, yet still not in the position of slavery. It is still "O my God" - he grasps the covenant: faith perceives the relationship to be unbroken between the soul and God, and pleads that relation. "O my God."

Now the last thing I shall call your attention to in this model prayer is this, that the prophet uses argument. Praying ought always to be made up of arguing. "Bring forth your strong reasons" is a good canon for a prevalent prayer. We should urge matters with God, and bring reasons

before him - not because he wants reasons, but he desires us to know why we desire the blessing. In this text we have a reason given, first - "Defer not for thine own sake," as much as if he had said, "If thou suffer this people of thine to perish, all the world will revile thy name; thine honour will be stained. This is thine own people, and because they are thy property, suffer not thine own estate to be endamaged, but save Jerusalem for thine own sake."

Then next, he puts it on the same footing in another shape, "For thy city and thy people"; he urges that this people were not like other people. They had sinned truly, but still there was a relationship between them and God that existed between God and no other people. He pleads the covenant, in fact, between Abraham and Abraham's seed and the God of the whole earth. Good pleading that! And then he puts in next, "For they are called by thy name." They were said to be Jehovah's people; they were named by the name of the God of Israel. "O God! let not a thing that bears thy name be trundled about like a common thing. Suffer it not to be trailed in the dust; come to the rescue of it. Thy stamp, thy seal is upon Israel. Israel belongs to thee; therefore, come and interpose." Now from this I gather that if we would prevail we should plead arguments with God, and these are very many; and discreet minds when they are fervent will readily know how far to go in pleading, and where to stop. I remember one morning a dear brother now present praying in a way that seemed to me to be very prevalent when he spoke thus, "O Lord, thou hast been pleased to call thy Church thy Bride; now we, being evil, have such love towards our spouse that if there were anything in the world that would be for her good, we would not spare to give it to her; and wilt thou not, O Husband of the Church, do the like with thy spouse, and let thy Church receive a blessing now that she pleads for it?" It seemed good arguing, after Christ's own sort, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" Get a promise, and spread it before the Lord, and say, "O Lord, thou hast said it; do it." God loves to be believed in. He loves you to think he means what he says. He is a practical God himself. His word has power in it, and he does not like us to treat his promises as some of us do, as if they were waste paper, as if they were things to be read for the encouragement of our enthusiasm, but not to be

used as matters of real practical truth. Oh! plead them with God: fill your mouths with reasonings, and come before him. Make this your determination, that as a Church, seeing we need his Spirit, and need renewed prosperity, we will not spare nor leave a single argument unused by which we may prevail with the God of mercy to send us what we want. Thus much then upon this as a model of prayer. Now I shall want a little longer time to speak upon: -

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH THE TEXT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS GIVE TO US IN PRAYER.

Brethren, it is always an encouragement to do a thing when you see the best of men doing it. Many a person has taken a medicine only because he has known wiser men than himself take it. The best and wisest of persons in all ages have adopted the custom of prayer in times of distress, and, indeed, in all times. That ought to encourage us to do the same. I heard a dear Welsh brother speak last Thursday evening, who interested and amused me too, but I cannot profess to repeat the way in which he told us a Biblical story. It was something in this way. He told it as a Welshman, and not quite as I think I might. He said that after the Lord Jesus Christ had gone up to heaven, having told his disciples to wait at Jerusalem until the Spirit of God was given, Peter might have said, "Well, now we must not go out preaching till this blessing comes, so I shall be off a-fishing." And John might have said, "Well, there is the old boat over at the lake of Gennesaret; I think I shall go and see how that is getting on; it is a long time since I saw after it." And each one might have said, "Well, I shall go about my business, for it is not many days hence when it is coming, and we may as well be at our earthly calling." "No," saith he, "they did not say that at all, but Peter said, 'Where shall we hold a prayer meeting?' and Mary said she had got a nice large room that would do for a prayer meeting. True it was in a back street, and the house was not very respectable, and, 'Besides,' says she, 'it is up at the very top of the house, but it is a big room.' 'Never mind,' says Peter, 'it will be nearer to heaven.' So they went into the upper room, and there began to pray, and did not cease the prayer meeting till the blessing came." Then the brother told us the next story of a prayer meeting in the Bible. Peter was in prison, and Herod was so afraid that he would get out again that he had sixteen

policemen to look after him, and the brethren knew they could not get Peter out in any other way than one; so they said, "We will hold a prayer meeting." Always the way with the Church at that time, when anything was amiss, to say, "Where shall we have a prayer meeting?" So Mistress Mark said she had got a good room which would do very well for a prayer meeting. It was in a back street, so nobody would know of it, and they would be quiet. So they held that prayer meeting, and began to pray. I do not suppose they prayed the Lord to knock the prison walls down, nor to kill the policemen, nor anything of that kind, but they only prayed that Peter might get out, and they left how he was to get out to God. While they were praying there came a knock at the door. "Ah!" said they, "that is a policeman come after another of us. But Rhoda went to the door to look, and when she looked she started back in affright. What could she see? She looked again, however, and she was persuaded that it was no other than Peter. She went back to her mistress, and said, "There is Peter at the gate." Good souls! they had been praying that Peter might come out, but they could not believe it, and they said, "Why, it is his spirit - his angel." "No," said the girl, "I know Peter well enough; he has been here dozens of times, and I know it is Peter"; and in came Peter, and they all wondered at their unbelief. They had asked God to set Peter free, and free Peter was. It was the prayer meeting that did it. And rest assured we should, everyone, find it our best resource in every hour of need to draw near to God.

Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw,
Prayer mounts the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above.

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

It is prayer that does it, and this fact should encourage us to pray.

The success of Daniel's prayer is the next encouragement. He had not got

to the end of his prayer before a soft hand touched him, and he looked up, and there stood Gabriel in the form of a man. That was quick work surely. So Daniel thought, but it was much quicker than Daniel expected, for as soon as ever he began to pray, the word went forth for the angel to descend. The answer to prayer is the most rapid thing in the world. "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." I believe electricity travels at the rate of two hundred thousand miles in a second - so it is estimated; but prayer travels faster than that, for it is, "Before they call I will answer." There is no time occupied at all. When God wills to answer, the answer may come as soon as the desire is given. And if it delay, it is only that it may come at a better time - like some ships that come home more slowly because they bring the heavier cargo. Delayed prayers are prayers that are put out to interest awhile, to come home, not only with the capital, but with the compound interest too. Oh! prayer cannot fail - prayer cannot fail. Heaven may as soon fall as prayer fail. God may sooner change the ordinances of day and night, than he can cease to reply to the faithful, believing spirit-wrought prayer of his own quickened, earnest, importunate people. Therefore, because he sends success, brethren, pray much.

It ought to encourage us, too, in the next place, to recollect that Daniel prayed for a very hard case. Jerusalem was in ruins; the Jews were scattered; their sins were excessive; but, nevertheless, he prayed, and God heard him. We are not in so bad a case as that with the Church; we have not to mourn that God has departed from us; our prayer is that he may not, even in any measure, withdraw his hand. I do pray God that I may long be buried ere he shall suffer this Church to lose his presence. There is nothing that I know of in connection with our church life that is worth a single farthing, if the Spirit of God be gone. He must be there. Brethren, if you are not prayerful, if you are not holy, if you are not earnest, God does not keep priests, deacons, elders, and church members living near to him. The sorrow of heart which one will feel if one be kept right himself cannot be expressed. May the Lord prevent our declining. If you are declining, may he bring you back. Some of you, I am afraid, are so - getting cold. Now and then I hear of a person who finds it too far to come to the Tabernacle. It used to be very short one time, though it was four or five miles. But when the heart gets cold, the road gets long. Ah! there are

some who want this little attention and the other. Time was when they stood in the aisle, in the coldest and draughtiest place - if the word was blessed to them, they would not have minded it. May God grant that you may be a living people always, for years and years to come, until Christ himself comes. But oh! you that are living near to God, make this your daily, hourly, nightly prayer, that he would not withdraw from us for our sins, but continue to stretch out his hand in lovingkindness, even until he gathers us to our Father.

It ought, further, to encourage us in prayer to remember that Daniel was only one man, and yet he won his suit. But if two of you agree as touching any one thing, it shall be done - but a threefold cord - a fifty-fold cord - oh! if, out of our four thousand members, every one prayed instantly, day and night, for the blessing, oh! what prevalence there must be! Would God it were so!

Brethren, how about your private prayers: are they what they should be? Those morning prayers, those evening prayers, and that midday prayer (for surely your soul must go up to heaven, even if your knees are not bent) - are those prayers as they should be? It will bring leanness upon you; there cannot be fat soul and neglected prayer. There must be much praying if there be much rejoicing in the Lord.

And then your family prayers: do you keep them up? I was in a railway carriage the other day, and a gentleman said to me, who was sitting beside me, "My son is going to be married tomorrow - going to be married to one of your members." "I am glad to hear it," I said. "I hope he is a believer." "Oh! yes, sir; he has been a member of your church for some years. I wish you would write me something to give them tomorrow." Well, you know how the carriage will shake, but I managed to jot down something on a little bit of paper with a pencil. The words, I think, that I put were something like this, "I wish you every joy. May your joys be doubled; may your sorrows be divided and lightened." But then I put, "Build the altar before you build the tent. Take care that daily prayer begins your matrimonial life." I am sure we cannot expect our children to grow up a godly seed if there is no family prayer. Are your family prayers, then, what they ought to be?

Then next, let me say to each one, how about your prayers as members of the Church? Perhaps I am the last person that might complain about a prayer meeting. It really is a grand sight to see so many of you, but I must confess I don't feel quite content, for there are some members whom I used to see, but don't see now. I know I see some fresh ones, and we are never short of praying men, but I want to see the others as well. I know those who are constantly at prayer meetings can say it is good to be there. It is the best evening in the week often to us, when we come together to entreat for the blessing. Do not, I pray you, get into the habit of neglecting the assembling of yourselves together for prayer. How often have I said, "All our strength lies in prayer"! When we were very few, God multiplied us in answer to prayer. What prayers we put up night and day when we launched out to preach the gospel in a larger building! And what an answer God sent us. Since then, in times of need and trouble we have cried to God, and he has heard us. Daily he sends us help for our college, for our orphanage, and for our other works, in answer to prayer. Oh! you that come here as members of the Church, if you do not pray, the very beams out of these walls and the stones will cry out against you. This house was built in answer to prayer. If anybody had said that we, who were but few and poor, could have erected such a structure. I think it would have sounded impossible. But it was done - you know how readily it was done, how God raised us up friends, how he has helped us to this day. Oh! don't stop your prayers. You seem to me, good people, to be very like that king who, when he went to the dying prophet, was told, "Take your arrows and shoot," and he went to the window, and he shot but once, and the prophet was angry and said, "Thou shouldest have shot many times, and then thou wouldest have utterly destroyed thy enemies." And so we pray, as it were, but little. We ask but little, and God gives it. Oh! that we could ask much, and pray for much, and shoot many arrows and plead very earnestly. Look at this city of ours. I would not say a word in derogation of my country, but I am afraid there is not much to choose between the sin of London and the sin of Paris. And see what has come on that was going on there without fearing that national sin would bring national chastisement. And oh! this wicked City of London, with its dens of vice and filthiness! Ye are the salt of the earth; ye that love Christ, let not your salt lose its savour. God forbid that you should sin against the

Lord by ceasing to pray for this wicked people. Everywhere, sea and land, is compassed by the adversaries of the truth, to make proselytes. I beseech you, compass the mercy-seat, that their machinations may be defeated. At this time there ought to be special prayer. When God in providence seems to be shaking the Papacy to its base, now should we cry aloud and spare not. Out of these convulsions God may bring lasting blessings. Let us not neglect to work when God works. Let the hand of the man be lifted up in prayer when the wing of the angel is moved in providence. We may expect great things if we can pray greatly, and wrestle earnestly. I call you, in God's name, to the mercy-seat. Draw near thither, with intense importunity; and such a blessing shall come as ye have not yet imagined. Pray for some here present that are unconverted. There are a good many of them. They will not pray for themselves; let us pray them into prayer; let us pray God for them, until they at last pray God for themselves. Prayer can mercy's door unlock, for others as well as for our own persons; let us, therefore, abound in prayer, and God send us the blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. - Daniel 9:19

Daniel was a man in very high position in life. It is true he was not living in his own native land, but, in the providence of God, he had been raised to great eminence under the dominion of the country in which he dwelt. He might, therefore, naturally have forgotten his poor kinsmen; many have done so. Alas! we have known some that have even forgotten their poor fellow Christians when they have grown in grace, and have thought themselves too good to worship with the poorer sort when they themselves have grown rich in this world's goods. But it was not so with Daniel. Though he had been made a president of the empire, yet he was still a Jew; he felt himself still one with the seed of Israel. In all the afflictions of his people he was afflicted, and he felt it his honour to be numbered with them, and his duty and his privilege to share with them all the bitterness of their lot. If he could not become despised and as poor as they, if God's providence had made him to be distinguished, yet his

heart would make no distinction: he would remember them and pray for them, and would plead that their desolation might yet be removed.

Daniel was also a man very high in spiritual things. Is he not one of God's three mighties in the Old Testament? He is mentioned with two others in a celebrated verse as being one of three whose intercessions God would have heard if he had heard any intercessions. But though thus full of grace himself (and for that very reason) he stooped to those who were in a low state. Rejoicing as he did before God as to his own lot, he sorrowed and cried by reason of those from whom joy was banished. It is a sad fault with those Christians who think themselves full of grace, when they begin to despise their fellows. They may rest assured they are greatly mistaken in the estimate they have formed of themselves. But it is a good sign when thine own heart is fruitful and healthy before God, when thou dost condescend to those that backslide, and search after such as are weak, and bring again such as were driven away. When thou hast, like thy Master, a tender sympathy for others, then art thou rich in divine things. Daniel showed his intimate sympathy with his poorer and less gracious brethren in the way of prayer. He would have shown that sympathy in other ways had occasions occurred, and no doubt he did; but this time the most fitting way of proving his oneness with them was in becoming an intercessor for them.

My object here and now will be to stir up the people of God, and especially the members of this church, to abound exceedingly in prayer; more and more to plead with God for the prosperity of his Church, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

First, our text gives us a model of prayer; and secondly, it and its surroundings give us encouragement for prayer. First, then, our text gives us: -

I. A MODEL OF PRAYER.

I think I may notice this first as to the antecedents of the prayer. This prayer of Daniel was not offered without consideration. He did not come to pray as some people do, as though it were a thing that required no

forethought whatever. We are constantly told we ought to prepare our sermons, and I surely think that if a man does not prepare his sermons he is very blameworthy. But are we never to prepare when we speak to God, and only when we speak to man? Is there to be no preparation of the heart of man from God when we open our mouth before the Lord? Do not you think we often do, both in private and public, begin to pray without any kind of consideration, and the words come, and then we try to quicken the words rather than the desires coming, and the words coming like garments to clothe them withal?

But Daniel's considerations lay in this first, he studied the books. He had with him an old manuscript of the prophet Jeremiah. He read that through. Perceiving such and such things spoken of, he prayed for them. Perceiving such and such a time given, and knowing that that time was almost come, he prayed the more earnestly! Oh! that you studied your Bibles more! Oh! that we all did! How we could plead the promises! How we could plead the promises! How often we should prevail with God when we could hold him to his word, and say, "Fulfil this word unto thy servant, whereon thou hast caused me to hope." Oh! it is grand praying when our mouth is full of God's word, for there is no word that can prevail with him like his own. You tell a man, when you ask him for such and such a thing, "You yourself said you would do so and so." You have him then. And so when you can lay hold on the covenant angel with this consecrated grip, "Thou hast said! thou hast said!" then have you every opportunity of prevailing with him. May our prayers then spring out of our scriptural studies; may our acquaintance with the Word be such that we shall be qualified to pray a Daniel prayer.

He had, moreover, it is clear if you read the prayer again, studied the history of his people. He gives a little outline of it from the day in which they came out of Egypt. Christian people should be acquainted with the history of the Church - if not with the Church of the past, certainly with the Church of today. We make ourselves acquainted with the position of the Prussian army, and we will buy new maps about once a week to see all the places and the towns. Should not Christians make themselves acquainted with the position of Christ's army, and revise their maps to see how the kingdom of God is progressing in England, in the United

States, on the Continent, or in the mission stations throughout the world? All our prayers would be much better if we knew more about the Church, and especially about our own Church. I am afraid I must say it - I am afraid there are some members of the Church that do not know what is doing - hardly know what is meant by some of our enterprises. Brethren, know well the Church's needs as far as you can ascertain them; and then, like Daniel, your prayer will be a prayer founded upon information; and with the promises of God and the fact of the Church's wants, you will pray prayers of the spirit, and of the understanding. Let that stand for earnest consideration.

But next, Daniel's prayer was mingled with much humiliation. According to the Oriental custom which expresses the inward thought and feeling by the outward act, he put on a coarse garment made of hair, black, called sackcloth; and then taking handfuls of ashes, he cast them on his head and over the cloth that covered him, and then he knelt down in the very dust in secret, and these outward symbols were made to express the humiliation which he felt before God. We always pray best when we pray out of the depths; when the soul gets low enough she gets a leverage; she can then plead with God. I do not say we ought to ask to see all the evil of our own hearts. One good man prayed that prayer very often. He is mentioned in some of the Puritan writers - a minister of the gospel. It pleased God to hear his prayer, and he never rejoiced afterwards. It was with great difficulty that he was even kept from suicide, so deep and dreadful was the agony he experienced when he did begin to see his sin as he wanted to see it. It is best to see as much of that as God would have us see of it. You cannot see too much of Christ, but you might see even too much of your sin. Yet, brethren, this is rarely the case. We need to see much our deep needs, our great sins, for ah! that prayer shall go highest that comes from the lowest. To stoop well is a grand art in prayer. To pour out the last drop of anything like self-righteousness; to be able to say from the very heart, "Not for our righteousness' sake do we plead with thee, O God, for we have sinned, and our fathers too." Put the negative, the weightiest negative, upon any idea of pleading human merit. When thou canst do this, then art thou in the right way to pray a prayer that will move the arm of God, and bring thee down a blessing. Oh! some of you ungodly ones have tried to pray, but you have not bowed yourselves.

Proud prayers may knock their heads on mercy's lintel, but they can never pass through the portal. You cannot expect anything of God unless you put yourself in the right place, that is, as a beggar at his footstool; then will he hear you, and not until then.

Daniel's prayer instructs us in the next point. It was excited by zeal for God's glory. We may sometimes pray with wrong motives. If I seek the conversion of souls in my ministry, is not that a good motive? Yes, it is; but suppose I desire the conversion of souls in order that people may say, "What a useful minister he is," that is a bad motive, which spoils it all. If I am a member of a Christian Church, and I pray for its prosperity, is not that right? Certainly; but if I desire its prosperity merely that I and others may be able to say, "See our zeal for the Lord! See how God blesses us rather than others!" that is a wrong motive. The motive is this, "Oh! that God could be glorified, that Jesus might see the reward of his sufferings! Oh! that sinners might be saved, so that God might have new tongues to praise him, new hearts to love him! Oh! that sin were put an end to, that the holiness, righteousness, mercy, and power of God might be magnified!" This is the way to pray; when thy prayers seek God's glory, it is God's glory to answer thy prayers. When thou art sure that God is in the case, thou art on a good footing. If thou art praying for that which will greatly glorify him, thou mayest rest assured thy prayer will speed. But if it do not speed, and it be not for his glory, why, then thou mayest be better content to be without it than with it. So pray thou, but keep thy bowstring right; it will be unfit to shoot the arrow of prayer unless this be thy bowstring, "God's glory, God's glory" - this above all; first, last, and midst; the one object of my prayer.

Then coming closer to the prayer, I would have you notice how intense Daniel's prayer was. "O Lord, hear: O Lord, forgive: O Lord, hearken and do, defer not for thine own sake." The very repetitions here express vehemence. It is a great fault of some people in public prayer when they repeat the name, "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," so often - it often amounts to taking God's name in vain, and is, indeed, a vain repetition. But when the reiteration of that sacred name comes out of the soul, then it is no vain repetition; then it cannot be repeated too often, and is not open to anything like the criticism which I used just now. So you will notice how

the prophet here seems to pour out his soul with "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," as if, if the first knock at mercy's door does not open it, he will knock again, and make the gate to shake, and then the third time come with another thundering stroke if, perhaps, he may succeed. Cold prayers ask God to deny them: only importunate prayers will be replied to. When the Church of God cannot take "No" for an answer, she shall not have "No" for an answer. When a pleading soul must have it; when the Spirit of God works mightily in him so that he cannot let the angel go without a blessing, the angel shall not go till he has given the blessing to such a pleading one. Brethren, if there be only one among us that can pray as Daniel did, with intensity, the blessing will come. Let this encourage any earnest man or woman here that fears that others are not excited to prayer as they should be. Dear brother, do you undertake it? Dear sister, in God's name, do you undertake it? and God will send a blessing to many through the prayer of one. But how much better would it be if many a score of men here, ay, the entire Church of God, were stirred up to this, that we give him no rest until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth! Oh! that our prayers could get beyond praying, till they got to agonizing. As soon as Zion travailed - you know that word - as soon as she travailed she brought forth children. Not till it comes to travail - not till then - may we expect to see much done. God send us such travailing to each one of us, and then the promise is near to fulfilling.

But coming still to the text, and a little more closely, I want to observe that this remarkable prayer was a prayer of understanding as well as earnestness; for some people in their earnestness talk nonsense, and I think I have heard prayers which God might understand, but I am sure I did not. Now here is a prayer which we can understand as well as God. It begins thus, "O Lord, hear." He asks an audience. This is how the petitioner does if he comes before an earthly majesty: he asks to be heard. He begins with that, "O Lord, hear. I am not worthy to be heard: if thou shut me and my case out of hearing, it will be just." He asks an audience: he gets it, and now he goes at once to his point without delay, "O Lord, forgive." He knows what he wants. Sin was the mischief, the cause of all the suffering: he puts his hand on it. Oh! it is grand when one knows what one is praying for. Many prayers maunder and wander - the praying person evidently thinks he is doing a good thing in saying certain good

phrases, but the prayer that hits the target in the centre is the prayer it is good to pray. God teach us to pray so. "O Lord, forgive."

Then observe how he presses the point home. "O Lord, hearken and do." If thou hast forgiven - he does not stop a minute, but here comes another prayer quick on the heels of it. Do, good Lord, interpose for the rebuilding of Jerusalem - do interpose for the redemption of thy captive people; do interpose for the re-establishment of sacred worship. It is well when our prayers can fly fast, one after another, as we feel we are gaining ground. You know in wrestling (and that is a model of prayer) much depends on the foothold, but oftentimes there is much depending upon swiftness and celerity of action. So in prayer. "Hear, me, my Lord! Thou hast heard me, forgive me. Have I come so far, then work for me - work the blessings I want." Follow up your advantage; build another prayer on the answer that you have. If you have received a great blessing, say, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him; because he has heard me once, therefore will I call again." Such a prayer proves the thoughtfulness of him who prays. It is a prayer offered in the spirit, and with understanding also.

And now one other thing. The prayer of Daniel was a prayer of holy nearness. You catch that thought in the expression, "O my God." Ah! we pray at a distance oftentimes: we pray to God as if we were slaves lying at his throne-foot; as if we might, perhaps, be heard, but we did not know. But when God helps us to pray as we should we come right to him, even to his feet, and we say, "Hear me, O my God." He is God; therefore, we must be reverent. He is my God; therefore, we may be familiar; we may come close to him. I believe some of the expressions that Martin Luther used in prayer, if I were to use them, would be little short of blasphemy, but as Martin Luther used them I believe they were deeply devout and acceptable with God, because he knew how to come close to God. You know how your little child climbs your knee: he gives you a kiss, and he will say to you many little things that if a person in the market were to say, you could not bear; they must not be said. No other being may be so familiar with you as your child. But oh! a child of God - when his heart is right - how near he gets to his God; he pours out his childlike complaint in childlike language before the Most High. Brethren, this is to be noted

well, that though he is thus pleading and in the position of humility, yet still not in the position of slavery. It is still "O my God" - he grasps the covenant: faith perceives the relationship to be unbroken between the soul and God, and pleads that relation. "O my God."

Now the last thing I shall call your attention to in this model prayer is this, that the prophet uses argument. Praying ought always to be made up of arguing. "Bring forth your strong reasons" is a good canon for a prevalent prayer. We should urge matters with God, and bring reasons before him - not because he wants reasons, but he desires us to know why we desire the blessing. In this text we have a reason given, first - "Defer not for thine own sake," as much as if he had said, "If thou suffer this people of thine to perish, all the world will revile thy name; thine honour will be stained. This is thine own people, and because they are thy property, suffer not thine own estate to be endamaged, but save Jerusalem for thine own sake."

Then next, he puts it on the same footing in another shape, "For thy city and thy people"; he urges that this people were not like other people. They had sinned truly, but still there was a relationship between them and God that existed between God and no other people. He pleads the covenant, in fact, between Abraham and Abraham's seed and the God of the whole earth. Good pleading that! And then he puts in next, "For they are called by thy name." They were said to be Jehovah's people; they were named by the name of the God of Israel. "O God! let not a thing that bears thy name be trundled about like a common thing. Suffer it not to be trailed in the dust; come to the rescue of it. Thy stamp, thy seal is upon Israel. Israel belongs to thee; therefore, come and interpose." Now from this I gather that if we would prevail we should plead arguments with God, and these are very many; and discreet minds when they are fervent will readily know how far to go in pleading, and where to stop. I remember one morning a dear brother now present praying in a way that seemed to me to be very prevalent when he spoke thus, "O Lord, thou hast been pleased to call thy Church thy Bride; now we, being evil, have such love towards our spouse that if there were anything in the world that would be for her good, we would not spare to give it to her; and wilt thou not, O Husband of the Church, do the like with thy spouse, and let thy

Church receive a blessing now that she pleads for it?" It seemed good arguing, after Christ's own sort, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" Get a promise, and spread it before the Lord, and say, "O Lord, thou hast said it; do it." God loves to be believed in. He loves you to think he means what he says. He is a practical God himself. His word has power in it, and he does not like us to treat his promises as some of us do, as if they were waste paper, as if they were things to be read for the encouragement of our enthusiasm, but not to be used as matters of real practical truth. Oh! plead them with God: fill your mouths with reasonings, and come before him. Make this your determination, that as a Church, seeing we need his Spirit, and need renewed prosperity, we will not spare nor leave a single argument unused by which we may prevail with the God of mercy to send us what we want. Thus much then upon this as a model of prayer. Now I shall want a little longer time to speak upon: -

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH THE TEXT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS GIVE TO US IN PRAYER.

Brethren, it is always an encouragement to do a thing when you see the best of men doing it. Many a person has taken a medicine only because he has known wiser men than himself take it. The best and wisest of persons in all ages have adopted the custom of prayer in times of distress, and, indeed, in all times. That ought to encourage us to do the same. I heard a dear Welsh brother speak last Thursday evening, who interested and amused me too, but I cannot profess to repeat the way in which he told us a Biblical story. It was something in this way. He told it as a Welshman, and not quite as I think I might. He said that after the Lord Jesus Christ had gone up to heaven, having told his disciples to wait at Jerusalem until the Spirit of God was given, Peter might have said, "Well, now we must not go out preaching till this blessing comes, so I shall be off a-fishing." And John might have said, "Well, there is the old boat over at the lake of Gennesaret; I think I shall go and see how that is getting on; it is a long time since I saw after it." And each one might have said, "Well, I shall go about my business, for it is not many days hence when it is coming, and we may as well be at our earthly calling." "No," saith he, "they did not say

that at all, but Peter said, 'Where shall we hold a prayer meeting?' and Mary said she had got a nice large room that would do for a prayer meeting. True it was in a back street, and the house was not very respectable, and, 'Besides,' says she, 'it is up at the very top of the house, but it is a big room.' 'Never mind,' says Peter, 'it will be nearer to heaven.' So they went into the upper room, and there began to pray, and did not cease the prayer meeting till the blessing came." Then the brother told us the next story of a prayer meeting in the Bible. Peter was in prison, and Herod was so afraid that he would get out again that he had sixteen policemen to look after him, and the brethren knew they could not get Peter out in any other way than one; so they said, "We will hold a prayer meeting." Always the way with the Church at that time, when anything was amiss, to say, "Where shall we have a prayer meeting?" So Mistress Mark said she had got a good room which would do very well for a prayer meeting. It was in a back street, so nobody would know of it, and they would be quiet. So they held that prayer meeting, and began to pray. I do not suppose they prayed the Lord to knock the prison walls down, nor to kill the policemen, nor anything of that kind, but they only prayed that Peter might get out, and they left how he was to get out to God. While they were praying there came a knock at the door. "Ah!" said they, "that is a policeman come after another of us. But Rhoda went to the door to look, and when she looked she started back in affright. What could she see? She looked again, however, and she was persuaded that it was no other than Peter. She went back to her mistress, and said, "There is Peter at the gate." Good souls! they had been praying that Peter might come out, but they could not believe it, and they said, "Why, it is his spirit - his angel." "No," said the girl, "I know Peter well enough; he has been here dozens of times, and I know it is Peter"; and in came Peter, and they all wondered at their unbelief. They had asked God to set Peter free, and free Peter was. It was the prayer meeting that did it. And rest assured we should, everyone, find it our best resource in every hour of need to draw near to God.

Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw,
Prayer mounts the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above.

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

It is prayer that does it, and this fact should encourage us to pray.

The success of Daniel's prayer is the next encouragement. He had not got to the end of his prayer before a soft hand touched him, and he looked up, and there stood Gabriel in the form of a man. That was quick work surely. So Daniel thought, but it was much quicker than Daniel expected, for as soon as ever he began to pray, the word went forth for the angel to descend. The answer to prayer is the most rapid thing in the world. "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." I believe electricity travels at the rate of two hundred thousand miles in a second - so it is estimated; but prayer travels faster than that, for it is, "Before they call I will answer." There is no time occupied at all. When God wills to answer, the answer may come as soon as the desire is given. And if it delay, it is only that it may come at a better time - like some ships that come home more slowly because they bring the heavier cargo. Delayed prayers are prayers that are put out to interest awhile, to come home, not only with the capital, but with the compound interest too. Oh! prayer cannot fail - prayer cannot fail. Heaven may as soon fall as prayer fail. God may sooner change the ordinances of day and night, than he can cease to reply to the faithful, believing spirit-wrought prayer of his own quickened, earnest, importunate people. Therefore, because he sends success, brethren, pray much.

It ought to encourage us, too, in the next place, to recollect that Daniel prayed for a very hard case. Jerusalem was in ruins; the Jews were scattered; their sins were excessive; but, nevertheless, he prayed, and God heard him. We are not in so bad a case as that with the Church; we have not to mourn that God has departed from us; our prayer is that he may not, even in any measure, withdraw his hand. I do pray God that I may long be buried ere he shall suffer this Church to lose his presence. There is nothing that I know of in connection with our church life that is worth

a single farthing, if the Spirit of God be gone. He must be there. Brethren, if you are not prayerful, if you are not holy, if you are not earnest, God does not keep priests, deacons, elders, and church members living near to him. The sorrow of heart which one will feel if one be kept right himself cannot be expressed. May the Lord prevent our declining. If you are declining, may he bring you back. Some of you, I am afraid, are so - getting cold. Now and then I hear of a person who finds it too far to come to the Tabernacle. It used to be very short one time, though it was four or five miles. But when the heart gets cold, the road gets long. Ah! there are some who want this little attention and the other. Time was when they stood in the aisle, in the coldest and draughtiest place - if the word was blessed to them, they would not have minded it. May God grant that you may be a living people always, for years and years to come, until Christ himself comes. But oh! you that are living near to God, make this your daily, hourly, nightly prayer, that he would not withdraw from us for our sins, but continue to stretch out his hand in lovingkindness, even until he gathers us to our Father.

It ought, further, to encourage us in prayer to remember that Daniel was only one man, and yet he won his suit. But if two of you agree as touching any one thing, it shall be done - but a threefold cord - a fifty-fold cord - oh! if, out of our four thousand members, every one prayed instantly, day and night, for the blessing, oh! what prevalence there must be! Would God it were so!

Brethren, how about your private prayers: are they what they should be? Those morning prayers, those evening prayers, and that midday prayer (for surely your soul must go up to heaven, even if your knees are not bent) - are those prayers as they should be? It will bring leanness upon you; there cannot be fat soul and neglected prayer. There must be much praying if there be much rejoicing in the Lord.

And then your family prayers: do you keep them up? I was in a railway carriage the other day, and a gentleman said to me, who was sitting beside me, "My son is going to be married tomorrow - going to be married to one of your members." "I am glad to hear it," I said. "I hope he is a believer." "Oh! yes, sir; he has been a member of your church for

some years. I wish you would write me something to give them tomorrow." Well, you know how the carriage will shake, but I managed to jot down something on a little bit of paper with a pencil. The words, I think, that I put were something like this, "I wish you every joy. May your joys be doubled; may your sorrows be divided and lightened." But then I put, "Build the altar before you build the tent. Take care that daily prayer begins your matrimonial life." I am sure we cannot expect our children to grow up a godly seed if there is no family prayer. Are your family prayers, then, what they ought to be?

Then next, let me say to each one, how about your prayers as members of the Church? Perhaps I am the last person that might complain about a prayer meeting. It really is a grand sight to see so many of you, but I must confess I don't feel quite content, for there are some members whom I used to see, but don't see now. I know I see some fresh ones, and we are never short of praying men, but I want to see the others as well. I know those who are constantly at prayer meetings can say it is good to be there. It is the best evening in the week often to us, when we come together to entreat for the blessing. Do not, I pray you, get into the habit of neglecting the assembling of yourselves together for prayer. How often have I said, "All our strength lies in prayer"! When we were very few, God multiplied us in answer to prayer. What prayers we put up night and day when we launched out to preach the gospel in a larger building! And what an answer God sent us. Since then, in times of need and trouble we have cried to God, and he has heard us. Daily he sends us help for our college, for our orphanage, and for our other works, in answer to prayer. Oh! you that come here as members of the Church, if you do not pray, the very beams out of these walls and the stones will cry out against you. This house was built in answer to prayer. If anybody had said that we, who were but few and poor, could have erected such a structure. I think it would have sounded impossible. But it was done - you know how readily it was done, how God raised us up friends, how he has helped us to this day. Oh! don't stop your prayers. You seem to me, good people, to be very like that king who, when he went to the dying prophet, was told, "Take your arrows and shoot," and he went to the window, and he shot but once, and the prophet was angry and said, "Thou shouldest have shot many times, and then thou wouldest have utterly destroyed thy enemies."

And so we pray, as it were, but little. We ask but little, and God gives it. Oh! that we could ask much, and pray for much, and shoot many arrows and plead very earnestly. Look at this city of ours. I would not say a word in derogation of my country, but I am afraid there is not much to choose between the sin of London and the sin of Paris. And see what has come on that was going on there without fearing that national sin would bring national chastisement. And oh! this wicked City of London, with its dens of vice and filthiness! Ye are the salt of the earth; ye that love Christ, let not your salt lose its savour. God forbid that you should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for this wicked people. Everywhere, sea and land, is compassed by the adversaries of the truth, to make proselytes. I beseech you, compass the mercy-seat, that their machinations may be defeated. At this time there ought to be special prayer. When God in providence seems to be shaking the Papacy to its base, now should we cry aloud and spare not. Out of these convulsions God may bring lasting blessings. Let us not neglect to work when God works. Let the hand of the man be lifted up in prayer when the wing of the angel is moved in providence. We may expect great things if we can pray greatly, and wrestle earnestly. I call you, in God's name, to the mercy-seat. Draw near thither, with intense importunity; and such a blessing shall come as ye have not yet imagined. Pray for some here present that are unconverted. There are a good many of them. They will not pray for themselves; let us pray them into prayer; let us pray God for them, until they at last pray God for themselves. Prayer can mercy's door unlock, for others as well as for our own persons; let us, therefore, abound in prayer, and God send us the blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Daniel's Band

O Daniel, a man greatly beloved. - Daniel 10:11

It did not do Daniel any harm to know that he was greatly beloved of God; or else he would not have received that information from heaven. Some people are always afraid that, if Christian people obtain full assurance, and receive a sweet sense of divine love, they will grow proud, and be carried away with conceit. Do not you have any such fear for other people, and especially do not be afraid of it for yourselves. I know of no greater blessing that can happen to any man and woman here, than to be assured by the Spirit of God that they are greatly beloved of the Lord. Such knowledge might do some of us, who are Christians, the greatest conceivable good. Daniel was not injured by knowing that he was greatly beloved. It has often been said that Daniel is the John of the Old Testament, and John is the Daniel of the New Testament. Those two men, Daniel and John, were choice saints. They rose to the greatest height of spiritual obedience, and then to the greatest height of spiritual enjoyment.

The knowledge that they were greatly beloved of God, instead of doing us harm, will be a means of blessings in many ways. If you know, my dear brother, of a surety, that you are a man greatly beloved of God, you will become very humble. You will say, "How could God ever love me?

'What was there in me to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?'"

I think a sense of God's love is even more humbling than a sense of our own sin. When the two are blended, they sink the soul very low, not in depression of spirit, but in its estimate of itself.

A sense of God's love will also excite in you great gratitude. "Oh!" you will say, "how can I repay the Lord for such an amazing favour?" You will be

conscious that you never can repay him; but you will begin working out all sorts of schemes and plans to try to show how much you value the love of God. You will bring out your alabaster-box from its hiding-place; you will willingly enough break it, and pour the precious ointment upon the dear head of him who has loved you so greatly. I am sure that a certainty of having the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, is one of the greatest promoters of holy gratitude; and holy gratitude is the mother of obedience. When we feel how much we owe, then we seek to know the will of God, and take a delight in doing it. Whatsoever he saith unto us, we are glad to do, as a proof that we really are grateful for "love so amazing, so divine."

This will also consecrate us. I believe that, to know certainly that you are greatly beloved of God, will make you feel that you cannot live as others do. You cannot trifle with sin. He who lives in the heart of the king must be faithful to him. If called to stand in God's immediate presence as a courtier and a favourite, you must take care how you behave yourself, and you will do so. "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" In proportion as we are sure of his love, our love to him will burn like coals of juniper, which have a most vehement heat; and everything contrary to the will of God will be consumed in that blessed flame.

A sense of divine love will also strengthen us. What is there that a man cannot do when he is in love even with one of his own race; but when he gets to be in love with God, and knows of a certainty that he is greatly beloved of God, he would cut his way through a lane of devils, he would face an army of angels, and defeat them all; for love is a conquering grace. When faith is side by side with love, it—

"Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, 'It shall be done;'"

and love goes and does it; for there is nothing which the love of God will not enable us to do.

Moreover, this assurance of God's love will make us very courageous. If

thou art a man greatly beloved, and thou knowest it, thou wilt be a brave man. Let me never come into collision with the sword of that man whom God greatly loves; he will cut me in halves. The love of God makes a hero of the man on whom it is fixed. He is in the thick of the fray; he defies sin, and death, and hell. He will burn for Christ; he would be ready to burn a thousand times over when once he was assured that he was the object of the peculiar love of God, and like Daniel, could be addressed as "a man greatly beloved."

This will make a man glad. If we are greatly beloved of God, how can we be miserable and discontent? Oh, no! If you are a man greatly beloved, you will trip with light feet over the hills of sorrow. You will be glad in the Lord, even when you have much to depress and discourage you. You will begin the music of heaven even here, for a sense of God's love in the soul sets all the bells of the heart ringing. He is the gladdest man who has the greatest assurance that he is "a man greatly beloved."

I have said all this as a preface, to show you that you need not be afraid of knowing that God loves you. Some seem to think that a state of doubt is a state of discretion. It is a state of folly. Full assurance of the faithfulness and truthfulness of God is nothing but common-sense spiritualized. To believe a lie, is folly; but to believe the truth is wisdom. If thou art a believer in Christ, though the very least and weakest of believers, thou art a man greatly beloved. Believe it, and be not afraid to rejoice in it. It will have no influence over thee but that which is sanctifying and health-giving.

Well, now, to help us think of Christ's great love to us, I am going to talk a little, first, about the case of Daniel, the man greatly beloved; secondly, about the case of every believer, for every believer is a man greatly beloved; and thirdly, about the case of some special saints, believers who are the elect out of the elect, the choicest of the choice ones of the Most High. Of these it may truly be said that they are men greatly beloved.

I. First, then, let us consider **THE CASE OF DANIEL**, who was "a man greatly beloved."

Because Daniel was greatly beloved of God, he was early tried, and enabled to stand. While he was yet a youth, he was carried into Babylon, and there he refused to eat the king's meat, or to drink the king's wine. He put it to the test whether, if he fed on common pulse, he would not be healthier and better than if he defiled himself with the king's meat. Now, religion does not stand in meat and drink; but let me say, a good deal of irreligion does, and it may become a very important point with some as to what they eat and what they drink. Daniel was early tested, and because he was a man greatly beloved of God, he stood the test. He would not yield even in a small point to that which was evil. Young man, if God greatly loves you, he will give you an early decision, and very likely he will put you to an early test. If you are greatly loved, you will stand firm, even about so small a thing as what you eat and drink, or something that looks less important than that. You will say, "I cannot sin against God. I must stand fast, even in the smallest matter, in keeping the law of the Lord my God." If thou art enabled to do that, thou art a man greatly beloved.

Afterwards, Daniel was greatly envied, but found faultless. He was surrounded by envious enemies, who could not bear that he should be promoted over them, though he deserved all the honour he received. So they met together, and consulted how they would pull him down. They were obliged to make this confession, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." O dear friends, you are greatly beloved is, when your enemies meet to devise some scheme for your overthrow, they cannot say anything against you except what they base upon your religion. If, when they sift you through and through, their eager, evil eyes cannot detect a fault; and they are obliged to fall back upon abusing you for your godliness, calling it hypocrisy, or some other ugly name, you are a man greatly beloved.

Further, Daniel was delivered from great peril. He was cast into the lions' den because he was a man greatly beloved of God. I think I see some shrink back, and I hear them say, "We do not want to go into the lions' den." They are poor creatures, but Daniel was worth putting in the lions' den; there was enough of him to be put there. Some men would be out of place among lions; cats would be more suitable companions for them; indeed. They are such insignificant beings that they would be more at

home among mice. Lion's dens would not be at all in their line. They would imitate Solomon's slothful man, and say, "There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." There is not enough manhood in them to bring them into close quarters with the king of beasts. Even among our hearers there are many poor feeble creatures. A clever man preaches false doctrine, and they say, "Very good. Was it not well put?" Oh, yes! it is all alike good to some of you, who cannot discern between the true and the false; but Daniel could distinguish between good and evil, and therefore he was thrust into the lion's den. It was, however, a den out of which he was delivered. The lions could not eat him, God loved him too well. The Lord preserved Daniel, and he will preserve you, dear friend, if you belong to "Daniel's band." It is one thing to sing:—

"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone;"

but it is quite another thing to be a Daniel, and dare to stand alone, when you are at the mouth of the lions den. If you are like Daniel, you will have no cause for fear even then. If your trial should be like going into a den of lions, if you are a man greatly beloved of God, you will come out again. No lion shall destroy you; you are perfectly safe. The love of God is like a wall of fire round about you.

Once more, Daniel was a man greatly beloved, and therefore he had revelations from God. Do not open your eyes with wonder and say, "I wish that I had all the revelations that Daniel had." Listen to what he says: "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me;" and again: "As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me; but I kept the matter in my heart." The revelations he received actually made him ill: "I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it." He whom God loves will see things that will astound him; he will see that which will almost kill him; he will that which will make him faint and sick well nigh unto death. When one said, "You cannot see God and live," another answered, "Then let me see him if I die." So those who are greatly beloved say, "Let me see visions of God whatever it may

cost me. Let me have communion with him even though it should break my heart, and crush me in the dust. Though it should fill me with sorrow, and make me unfit for my daily business, yet manifest thyself to me, my Lord, as thou dost unto the world!" Even men greatly beloved, when they deal closely with God, have to find out that they are but dust and ashes in his sight. They have to fall down before the presence of his glorious majesty, as the beloved John did when he fell at Christ's feet as dead.

I will make only one more remark upon Daniel's case, and that is this, he stood in his lot. Because he was a man greatly beloved, he had this promise with which to close his marvellous book. "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." He was a man greatly beloved, but he does not understand all that God has revealed; and he is to go his way, and rest quite satisfied that, whether he understood it or not, it would work him no harm; for when the end came, he would have his place and his portion, and he would be with his Lord for ever. The next time you get studying some prophecy of Scripture, which you cannot make out, do not be troubled; but hear the voice of God saying, "Go thy way. Wait awhile. It will all be plain by-and-by. God is with thee. There remains a rest for thee, a crown that no head but thine can wear, a harp that no fingers but thine can play upon, and thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

Thus I have briefly describe the case of Daniel.

II. In the second place, I am going to speak of THE CASE OF EVERY BELIEVER, who is also greatly beloved of God. I must be very brief, because of the communion service which is to follow.

Every believer has been called out from others. My brother, look at the hole in the pit whence thou wast digged. Like Abraham, thou hast been called out from thy family, and from thy father's house. Possibly, you have not a godly relative. Many here are the only ones of their kith and kin that ever knew the Lord, so far as they know of, or can remember. Behold in this the sovereign, electing love of God. Art thou not a man greatly beloved? Even if thou hast come of a godly stock, yet thou hast seen others who seemed to be nearest to the kingdom, and yet have been

cast out from it. Admire the grace of God, which has called thee, and thy father, and thy grandfather, and thy brother, and thy wife, and maybe children too. Oh, be grateful, and bless the name of the Lord! But "who maketh thee to differ from another?" Who but God, the Giver of all grace, has made thee to differ from the ungodly around thee? Therefore, adore him for his matchless mercy, his distinguishing grace.

Remember, too, that if thou hast been called out from a sinful world, and transformed into a child of God, this is the token that thou hast been chosen from the beginning. God loved thee long before he began to deal with thee in the way of grace. Ere thou wast born, Christ died for thee; and ere this world was made. God loved thee with an everlasting love.

"Before the day-star knew its place,
Or planets ran their round,"

thy name was in his Book; and thine image was on the heart of Christ, whose delights were with the sons of men. Remember his word by the prophet Jeremiah, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Feed on that precious truth, inwardly digest it, let it enter into thy very soul. He hath loved me with an everlasting love; then, surely, I may claim the title of "a man greatly beloved."

Remember, too, that in the fulness of time, thou wast redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Thy God took upon himself thy nature, and on the cross he bore thy sins in his own body on the tree. The chastisement of thy peace was upon him, and with his stripes thou art healed. The bloodmark in on thee now; thou art one for whom he died in that special way which secures effectual salvation to thee. He loved his church, and gave himself for it; and this is the song of that church on heaven, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on earth." If thou hast been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, verily, I say unto thee, thou art "a man greatly beloved."

Thou hast been also pardoned, and put among the Lord's children.

Remember thy sin for a moment. Darest thou remember it? Hast thou remembered it? Then forget it, for God hast blotted it out. He has cast all thy sins behind his back. The depths have covered them; there is no one of them left. They sank like lead in the mighty waves of oblivion; and they shall never arise to condemn thee. Thou art forgiven. Perhaps thou wast a drunkard, a swearer, disobedient to parents, or unchaste; but whatever thy sin, the blood of Jesus has cleansed thee, and thou art whiter than the snow; and he has covered thee with the robe of his perfect righteousness, and thou art "accepted in the Beloved." Art thou not a man greatly beloved? I remember one who came creeping to the Saviour's feet, it was myself, black as night, condemned in my own conscience, and expecting to be driven to the place where hope could never come. I came to Christ wearing the weeds of mourning; but, in a moment, when I looked to Jesus, he put on me the garments of salvation. He took away my sin, and place a fair crown upon my head, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. Blessed be his name! If there is a man in the world who can sing,—

"Oh, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
The love of God to me!
It brought my Saviour from above,
To die on Calvary;"

I am that man; and you can sing it, too, dear friend, cannot you? I mean you have been forgiven your trespasses for Christ's sake. I feel sure that your heart is speaking now, even if your tongue is silent, and it says, "Indeed, as a pardoned man, I am greatly beloved."

Since the Lord forgave your sin, you have been a praying man, and God has heard your prayers. From the horns of the unicorns has he delivered you; out of the depths of the sea have you cried, and he has rescued you, like Jonah. With the psalmist, you can say, "Verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer." Are you not greatly beloved? As our dear friend, Dr. Taylor, said in prayer this morning, we have a mercy-seat to which we can always go. Not only have we gone to it in the past, but we may go to it whenever we need. We have the entree' of the King's palace at will. Are we not men greatly beloved?

Beside that, remember that the Lord has upheld you until now. In your pilgrim path, how many times your feet have almost gone! How often you have been tempted, ah! Worse than that, how often you have yielded to temptation; yet here you are, your character not ruined, your soul not lost, your face towards Jerusalem, and the enemy's foot is not on your neck yet; and it never will be, glory be to the name of the Lord! When I think of all our experience in the way in which the Lord hath led us, I can truly say of all his people that they are men and women greatly beloved.

Now to-night you are invited to feast with Christ and his church; not to come and be dogs under the table, but to sit with him at the royal banquet, with his banner of love waving over you. You are invited to be his companions here, his comrades at his feet. Oh, what a festival is this sacred supper! Haman thought himself honoured when he was invited to his king's banquet; but what shall we say who are bidden to come to this high festival?

"What food luxurious loads the board,
When at the table sits the Lord!
The wine how rich, the bread how sweet,
When Jesus deigns the guests to meet!"

Only one thing more will I say under this head; but the story is so marvellous, that we may be forever telling it, and yet it will never be all told. The love of Christ to some of us has been so wonderful, that when we once begin the theme, we seem to forget all about time, and wish there were no fleeting hours to bid us end our story! Eternity itself will not be too long for telling out "the old, old story, of Jesus and his love."

But, what I was going to say is this, we shall be with him soon. Some of us sit here heavy at heart; and there are wrinkles on the brow, and there is a weariness in the frame which makes the wheels of life drag heavy. Beloved, it is but the twinkling of an eye, so brief is life, and we shall be with him where he is, and shall behold his glory. Do you ever try to realize the greatness of that love that will take you to be with Christ, to dwell with him, and to share his glory for ever? Can you not put the

incorruptible crown on your head, to-night in fancy; nay, in faith? Can you, even now, begin to wave the palm of victory, and strike the harp of everlasting praise? Do you feel as if you could, even now, join the sacred songsters above, and sing the heavenly hymn, the hallelujah chorus of the ages yet to be? As surely as we are in Christ to-night, we shall be with Christ by-and-by. Oh, men greatly beloved, to have such a future as this before you, ought to make your heaven begun below!

III. Time fails me, so I must speak of THE CASE OF SPECIAL SAINTS, those who are in a peculiar sense men greatly beloved.

There are some men who are, as I said at the beginning of my discourse, elect out of the elect. Remember, that Christ had seventy choice men, his disciples; but then he had twelve choicer men, his apostles; and he had three of these, who were with him when the others were not; and out of these three he had one John, "that disciple whom Jesus loved." His love is so sweet, that, while I would be grateful to be even outside the seventy, so long as I might be among the five hundred brethren who saw him after he rose from the dead, yet I would then have the ambition to get in among the seventy; and not for the honour of it, but for the love it would bring, I would like to be out of the eleven; and for the same reason I would fain to be one of the three, and I would, above measure, be thankful if I might be that one whom Jesus loved. Have you not the same holy aspiration?

Well, now, let me tell you that, if you would be among the choicer spirits, greatly beloved of God, you must be men of spotless character. Christ loves great sinners; and even saints that fall, and stain their garments, he will not cast away; but you will never enjoy the fulness of Christ's love unless you keep your garments unspotted from the world. You cannot find a fault in Daniel; and if you want to live on earth so as to be in heaven while you are here, and to drink the wine of Christ's love to the bottom of the chalice, even the spiced wine of his pomegranate, you must watch every step, and observe every word; for our Lord is very jealous, and half a word of evil will grieve him. If you would walk in the light as he is in the light, and have constant fellowship with God, I beseech you, be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect, and follow after unsullied holiness. The pure in heart shall see God. Oh, that you

might everyone have this purity! It is those who have not defiled their garments who shall walk with Christ in white.

The next point is, that men who are greatly beloved are men of decision. When Daniel had the lions' den in prospect, because of his faithfulness to his God, "he went into the house; and his window being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." There was no compromising in Daniel's case. If you want to be greatly beloved, do not attempt any compromise with sin. Have nothing to do with policy, and craft, and holding with the true and the false at the same time. If God is to use you in his service, you must be like the tribe of Levi, separate from your brethren, and you must ever be ready to stand up bravely for God and for his eternal truth at any cost. It is my earnest desire that we may have in this church many men and women of this kind, who will be, as Mr. Moody puts it, out and out for Christ.

Next, if you would be men greatly beloved of God, beyond all the rest of his people, on whom special shinings of his face shall come, you must be much in communion with him. Daniel fasted and prayed, and communed with God with cries and tears; and God came and revealed himself to him. He was greatly beloved, for he lived near to God. He was no far-off follower of his Lord. He dwelt in the full blaze of the Sun of Righteousness.

If a man is to be greatly beloved of God, he must live above the world, as Daniel did. Daniel became a prince, a governor, a man of substance and position; but when Belshazzar promised to clothe him with scarlet, and to put a gold chain about his neck, if he could read and interpret the writings on the wall, he said to the king, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another." Daniel did not want them. When he became great in the land, he walked with God as he had done when he was poor. It is a dangerous thing for some people to be made much of in this world; their hands soon get turned, and they begin to think too much of themselves. He who thinks that he is somebody is nobody; and he whose head swims because of his elevation, will soon have it broken because of his tumbling down from his lofty position. Daniel was a man greatly

beloved, and God showed him his great love by setting him in high places, and keeping him there in safety.

Once more, men who are greatly beloved by the Lord live wholly for God and for God's people. You see nothing of selfishness about Daniel. He neither seeks to be great nor to be rich. He loves his own people, Israel; he pleads with God for the seed of Abraham. He is patriotic. He loves Jehovah, and he pleads with him for God's own people. Now, if you want to be greatly beloved, give yourself up to the service of God and his church.

"Ye that are men, now serve him,
Against unnumbered foes;
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose."

No man need wish to be born in a time more suitable for heavenly chivalry than this. To stand alone for God in such an evil age as this, is a great honour. I pray that you may be able to avail yourselves of your privileges. How few care to swim against the current! A strong stream is running in opposition to the truth of God. Many say that the Bible is not half inspired. Many are turning away from Christ, refusing to acknowledge he deity, and some blasphemously speak of his precious blood as a thing of the shambles. O sirs! If somebody does not stand out to-day for the cause of God and truth, what is to become of the nominal church and of a guilty world? If you are loyal to Christ, show it now. If you love him, and his infallible Word, prove it now. Then shall you hear him say to you also, "O man greatly beloved, go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." God grant it for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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Darkness Before The Dawn

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether. - Song Of Solomon 2:17

The spouse sings, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away," so that the beloved of the Lord may be in the dark. It may be night with her who has a place in the heart of the Well-beloved. A child of God, who is a child of light, may be for a while in darkness; first, darkness comparatively, as compared with the light he has some times enjoyed, for days are not always equally bright. Some days are bright with a clear sunshine, other days may be overcast. So the child of God may one day walk, with full assurance of faith, in close fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; and at another time he may be questioning his interest in the covenant of grace, and may be rather sighing than singing, rather mourning than rejoicing. The child of God may be, then, in comparative darkness.

Yes, and he may be in positive darkness. It may be very black with him, and he may be obliged to cry, "I see no signs of returning day." Sometimes, neither sun nor moon appears for a long season to cheer the believer in the dark. This may arise partly through sickness of body. There are sicknesses of the body which in a very peculiar way touch the soul; exquisite pain may yet be attended with great brightness and joy, but there are certain other illnesses which influence us in another way. Terrible depressions come over us; we walk in darkness, and see no light. I should not like to guess how heavy a true heart may sometimes become; there is a needs-be that we be in heaviness through manifold trials. There is not only a needs-be for the trials, but also for the heaviness which comes out of them. It is not always that a man can gather himself together, and defy the fierce blasts, and walk through fire and through water with heavenly equanimity. No, brethren, "a wounded spirit who can bear?" and that wounded spirit may be the portion of some of the very fairest of the sons of God; indeed, the Lord has some weakly, sickly sons who, nevertheless, are the very pick of his family. It is not always the strong ones by whom he sets the most store; but, sometimes, those that seem to be driven into a corner, whose days are spent in mourning, are among the most precious in his sight. Yes, the darkness of the child of

God may be comparative darkness, and it may to a great extent be positive darkness.

But yet it can only be temporary darkness. The same text which suggests night promises dawn: "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away," says the song of the spouse. Perhaps no text is more frequently upon my lips than is this one; I do not think that any passage of Scripture more often recurs to my heart when I am alone, for just now I feel that there is a gathering gloom over the church and over the world. It seems as if night were coming on, and such a night as makes one sigh and cry, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away."

I am going to speak upon three things which are in our text. The first will be, our prospect. We have a prospect that the day will break, and the shadows flee away. Secondly, our posture "until the day break, and the shadows flee away." Thirdly, our petition: "Turn, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division." We are content to wait if he will come to us; if gladdened with his presence, the night shall seem short, and we can well endure all that it brings. Let the prayer of our text be put up by any of you who are waiting in the darkness, and may it be speedily answered in your happy experience!

I. First of all, let us consider OUR PROSPECT. Our prospect is, that the day will break, and that the shadows will flee away. We may read this passage in many ways, and apply it to different cases.

Think, first, of the child of God, who is full of doubt. He is afraid that, after all, his supposed conversion was not a true one, and that he has proved it to be false by his own misbehaviour. He is afraid, I scarcely know of what, for so many fears crowd in upon him. He is crying to God to remove his doubts, and to let him once again—

"Read his title clear
To mansions in the skies."

His eyes are looking toward the cross, and somehow, he has a hope, if not quite a persuasion, that he will find light in Christ, where so many others

have found it. I would encourage that hope till it becomes a firm conviction and a full expectation. The day will break for you, dear mourner, the shadows will yet flee away. While I say that, I feel able to speak with great confidence, for my eye, as it looks round on this congregation, detects many brethren and sisters with whom I have conversed in the cloudy and dark day. We have prayed together, dear friends,—have we not? I have repeated in your hearing those precious promises which are the pillows of our hope; yet, at the time, it seemed as if you would never be cheered or comforted. Friends who lived with you grieved much to see you so sad; they could not understand how such as you who have lived so scrupulously as you believed to be right, should, nevertheless, come into sadness and despondency. Well, you have come out of that state, have you not? I can almost catch the bright expression in your eye as you flash back the response, "It is so, sir; we can sing among the loudest now, we can leap as a hart, and the tongue that once was dumb can now sing praises unto the Lord who delivered us." The reason of this great change is that you did still cling to Christ even when it seemed to be no use to cling. You had a venturesome faith; when it seemed a risky thing even to believe, you did believe, and you kept on believing, and now the day has dawned for you, and the shadows have fled away. Well, so shall it be to all who are in like case if they will but trust in the Lord, and stay themselves upon our God. Though they walk in darkness, and see no light, yet by-and-by the day shall break for them also.

This expression is equally applicable when we come into some personal sorrow not exactly of a spiritual kind. I know that God's children are not long without tribulation. As long as the wheat is on the threshing-floor, it must expect to feel the flail. Perhaps you have had a bereavement, or you may have had losses in business, or crosses in your family, or you have been sorely afflicted in your own body, and now you are crying to God for deliverance out of your temporal trouble. That deliverance will surely come. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." "I have been young," said David, "and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken." The Lord will yet light your candle, and surround your path with brightness. Only patiently hope and quietly wait, and you shall yet see the salvation of the Lord.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Hark that; you know that part of the verse is true, and so is the rest of it: "but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Clutch at that, for it is equally true. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." You know that is true. "Be of good cheer," says Christ, "I have overcome the world." Therefore, expect that you also will overcome it through your conquering Lord. Yes, in the darkest of all human sorrows, there is the glad prospect that the day will break, and the shadows will flee away.

This is the case again, I believe, on a grander scale with reference to the depression of religion at the present time. Some of us are obliged to go sorrowing when we look upon the state of the church and the world. We are not accustomed to take gloomy views of things, but we cannot help grieving over what we see. More and more it forces itself upon us that the old-fashioned gospel is being either neglected or trampled in the dust. The old spirit, the old fire that once burned in the midst of the saints of God, is there still, but it burns very low at present. We want—I cannot say how much we want a revival of pure and undefiled religion in this our day. Will it come? Why should it not come? If we long for it, if we pray for it, if we believe for it, if we work for it, and prepare for it, it will certainly come. The day will break, and the shadows will flee away. The mockers think that they have buried our Lord Jesus Christ. So, perhaps, they have; but he will have a resurrection. The cry is, "Who will roll us away the stone?" The stone shall be rolled away, and he, even the Christ in whom our fathers trusted, the Christ of Luther and of Calvin, of Whitefield and of Wesley, that same Christ shall be among us yet in the fullness and the glory of his power by the working of the Holy Ghost upon the hearts of myriads of men. Let us never despair; but, on the contrary, let us brush the tears from our eyes, and begin to look for the light of the morning, for "the morning cometh," and the day will break, and the shadows will flee away.

Let me encourage any friends who have been laboring for Christ in any district which has seemed strikingly barren, where the stones of the field have seemed to break the ploughshare. Still believe on, beloved; that soil which appears most unfruitful will perhaps repay us after a while with a hundred-fold harvest. The prospect may be dark; perhaps, dear friends, it

is to be darker yet with us. We may have worked, and seemed to work in vain; possibly the vanity of all our working is yet to appear still more; but for all that, "the morning cometh." "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." We must not be in the least afraid even in the densest darkness; but, on the contrary, look for the coming blessing.

I believe that this is to be the case also in this whole world. It is still the time of darkness, it is still the hour of shadows. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, and I cannot foretell what is yet to happen in the earth; it may be that the darkness will deepen still more, and that the shadows will multiply and increase; but the Lord will come. When he went up from Olivet, he sent two of his angels down to say, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He is surely coming; and though the date of his return is hidden from our sight, all the signs of the times look as if he might come very speedily. I was reading, the other day, what old Master William Bridge says on this subject:—"If our Lord is coming at midnight, he certainly will come very soon, for it cannot be darker than it now is." That was written two hundred years ago, but our Lord has not come yet, and I might say much the same as Master Bridge did. Do not doubt as to Christ's coming because it is delayed. A person lies dying, and the report concerning him is, "Well, it does not look as if he could live many hours." You call again, and they say, "Well, he still survives, but it seems as if he would scarcely get through the night." Do you go away and say, "Oh, he will not die; for I have expected, for several days, to hear that he has passed away"? Oh, no! but each time you hear the report, you feel, "Well, it is so much nearer the end." And so is our Master's coming; it is getting nearer every hour, so let us keep on expecting it. That glorious advent shall end our weary waiting days, it shall end our conflicts with infidelity and priestcraft, it shall put an end to all our futile endeavors; and when the great Shepherd shall appear in his glory, then shall every faithful under-shepherd and all his flock appear with him, and then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away.

As to the shadows fleeing; what are those shadows that are to fly at his approach? The types and shadows of the ceremonial law were all finished

when Christ appeared the first time; but many shadows still remain,—the shadows of our doubts, the grim mysterious shadows of our fears, the shadows of sin, so black, so dense,—the shadows of abounding unbelief, ten thousand shadows. When he cometh, these shall all flee away; and with them shall go heaven and earth,—the heaven and earth that now are, for what are these but shadows? All things that are unsubstantial shall pass away when he appeareth; when the day breaks, then shall everything but that which is eternal and invisible pass away. We are glad that it shall be so; and we pray that soon the day may break, and the shadows flee away. This, then, is our prospect.

II. Now I want to occupy a few minutes of your time in considering OUR POSTURE "until the day break, and the shadows flee away." We are here, like soldiers on guard, waiting for the dawn. It is night, and the night is deepening; how shall we occupy ourselves until the day break, and the shadows flee away?

Well, first, we will wait in the darkness with patient endurance as long as God appoints it. Whatever of shadow is yet to come, whatever of cold damp air and dews of the night is yet to fall upon us, we will bear it. Soldiers of the cross, you must not wish to avoid these shadows; he who has called you to this service knew that it would be night time, and he called you to night duty; and being put upon the night watch, keep at your post. It is not for any of us to say, "We will desert because it is so dark." Has not the thought sometimes grossed your mind, "I am not succeeding; I will run away"? Have you not often felt, like Jonah, that you would go to Tarshish that you might escape from delivering your Master's message? Oh, do not so! The day will break, and the shadows flee away; and until then, watch through the night, and fear not the shadows. Play the man, remembering through what a sevenfold night your Master passed, when, in Gethsemane, he endured even to a bloody sweat for you. When, on the cross, even his mid-day was midnight, what must have been the darkness over his spirit? He bore it; then bear you it. Let no thought of fear pass over your mind; or, if it does, let not your heart be troubled, but rise above your fear until the day break, and the shadows flee away. Be of good courage, soldiers of Christ, and still wait on in patient endurance.

What next are we to do until the day break? Why, let there be hopeful watching. Keep your eyes towards the East, and look for the first grey sign of the coming morning. "Watch!" Oh, how little is done of this kind of work! We scarcely watch as we ought against the devil; but how little do we watch for the coming of our Master! Look for every sign of his appearing, and be ever listening for the sound of his chariot wheels. Keep the candle burning in the window, to let him see that you are awake; keep the door on the latch, that when he cometh you may quickly open unto him. Hopefully watch until the day break, and the shadows flee away.

Then, further, dear friends, while we maintain patient endurance and hopeful watching, let us give each other mutual encouragement. Men who have been shipwrecked will give each other a hand, and say, "Brother, mayhap we shall escape after all." Now that it is midnight all around, let every Christian give his fellow-soldier a grip of his hand. Courage, brothers; the Lord has not forgotten us. We are in the dark, and cannot see him; but he can see us, and he knows all about us, and maybe he will come, walking on the stormy waters in the middle watch of the night when our little bark seems ready to be sunk beneath the waves by the boisterous wind. I seem just now as though I were a soldier in this great guard-room, and as if we were sitting in these shadows, and perhaps in the darkness, and seemed very much dispirited; and I would say to you my comrades, "Come, brothers, let us cheer up. The Lord hath appeared to one and another of us. He hath given to some of us the light of his countenance, and he is coming back to welcome us all unto himself. Let us not be dismayed; our glorious Leader forgets not the weakest and feeblest of us, neither is any part of the battle-field beyond the reach of the great Captain's eye. He sees which way the struggle is going, and he has innumerable reserves, which he will bring up at the right time. I seem to hear the music of his horse's hoofs even now. He is coming who shall turn the scale in the worst moment of the conflict, for the battle is the Lord's, and he will deliver the enemy into our hand. Let no man's heart fail him because of yonder Goliath; the God who has raised up men to slay the lion and the bear, will yet find a David and a smooth stone to kill this mighty giant. Wherefore, brothers, be of good courage."

What further should we do in the dark? Well, one of the best things to do

in the dark is to stand still and keep our place. "Until the day break and the shadows flee away," let us keep our place, and firmly maintain our position. A brother who sat at the back of me, twenty years ago, dropped in again recently to hear me preach; and he said to me, after the service, that he had been back in America, and come over here again after twenty years, and he added, "It is the same old story, Spurgeon, as when I was here before; you are sticking to the same old gospel" I replied, "Yes, and if you will come in twenty years' time, if God spares me, I shall still be sticking to the same old gospel, for I have nailed my colors to the mast, and I do not mean to have anything to do with this new-fangled progressive theology." To me, the gospel came to perfection long ago in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it can never go beyond that perfection. We preach nothing but that gospel which has saved our own souls, and saved the souls of the myriads who have gone to their eternal rest, and we do not intend preaching anything else until somebody can find us something better, and that will not be to-morrow, nor the day after, nor as long as the world stands. It is dark, very dark, so we just stop where we are, in steadfast confidence in the Lord who has placed us where we are. We are not going to plunge on in a reckless manner, we mean to look before we leap; and as it is too dark to look, we will not leap, but will just abide here hard by the cross, battling with every adversary of the truth as long as we have a right hand to move in the name of the Almighty God, "until the day break, and the shadows flee away."

What else ought we to do? Keep up a careful separateness from the works of darkness that are going on all around us. If it seems dark to you, gather up your skirts, and gird up your loins. The more sin abounds in the world, the more ought the Church of God to seek after the strictest holiness. If ever there was an age that wanted back again the sternest form of Puritanism, it is this age. If ever there was a time when we needed the old original stamp of Methodists, we need them now,—a people separated unto God, a people that have nothing to do but to please God and to save souls, a people that will not in any way bow themselves to the fashions of the time. For my part, I would like to see a George Fox come back among us, ay, Quaker as he was, to bear such a testimony as he did bear in the power of the Spirit of God against the evils of his time. God make us to feel that now, in the dark, we cannot be even as lenient as we might have

been in brighter days towards the sin that surrounds us! Are any of you tempted into "society" so-called, and into the ways of that society? Every now and then, those who read the papers get some little idea of what is going on in "society." The stench that comes from "society" tells us what it must be like, and makes us wish to keep clear of it. The awful revelations that were once before made, which caused us to be sick with shame and sorrow, might be made again; for there is just the same foulness and filthiness beneath the surface of the supposed greater decency. O Christian people, if you could but know, as the most of you ought not to know, how bad this world is, you would not begin to talk about its wonderful improvements, or to question the doctrine of human depravity. We are going on, according to some teachers, by "evolution" into something; if I might prognosticate what it is, I should say that it is into devils that many men are being evolved. They are going down, down, down, save where eternal grace is begetting in the heart of men a higher and better and nobler nature, which must bear its protest against the ignorance or hypocrisy which this day talks about the improvements of our civilization, and the progress that we are making towards God. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away," keep yourselves to your Lord, and hear you this voice sounding through the darkness, the voice of a wisdom that sees more than you see, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, said the Lord Almighty." "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away," lift your hands to heaven, and pledge yourselves to walk a separated pilgrim life, until he cometh before whose face heaven and earth shall flee away.

III. Now I close by noticing OUR PETITION: "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

I am not going to preach upon that part of our text, but only just to urge you to turn it into prayer. We have to wait, brothers and sisters; we have to wait in the darkness, cheered here and there with the light from a golden lamp that glows with the light of God. The world lieth in darkness, but we are of God, little children, therefore this must be our prayer to our

Well-beloved, "Come unto us." "Turn to me, O my Beloved, for thou hast turned away from me, or from thy Church. Turn again, I beseech thee. Pardon my lukewarmness, forgive my indifference. Turn to me again, my Beloved. O thou Husband of my soul, if I have grieved thee, and thou hast hidden thy face from me, turn again unto me! Smile thou, for then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away. Come to me, my Lord, visit me once again." Put up that prayer, beloved.

The prayer of the spouse is in this poetic form: "Come over the mountains of division." As we look out into the darkness, what little light there is appears to reveal to us Alp upon Alp, mountain upon mountain, and our Beloved seems divided from us by all these hills. Now our prayer is, that he would come over the top of them; we cannot go over the top of them to him, but he can come over the top; of them to us, if he think fit to do so. Like the hinds' feet, this blessed Hind of the morning can come skipping over the hills with utmost speed to visit and to deliver us. Make this your prayer, Great Master, sweetly-beloved One, come over the mountains of division, and come quickly, like a roe or a young hart. Come easily, come unexpectedly; as roes and harts let no man know when they will come, so come thou unto me." I wish that, even while we are sitting here, our Divine Lord would come to our spirits with all his ravishing charms, so that we might cry, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." Have you never felt an influence steal over you which has lifted you out of yourself, and made you go as on burning wheels with axles hot with speed, where before you had been sluggish and dull? Our Well-beloved can come and visit us, all on a sudden, without any trouble to himself. It cost him his life's blood to come to earth to save us; it will cost him nothing to come just now to bless us. Remember what he has already done; for, having done so much, he will not deny you the lesser blessing of coming to you. Are you saved by his grace? Then do not think that he will refuse you fellowship with himself. Pray for it now. Before we come to the communion table, pray for it, and while you are sitting there, let this be your cry, "Come to me, my Beloved, over the hills of division; come as a roe or a young hart;" and he will come to you. Put up your prayer in the sweet words we sang just now,—

"When wilt thou come unto me, Lord?"

O come, my Lord most dear!
Come near, come nearer, nearer still,
I'm blest when thou art near.

"When wilt thou come unto me, Lord?
Until thou dost appear,
I count each moment for a day,
Each minute for a year."

Oh, that this might be one of those happy seasons when you shall not be fed by the preacher's talk, but by the Master revealing himself to you! May God graciously grant it!

I may be addressing some who long to find the Savior. This morning, I got, from a friend who came in to see me, an illustration which I will give to you. He told me—and oh, how he made my heart rejoice!—that, six years ago, he was, so the apostle says, "going about to establish his own righteousness." He is a man of reputation, and when a friend sent him some of my sermons to read, he thought to himself, "What do I want these sermons for? I am as good so any man can be." But he did read them, and the friend asked him, "Have you read those sermons of Mr. Spurgeon's that I sent you?" "Yes," he replied, "I have; but I have got no good out of them." "Why not?" "Why," he said, "he has spoiled me; he has dashed my hopes to the ground, he has taken away my comfort and my joy; I thought myself as good as anybody living, and he has made me feel as if I were rotten right through." "Oh!" said his friend, "that medicine is working well, you must take some more of it." But the more of the sermons he read, the more unhappy he became, the more he saw the hollowness of all his former hopes; and he came into a great darkness, and the day did not break, and the shadows did not flee away. But, on a sudden, he was brought out into the light. As he told me the story, this morning, his eyes were wet, and so were mine. This is how the Lord led him into peace; I wish the telling of it might bring the same blessing to some of you. He said, "I went with my friend to fish for salmon in Loch Awe. I threw a fly, and as I threw it, a fish leaped up, and took it in a moment." "There," said the friend to him, "that is what you have to do with Christ, what that fish did with your fly. I am sure I do not know

whether the fly took the fish, or the fish took the fly; it was both, the bait took the fish, and the fish took the bait. Do just so with Christ, and do not ask any questions. Leap up at him, take him in, lay hold of him." The man did so, and at once he was saved; I wish that somebody else would do the same. I never ask you to answer the question whether it is Christ who takes you or you who take Christ, for both things will happen at the same moment. Will you have him? Will you have him? If you will have him, he has you. If you are willing to have Christ, Christ has already made you willing in the day of his power. Throw yourself upon Christ, as the salmon opened his mouth, and took in the bait; so do you take Christ into your very soul. Writing to the Romans, Paul says, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth." What is the thing to do with that which is in your mouth when you want to keep it? Why, swallow it, of course! Do so with Christ, let him go right down into your soul I put him into your mouth, as it were, while I am preaching. Accept him, receive him, and he is yours directly. Then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away, and your Beloved shall have come to you over the mountains of division, never to leave you again, but to abide with you for ever. God bless you! Amen.

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David's Dying Prayer

Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. - Psalm 72:10

There was a time when this prayer would have been unnecessary; a period, in fact, when it could not have been offered, seeing the thing to be asked for was already in being. A time there was when the word rebellion had not been uttered against the great magistracy of heaven; a day there was, when the slime of sin had never been left by the trail of the serpent, for no serpent then existed, and no evil spirit. There was a hour, never to be forgotten, when the seraph might have flapped his wing for aye, and never have found aught of discord, or aught of rebellion or of anarchy throughout God's universe, when the mighty angels assembled in the

halls of the Most High, and without exception did reverence to their liege Lord, and paid him homage due; when the vast creation revolved around its center, the great metropolis, the throne of God, and paid its daily and hourly homage unto him, when the harmonies of creation always came to one spot and found their focus near the throne of God. There was a time when every star was bright; when all space was filled with loveliness, when holiness, purity, and happiness, were like a robe which mantled the entire creation. This world itself was once fair and lovely—so fair and lovely that we who live in these erring times can scarcely guess its beauty. It was the house of song, and the dwelling-place of praise. If it had no pre-eminence among its sister spheres, certainly it was inferior to none of them, surrounded with beauty, girt with gladness, and having in it holy and heavenly inhabitants. It was a house to which the angels themselves loved to resort, where the holy spirits, the morning stars, delighted to sing together over this beautiful and fair earth of ours. But now how changed! how different! Now it is our duty devoutly to bend our knees and pray that the whole earth may yet be filled with his glory.

In one sense this prayer is still unnecessary, for in a certain sense the whole earth is filled with God's glory. "All thy works praise thee, O God," is as true now as it was in paradise. The stars still sing their Maker's praise; no sin hath stopped their voice, no discord hath made a jarring note among the harmonies of the spheres. The earth itself still praiseth its Maker, the exhalations, as they arise with morn, are still a pure offering, acceptable to their Maker. The lowing of the cattle, the singing of the birds, the leaping of the fishes, and the delights of animal creation, are still acceptable as votive offerings to the Most High. The mountains still bring righteousness; on their hoary summits God's holy feet might tread, for they are yet pure and spotless. Still do the green valleys, laughing with their verdure send up their shouts to the Most High. The praise of God is sung by every wind it is howled forth in dread majesty by the voice of the tempest, the winds resound it, and the waves, with their thousand hands, clap, keeping chorus in the great march of God. The whole earth is still a great orchestra for God's praise, and his creatures still take up various parts in the eternal song, which, ever swelling and ever increasing, shall by-and-by mount to its climax in the consummation of all things. In that sense, therefore, the prayer is still inappropriate. God, who filleth all in

all, and filleth earth and heaven, needeth not to have more glory, as to the essence of his glory; for still he is glorified in the whole earth.

But David intended this prayer in another sense. "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen;" not as Creator, but as a moral Governor, and a Ruler. It is as Governor that we have revolted from God and done dishonor to him; it is as our Master, our Ruler, our Judge, that we have done despite to his glory, and have trampled on his crown. It is, therefore, in this respect that David wished that the whole earth might be filled with God's glory. He desired that every idol temple might be cast down—that the name of Jehovah might be sung by every lip, that he in his person might be loved by every heart, and be for ever adored as "God over all blessed for ever." A foolish wish, say you, for it never can be accomplished. Surely the day will never come when hoary systems of superstition shall die. What! shall colossal systems of infidelity and of idolatry totter to their fall? They have resisted the battering-ram for many a year; and yet shall they pass away, and shall God's kingdom come, and his will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven? Nay, it is no day dream of a boy, it is no wish of the enthusiast. Mark who uttered that prayer, and where he was when he uttered it. It was the prayer of a dying king; it was the prayer of a holy man of God, whose eyes were just then lighted up with brightness in view of the celestial city, as he stood on the mighty Pisgah, "and viewed the landscape o'er"—the prayer of the dying psalmist, when on the margin of his life he surveyed the ocean—the prayer of a mighty king, when he saw the scroll of prophecy unfolded before him for the last time and was about to be ushered into the presence of his Maker. He uttered this as his last best wish and desire; and when he had uttered it he sank back in his bed, and said, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." It was his last prayer: "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."

First, this morning, I shall try to explain the prayer, then I shall labor as God shall enable me, to inflame the hearts of all Christian men to desire the object of this prayer; then offer a word or two of counsel as to the pursuit of the object here spoken of; and conclude by noticing the promise to buoy our hopes up. By-and-by "the earth shall be filled with his glory."

I. First, then, let me EXPLAIN THE PRAYER. It is a large prayer—a massive one. A prayer for a city needs a stretch of faith, ay, there are times when a prayer for one man is enough to stagger our belief; for we can scarcely think that God will hear us for even that one. But how great this prayer is, how comprehensive! "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and Amen." It doth not exempt one single country, however trodden under the foot of superstition; it doth not leave out one single nation, however abandoned. For the cannibal as well as for the civilised, for the man that grasps the tomahawk as well as for the man who bends his knee in supplication, this prayer is uttered, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen."

Let me just very briefly note what I believe the psalmist meant. He desired that the true religion of God might be sent into every country. Looking from that point of view, as we utter this prayer, what a multitude of thoughts rush into our minds! Lo, yonder we see the hoary systems of ancient superstition; we behold multitudes bowing down before Budha and Brahma, and paying their adorations to idols that are no gods: we pray for them, that they may cease to be idolaters, and that God's name may be known amongst them. Yonder we see the crescent, gleaming with a pale and sickly light, and we pray that the followers of Mahomed may bow themselves before the cross, renounce the scimitar, and return to him that loved them, casting away all the uncleanness and filthiness of their former religion. We see yonder the scarlet woman on the seven hills, and we include her in our prayer; we pray that God may cast down Rome; that he may overturn her deep, hell-rooted foundations, and may cause her tyranny over the nations to cease, that she may no more be drunk with the blood of the slain, and no more with her idolatries and witchcrafts lead the nations astray. We include her in our supplications. We look on nations that are almost too debased to be included in the roll of mankind; we see the Hottentot in his kraal, the Bushman and the Bechuana, and we put up our prayer for these: "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen." Let Africa's center, once thought to be barren but now discovered to be glorious in fertility, become fertile also in works of grace; let the regions whence our black brethren have been driven to slavery become the homes of blessedness, and the regions

of God's praise. We cast our eye to other regions, where the scalp is still at the Indian's girdle, where still they wash their hands in blood and delight themselves in murder, or we look to that huge empire of China, and we see the myriads still lost in infidelity and a partial idolatry, which is consuming them and destroying them, and we pray, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." Yes, it is a great prayer, but we mean it. We are praying against Juggernaut, and against Budha, and against every form and fashion of false religion. We are crying against anti-Christ, and we are praying that the day may come when every temple shall be dismantled, when every shrine shall be left poor as poverty, and when there shall be no temple but the temple of the Lord God of Hosts, and when no song shall be sung but the song of Hallelujah; unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

But we mean more than this. We ask not merely the nominal Christianity of any country, but the conversion of every family in every country. "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen." Is that wish too great, too high? Are we too sanguine in our expectations? No; "The knowledge of the Lord" is to "cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea," and that is entirely. We do not wish to see dry places here and there, but as the deep foundations of the depths are covered with the sea, so we wish that every nation may be covered with God's truth. And so we pray that every family may receive it; yes, we pray that every household may have its morning and its evening prayer; we pray that every family may be brought up in the fear of the Lord, that every child may, on its mother's knee, say, "Our Father," and that the answer may come to the infant's prayer, "Thy kingdom come." Yes, we ask of God that every house may be like the tents of Judah, consecrated to God; we ask that even the kraal of the Hottentot may become a synagogue for God's praise. Our desire is, that man may become so holy, that every meal may become a eucharist, and every cup a chalice, and every garment a priestly vestment, and that all their labors may be consecrated to the Lord. We are bound to expect it, for it is said, "Even the bells upon the horses shall be holiness to the Lord, and even the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar."

But, we go further than that. We do not ask merely for household

conversion, but for the individual salvation of every being existing. "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." Should there be one heart that doth not beat in God's praise, or one lip that is dumb in the melody of thanksgiving, then there would be yet a spot left which would not be filled with God's praise, and that one left unconverted would blot and blur the whole great work of filling the earth with God's glory. A missionary once said, and said truly, that if all the people in the world were converted except one man in Siberia, it would be worth while for all the Christians in England to make a pilgrimage to Siberia, if that man's salvation could not be accomplished in any other way. And so it would. The salvation of one soul is unutterably precious, and when we offer this prayer we exclude none. We pray that the atheist, the blasphemer, the hardened rebel, the prodigate, may each be filled with God's glory; and then we ask for mercy for the whole earth; we leave not out so much as one, but so hope and expect the day when all mankind shall bow at the Saviour's feet, when every hand shall bring tribute, every lip a song, and every eye shall speak its gladness and its praise. This I believe to be the psalmist's prayer—that every man might be converted, and that in fact everywhere, in every heart and conscience, God might reign without a rival, Lord paramount over the great wide world.

II. Well, now, I am going, in the second place, to try to STIR YOU UP, my brethren, to desire this great, this wonderful thing for which David prayed. Oh! for the rough and burning eloquence of the hermit of old, who stirred the nations of Europe to battle for the cross! I would to God this morning I could speak as he did when the multitude were gathered together, or, like that bishop of the church, who followed him, who addressed the mighty multitudes with such burning words of fiery eloquence, that at last they heaved to and fro with waves of excitement, and every man, starting to his feet and grasping his sword cried, "Deus vult," "The Lord wills it," and rushed forward to battle and to victory. In a higher and holier sense I preach the crusade to-day, not as a hermit, but as God's preacher, I come forth to stir you up, men and brethren, to desire and seek after this great and highest wish of the faithful, that the whole earth might be filled with his glory. And how shall I stir you up except by leading you to one or two contemplations?

First, I beseech you, contemplate the majesty of God; or rather, since I am unable to help you to do that just now, let me remind you of seasons when you have in some measure grasped the thought of his divinity. Have you never at night gazed upon the starry orbs, with the thought that God was the Maker of them all until your soul was steeped in reverent adoration, and you bowed your head with wonder and with praise, and said, "Great God! how infinite art thou?" Have you never, in looking upon God's pure earth, when you have seen the mountains, and the clouds, and the rivers, and the floods, said -

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair: Thyself how wondrous then?"

Oh! methinks you must have had some glowing bursts of devotion, somewhat like that burst of Coleridge in his hymn from the valley of Chamounix or, like that of Thompson, when he leads the Seasons out to sing God's praise, or, like that matchless burst of Milton, when he extolled God, making Adam in the garden praise his Maker. Yes, there have been moments when we could bow before God, when we felt our own nothingness, and knew that he was all-in-all. Ah! if you can get such thoughts as these, my friends, this morning, I know that the next thought akin to this will be—"Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." You cannot bow before God yourself and adore him, without wishing that all the rest of mankind should do the same. Ah! and the thought has gone further; ye have wished that even inanimate objects might praise him. Oh! ye mountains, let the shaggy woods upon your crowns wave in adoration ye that with bald heads lift up yourselves loftier than those minor hills, let the clouds that gird you serve like wings of cherubim to veil your faces. But oh! adore him, adore him, for he is worthy of all adoration; let him ever be extolled. You cannot, I repeat, have great thoughts of God yourselves, without spontaneously rising up and saying, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

But, my brethren, turn your eyes yonder. What see you there? You see the Son of God stepping from the place of his glory, casting aside the

garments of his majesty, and robing himself in garments of clay. Do you see him yonder? He is nailed to a cross. Oh! can ye behold him, as his head hangs meekly on his breast? Can ye catch the accents of his lips, when he says, "Father, forgive them?" Do you see him with the thorn-crown still about his brow, with bleeding head, and hands, and feet? And doth not your soul burst with adoration, when ye see him giving himself for your sins? What! can ye look upon this miracle of miracles, the death of the Son of God, without feeling reverence stirred within your bosom—a marvellous adoration that language never can express? No, I am sure you cannot. You bow yourself before that cross, you close your eyes that are already filled with tears, and as you bend your head upon the mount of Calvary I hear you say, "Jesus, have mercy upon me." And when you feel the blood applied to your conscience, and know that he has blotted out your sins, you are not a man unless you start from your knees and cry, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and Amen." What! did he bend his awful head down to the shades of death? What! did he hang upon a cross and bleed, and shall not earth praise him? O ye dumb, sure this might loose your tongues. O ye silent ones, ye might begin to speak; and if ye do not, sure the very stones will speak, and the rocks that rent once at his death will rend again, and open a wide mouth to let their hallelujahs ascend to heaven. Ah! the cross makes us praise him. Lovers of Jesus, can you love him without desiring that his kingdom may come? What! can ye bow before him, and yet not wish to see your Monarch master of the world? Out on ye, men, if ye can pretend to love your Master, and yet not desire to see him the conqueror. I give you not a doit for your piety, unless it leads you to wish that the same mercy which has been extended to you might reach to others, and unless it prompts you to pray this prayer, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and Amen."

But gaze a moment longer. The man that died for sinners sleeps within a grave; a little while he sleeps, until the angel rolls away the stone and gives him liberty. Do you behold him, as he wakes up from his slumber, and radiant with majesty, and glorious with light, affrights his guard, and stands a risen man? Do you see him, as he climbs to heaven, as he ascends to the paradise of God, sitting at the right hand of his Father till his enemies are made his footstool? Do you see him, as principalities and

powers bow before him, as cherubim and seraphim cast their crowns at his feet? Do you hear him? Do you hear him intercede, and do you hear also the music of the glorified spirits, ever chanting perpetual lays before his throne? And do you not wish that we might

"Prepare new honors for his name,
And songs before unknown?"

Oh! it is impossible to see the glorified Christ with the eye of faith, without exclaiming afterwards, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.

But now one other thought. Common humanity urges us to pray this prayer. Did you never walk through a village full of drunkenness and profanity? Did you never see at every ale-house poor wretched bloated carcasses that once were men standing, or rather leaning against the posts staggering with drunkenness! Have you never looked into the houses of the people, and beheld them as dens of iniquity, at which your soul did turn aghast? Have you never walked through that village and seen the poverty, and degradation, and misery of the inhabitants, and sighed over it? Yes, you have. But was it ever your privilege to walk through that village in after years, when the gospel has been preached there? It has been mine. Once it was my delight to labor in a village where sin and iniquity had once been rampant, and I can say with joy and happiness, that almost from one end of the village to the other, at the hour of eventide, you would have heard the voice of song coming from every roof-tree, echoing from every heart. Oh! what a pleasant thing to walk through the village, when drunkenness hath almost ceased, when debauchery is dead, and when men and women go forth to labor with joyful hearts, singing as they go the praises of the ever-living God, and when at sunset the humble cottager calls his children together, and reads them some portion from the book of truth, and then together they bend their knees—oh! happy, happy households! Yes, we have seen some such places, and when our hearts have been gladdened by the sight, we have said, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen." It has been our delight sometimes to tabernacle amongst the lowly for a little season. We have had our seat given us in the chimney corner for awhile, and by-and-

by as the time to retire drew nigh, the good man of the house has said to the prophet's servant, "Now, sir, will you read for us to-night, as you are here?" And we have noticed the faces of the little group around us, as we have read some portion like this—"Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." And then we have said, "No, we will not pray to-night, you must be priest in your own house, and pray yourself." And then the good man has prayed for his children, and when we have seen them rise up and kiss their parent for the night we have thought, "Well, if this is the kind of family that religion makes, let the whole earth be filled with his glory. For the blessedness and for the happiness of man, let God's kingdom come, and let his will be done." Contrast that, my brethren, with the murderous rites of the Hindoo; contrast it with the savagery and barbarism of heathen lands. If I could bring some barbarian to stand before you this morning, he might himself be a better preacher than I can be, as with his almost unintelligible utterances and clicks he would begin to tell you the few ideas he had, which ideas began and ended with himself, and with the miserable prey on which he lived. You would say, "What!-there such a miserable race as this?" Let us at once kneel down and utter this prayer, and then rise up and labor to fulfill it—"Let the whole earth be filled with his glory." I feel that I cannot stir you this morning as I wished. (If I were a Welshman I think I could move your hearts they have such a knack of waking persons up by what they say.) Oh! my soul longs for that day, it sigheth for that blessed period. Would God that all sighed and longed for it too, and were prepared to work and labor, watch and pray, until we should indeed sing with truth,

"Hallelujah! Christ the Lord
God Omnipotent shall reign;
Hallelujah! Christ in God,
God in Christ is all-in-all."

May such a day come, as it certainly will!

III. And now I am to give you A FEW COUNSELS IN THE PURSUIT OF THIS OBJECT.

First, you cannot pray this prayer unless you seek in your own life to

remove every impediment to the spread of Christ's kingdom. You cannot pray it, sir; you cannot say, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen,"—you who cursed God yesterday. How can the same lip that cursed God say, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." You cannot say it, sir,—you who break his commandments, and violate his laws, and run riot against his government. If you said it you would be a vile hypocrite. Is there anything in our character and conduct which has a tendency to prevent the spread of the gospel? Oh! we say it with pain, there are many members of the churches everywhere whose characters are such that if they remain what they are, Christ's gospel never can fill the whole earth, for it cannot fill their hearts. You know the men. They call themselves God's dear people, and they would be dear if they were given away; certainly nobody would buy them at the lowest price in the world. They say that they are his precious ones, and they must be very precious, or else he never would have any thoughts of mercy towards such a set as they are. And they will sometimes say, "Ah! we are the Lord's elect," and they live in sin. They say there are very few of their sort, and we reply, "What a mercy!" If there were we should need many of our public buildings to be turned at once into gaols, to lock up such people. No, we do not believe in the characters of men who make a profession of religion and yet do not live up to it. Do not tell us about such profession, just be quiet altogether. Do not call yourselves religious, and yet act as others do. I do prefer a man that is a right down blustering sinner when he is at it. Do not let him go into sin, and then mask and cover it all up. There is no use in it. The man is not honest. I do think there is some hope of a man who is a down-right, thorough-bred sinner, that goes at it and is not ashamed of it, but a rascally, canting hypocrite, that comes crawling into our church, and yet lives in sin all the while—such a man—God Almighty may save him, but it is very seldom that he does save such people. He lets them go on, and reap the fruit of their own ways; he lets them find out, after all, that hypocrisy is a sure road to hell, and never can lead to heaven. We must look well to ourselves, by God's Spirit, or else we must not pray this prayer: "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."

And there is my friend Mr. Save-all. I am sure he cannot pray this prayer, at least I think I hear him in his soul say, "O Lord, let the whole earth be

filled with thy glory." A contribution is requested to assist the cause in so doing. Oh! no not at all. Like the old negro woman we have all heard of, who sang, "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel," and put her eye up in such a devout frame, that her brother negro who was passing the plate that day could not get her to pay any attention to him, till he jogged her elbow, and said, "Yes, sissy, it is well enough to sing, 'Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel;' if you would give it wings then it might, but you are just singing this and doing nothing at all." Now, what is the good of a man singing, "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel," and praying this prayer, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory," if he has got six thousand a year coming in for doing nothing at all? It is no use for a man to put on a pair of lawn sleeves and say, "Oh, it is my devout desire that the whole earth may be filled with his glory," and then leave the world to stare at him and consider what good he is. It is no use for a man simply to have a curacy or something of that sort, buy his manuscripts cheap, come up and read off two sermons twenty minutes long, go home with a good conscience that he has done duty twice, and then say, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Why, my friends, there is no chance of it if that is the way it is to be done, not the slightest in the world; to cry, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory," and then stand still and do nothing at all; or merely do some nominal well-paid work, and feel it is all over. We want something in the ministry a little different before even ministers can pray this prayer in sincerity. I am not finding fault with any of my brethren, but I would recommend them to preach thirteen times a week, and then they can pray this prayer a little better. Three times a week would not do for me. It would hurt my constitution; preaching thirteen times a week is good healthy exercise. But you shut yourself up in your study, or what is ten times worse, you do nothing at all, but just take it easy all the week till the Sunday comes, and then borrow a sermon out of an old magazine, or buy one of the helps for ministers, or take down one of Charles Simeon's skeletons and preach it. My good man, you cannot pray in that fashion. The poorest Sabbath-school teacher has a better right to pray that prayer than you have. You go to a fire that is raging vehemently, and say, "Oh, let it be put out!" and stand with your hands in your pockets, while a little boy that is standing there and passing the bucket may pray that prayer sincerely, but you cannot. No, my brethren, you must be up and doing for your blaster, or else you cannot pray this prayer. You say, "I am doing my

duty;" but my friend, that is not much use, you must do a little more than that, doing your duty, as you think, is often doing but a very small part of your duty. What is a man's duty? "Why, as much as he is paid for, Sir." Oh, no, I think not; a man's duty is to do whatsoever his hand findeth to do, with all his might; and until he does that he cannot with any sincerity offer this prayer, "Let the whole world be filled with his glory "Amen, and Amen." Ah, there are some here that I could mention, who by their unparalleled philanthropy, by their unique and unrivalled love of their fellow-creatures, have done much to fill the earth with God's glory; for they have let the world see what Christian men and Christian women are able to do when God's love has touched their hearts. There are to be found some who by devoting themselves to the service of their Master, and spending and being spent for him, have done much to heighten the opinion of the world towards Christianity, and make them think better of the Christian church than they would have done if it had not been for these few rare, mighty heroes in the midst of us. "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." But it cannot be, speaking after the manner of men, unless we each of us labor and endeavor as God shall help us, to extend the kingdom of our Master.

And now, my friends, have I been urging you to an impossible toil Have I been telling Christian men to pray for that which never can be granted? Ah! no, blessed be God, we are taught to pray for nothing but that which God has been pleased to give. He has told us to pray that his kingdom may come, and his kingdom will come, and come most assuredly, too. Hark! hark! hark! I hear mustering for the battle; yonder in the dim distance I see the armies gathering; yes, I can dimly see their ensign, and behold the flag that waves before them! Who are these that come? Who are these? These are nobler and better men than we! These are warriors of Christ, as yet, perhaps, unborn. These are the mighty men, the rear-guard, these are the imperial guard of heaven, who have been fighting long. The enemy hath sometimes fled, but hitherto we have achieved but little, the phalanx of the foe standeth still fast and firm, and we have blunted our blades against the shields of the mighty. As yet the victory is not complete; the Master standeth on the hill with his reserve. Lo! I see them—they are coming, they are coming. Some of us shall live to see them—men those tongues are made of fire, whose hearts are full of flame, who

speak like angels and preach like cherubim! The men are coming, and happy shall the man be that marks the triumph; each tramp of theirs shall be the tramp of victory, each blast of theirs shall level walls of spiritual Jerichos, each blow of their horn shall clear an acre of valiant foemen, each stroke from their sword shall cleave a dragon, and every blow from their arm shall be mighty to overturn thrones and scepters and kings! They come, they come; and till they come what shall we do?—Why fight on and hold our posts. But lo! they come. Let us be cheered with the thought that victory is certain. The hour cometh when this mighty band of heroes shall sweep the earth with the banner of victory. And when in years to come, you and I shall look upon the plain of battle, we shall see there an idol broken, there a colossal system of wickedness dashed in pieces, there a false prophet slain, there a deluder cast away. Oh! glorious shall be that day when victory shall be complete; when the horse and the rider shall be overthrown; when the battle that is without blood and without smoke, without rolling of garments of warriors, shall be completed by the shout of victory through him that hath loved us.

Beloved, we will wait awhile. We will still continue on this side with our Master; for though we are fighters now, we shall be winners by-and-by. Yes, man, woman, ye who are unknown, unnoted, but are striving for your Master, by prayer, and praise, and labor, the day is coming when everyone of you shall have a crown of victory! The hour is coming when your heart shall beat high, for you shall share the conquest, those men who are coming, without whom we cannot be made perfect, shall not have all the honor. We who have borne the brunt of the fight shall have a share of the glory; the victors shall divide the spoil, and we shall divide the spoil with them. Thou, tried, afflicted, forgotten and unknown, thou shalt soon have the palm-branch in thy hand, and thou shalt ride in triumph through the streets of earth and heaven, when thy Master shall make show of principalities and powers openly, in the day of his victory! Only still continue, only wrestle on, and thou shalt be crowned.

But I have got one word to say, and then Amen. You know, in Roman warfare there were special rewards given for special works. There was the mural crown for the man that first scaled the rampart and stood upon the wall. I am looking on this great congregation with a thought in my mind

which agitates my spirit. Young men! young men! is there not one among you that can win a mural crown? Have I not one true Christian heart here that is set for work and labor? Have not I one man that will devote himself for God and for his truth? Henry Martyn! thou art dead; and is thy mantle buried with thee? Brainerd, thou sleepest with thy fathers; and is thy spirit dead too, and shall there never be another Brainerd? Knibb, thou hast ascended to thy God; and is there nowhere another Knibb? Williams, thy martyred blood still crieth from the ground; and is there nowhere another Williams? What! not among this dense mass of young and burning spirits? Is there not one that can say in his heart, "Here am I, send me?" "Lo, this hour, by God's grace being saved, I give myself up to him, to go wherever he shall please to send me, to testify his gospel in foreign lands?" What! are there no Pauls now? Have we none who will be apostles for the Lord of hosts? I think I see one who, putting his lips together, makes this silent resolve—"By God's grace I this day devote myself to him; through trouble and through trial I will be his, if he will help me; for missionary work or for aught else I give up my all to God, and if I may die as Williams did, and wear the blood-red crown of martyrdom, I will be proud; and if I may live to serve my Master, like a Brainerd, and die at last worn out here I am, do but have me, Master, give me the honor of leading the forlorn hope of leading the vanguard of Christianity; here I am, send me." O Lord, accept that young man! Lo, I consecrate him this day in thy name for that service, these outstretched hands this morning give a benediction to you, young hero of the cross! Your brother's heart beats with you; go, and go to victory; and if it must be mine to stay here to labor in a more easy and pleasant part of the vineyard, which I dare not leave, still I will envy you, that you have the honor of going to far distant lands, and I will pray for you, that your success may be great, and that through you the kingdoms of this world may be brought to Christ, and the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth. But we will all pray this prayer in our houses alone—"Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."

You that are enemies to God, beware, beware, beware! It will be a hard thing to be found on the side of the enemy in the great battle of right.

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David's Dying Song

Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. - 2 Samuel 23:5

These be the last words of David; so we read at the commencement of the chapter. Many have been the precious sentences which have fallen from his inspired lips; seraphic has been the music which has dropped from his fingers when they flew along the strings of his harp; but now that sweet voice is to be hushed in death, and now the son of Jesse is to sleep with his fathers. Surely it were well to press around his bed, to hear the dying monarch's last testimony; yea, we can conceive that angels themselves would for an instant check their rapid flight, that they might visit the chamber of the dying mighty one, and listen to his last death song. It is always blessed to hear the words of departing saints. How many choice thoughts have we gained in the bedchamber of the righteous, beloved? I remember one sweet idea, which I once won from a death-bed. A dying man desired to have one of the Psalms read to him, and the 17th being chosen, he stopped at the 6th verse, "Incline thine ear unto me and hear my speech," and faintly whispering, said, "Ah, Lord, I cannot speak, my voice fails me; incline thine ear, put it against my mouth, that thou mayest hear me." None but a weak and dying man, whose life was ebbing fast, could have conceived such a thought. It is well to hear saints' words when they are near heaven - when they stand upon the banks of Jordan. But here is a special case, for these be the last words of David. They are something more than human utterances; for we are told that the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, and his word was in his tongue. These were his closing accents. Ah! methinks, lisping these words he rose from earth to join the chorus of the skies. He commenced the sentence upon earth, and he finished it in heaven. He began, "Although my house be not so with God;" and as he winged his flight to heaven, he still sang, "yet hast thou made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure:

"and now before the throne he constantly hymns the same strain - "yet hast thou made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." I hope, my friends, there are many of us who can join in this verse this morning, and who hope to close our earthly pilgrimage with this upon our tongue.

We shall notice first, that the Psalmist had sorrow in his house - "Although my house be not so with God." Secondly, he had confidence in the covenant - "yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant." And thirdly, he had satisfaction in his heart, for he says - "this is all my salvation, and all my desire.

I. The Psalmist says he had sorrow in his house - "Although my house be not so with God." What man is there of all our race, who, if he had to write his history, would not need to use a great many "althoughs"? If you read the biography of any man, as recorded in the Sacred Word, you will always find a "but," or an "although," before you have finished. Naaman was a mighty man of valour, and a great man with his master, but he was a leper. There is always a "but" in every condition, a crook in every lot, some dark tint upon the marble pillar, some cloud in the summer sky, some discord in the music, some alloy in the gold. So David, though a man who had been raised from the sheepfold, a mighty warrior, a conqueror of giants, a king over a great nation, yet, had his "althoughs;" and the "although" which he had, was one in his own house. Those are the worst troubles which we have in our own household. We love not an evil beast abroad, but we hate the lion most when it prowls upon our own estates, or croucheth on the floor of our dwelling. The greatest trouble with the thorn is when it lieth in our bed, and we feel it in our pillow. Civil war is always the fiercest - those are foes indeed who are of our own household. I think, perhaps David intended, when he said "Although my house be not so with God," to speak partly of his affairs. If any man else had looked at David's affairs - the government of his country - he would have said, "David's government is the mirror of excellence." His house was so rightly ordered, that few of his subjects could murmur at him; but David recollected that a greater and keener eye than that of man rested on him; and he says, speaking of his empire and his house - for you know the word "house" in Scripture often means our business, our affairs, our

transactions, ("Set thine house in order, for thou must die, and not live,") - he says, although before man my house may be well swept, and garnished, yet it is not so with God as I can desire. Oh, beloved, there are some of us who can walk before our fellow-men conscious of innocence; we dare defy the gaze of our fellow-mortals; we can say, "Lord! thou knowest I am not wicked;" we are blameless before this perverse generation: we walk amongst them as lights in the world, and God has helped us, so that we are clean from the great transgression; we are not afraid of a criticism of our character, we are not fearful of being inspected by the eyes of all men, for we feel that through God's grace we have been kept from committing ourselves; he has kept us, and the evil one toucheth us not. But with all this conscious innocence - with all that dignity with which we stand before our fellows - when we go into God's sight, how changed we are! Ah, then, my friends, we say not, "Lord! thou knowest I am not wicked;" but rather, we fall prostrate, and cry, "Unclean, unclean, unclean;" and as the leper cools his heated brow with the water running in the cool sequestered brook, so do we have our body in Siloam's stream, and strive to wash ourselves clean in the water and blood from Christ's riven side. We feel that our house is "not so with God ;" though in the person of Jesus we are free from sin, and white as angels are: yet when we stand before God, in our own persons, we are obliged to confess, that honest as we may be, upright as we have been, just and holy before men, yet our house is "not so with God."

But I imagine that the principal meaning of these words of David refers to his family - his children. David had many trials in his children. It has often been the lot of good men to have great troubles from their sons and daughters. True, we know some households that are the very image of peace and happiness, where the father and mother bend the knee together in family prayer, and they look upon an offspring, numerous or not, as it may be, but most of them devoting their hearts to God. I know a household which stands like a green oasis in the desert of this world. There be sons who preach God's gospel, and daughters who are growing up to fear the Lord, and to love him. Such a household is indeed a pleasant halting-place for a weary soul in its pilgrimage through this wilderness of life. Oh! happy is that family whom God hath blessed. But there are other houses where you will find the children are the trials of

the parents. "Although my house be not so with God," may many an anxious father say; and ye pious mothers might lift your streaming eyes to heaven, and say, "Although my house be not so with God." That first-born son of yours, who was your pride, has now turned out your disgrace. Oh! how have the arrows of his ingratitude pierced into your soul, and how do you keenly feel at this present moment, that sooner would you have buried him in his infancy; sooner might he never have seen the light, and perished in the birth, than that he should live to have acted as he has done, to be the misery of your existence, and the sorrow of your life. O sons who are ungodly, unruly, gay, and profligate, surely ye do not know the tears of pious mothers, or ye would stop your sin. Methinks, young man, thou wouldst not willingly allow thy mother to shed tears, however dearly you may love sin. Will you not then stop at her entreaties? Can you trample upon your mother? Oh! though you are riding a steeple-chase to hell, cannot her weeping supplications induce you to stay your mad career? Will you grieve her who gave you life, and fondly cherished you at her breast? Surely you will long debate e'er you can resolve to bring her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Or has sin brutalized you? Are ye worse than stones? Have natural feelings become extinct? Is the evil one entirely your master? Has he dried up all the tender sympathies of your heart? Stay! young prodigal, and ponder!

But, Christian men! ye are not alone in this. If ye have family troubles, there are others who have borne the same. Remember Ephraim! Though God had promised that Ephraim should abound as a tribe with tens of thousands, yet it is recorded in 1 Chron. 7:20 - 22: "And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah and Bered his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah his son, and Tahath his son, and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him." Abraham himself had his Ishmael, and he cried to God on account thereof. Think of Eli, a man who served God as a high priest, and though he could rule the people, he could not rule his sons; and great was his grief thereat. Ah! some of you, my brethren in the gospel, may lift your hands to heaven, and ye may utter this morning these words with a deep and solemn emphasis - you may write "Although" in capitals, for it is

more than true with some of you - " Although my house be not so with God."

Before we leave this point: What must I say to any of those who are thus tried and distressing in estate and family? First, let me say to you, my brethren, it is necessary that you should have an "although" in your lot, because if you had not, you know what you would do; you would build a very downy nest on earth, and there you would lie down in sleep; so God puts a thorn in your nest in order that you may sing. It is said by the old writers, that the nightingale never sang so sweetly as when she sat among thorns, since say they, the thorns prick her breast, and remind her of her song. So it may be with you. Ye, like the larks, would sleep in your nest did not some trouble pass by and affright you; then you stretch your wings, and carolling the matin song, rise to greet the sun. Trials are sent to wean you from the world; bitters are put into your drink, that ye may learn to live upon the dew of heaven: the food of earth is mingled with gall, that ye may only seek for true bread in the manna which droppeth from the sky. Your soul without trouble would be as the sea if it were without tide or motion; it would become foul and obnoxious. As Coleridge describes the sea after a wondrous calm, so would the soul breed contagion and death.

But furthermore, recollect this, O thou who art tried in thy children - that prayer can remove thy troubles. There is not a pious father or mother here, who is suffering in the family, but may have that trial taken away yet. Faith is as omnipotent as God himself, for it moves the arm which leads the stars along. Have you prayed long for your children without a result? and have ye said, "I will cease to pray, for the more I wrestle, the worse they seem to grow, and the more am I tried?" Oh! say not so, thou weary watcher. Though the promise tarrieth, it will come. Still sow the seed; and when thou sowest it, drop a tear with each grain thou putteth into the earth. Oh, steep thy seeds in the tears of anxiety, and they cannot rot under the clods, if they have been baptized in so vivifying a mixture. And what though thou diest without seeing thy sons the heirs of light? They shall be converted even after thy death; and though thy bones shall be put in the grave, and thy son may stand and curse thy memory for an hour, he shall not forget it in the cooler moments of his recollection,

when he shall meditate alone. Then he shall think of thy prayers, thy tears, thy groans; he shall remember thine advice - it shall rise up, and if he live in sin, still thy words shall sound as one long voice from the realm of spirits, and either affright him in the midst of his revelry, or charm him heavenward, like angel's whispers, saying, "Follow on to glory, where thy parent is who once did pray for thee." So the Christian may say, "Although my house be not so with God now, it may be yet;" therefore will I still wait, for there be mighty instances of conversion. Think of John Newton. He even became a slaver, yet was brought back. Hope on; never despair; faint heart never winneth the souls of men, but firm faith winneth all things; therefore watch unto prayer. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." There is your trouble, a small cup filled from the same sea of tribulation as was the Psalmist's when he sung, "Although my house be not so with God."

II. But secondly: David had confidence in the covenant. Oh! how sweet it is to look from the dulness of earth to the brilliancy of heaven! How glorious it is to leap from the ever tempest-tossed bark of this world, and stand upon the terra firma of the covenant! So did David. Having done with his "Although," he then puts in a blessed "yet" Oh! it is a "yet," with jewels set: "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

Now let us notice these words as they come. First, David rejoiced in the covenant, because it is divine in its origin. "Yet hath HE made with me an everlasting covenant." O that great word HE. Who is that? It is not my odd-father or my odd mother who has made a covenant for me - none of that nonsense. It is not a covenant man has made for me, or with me; but yet hath HE made with me an everlasting covenant." It is divine in its origin, not human. The covenant on which the Christian rests, is not the covenant of his infant sprinkling: he has altogether broken that scores of times, for he has not "renounced the pomps and vanities of this wicked world," as he should have done, nor "all the lusts of the flesh." Nor has he really become regenerate through those holy drops of water which a cassocked priest cast on his face. The covenant on which he rests and stands secure, is that covenant which God has made with him. "Yet hath HE made." Stop, my soul. God, the everlasting Father, has positively

made a covenant with thee; yes, that God, who in the thickest darkness dwells and reigns for ever in his majesty alone; that God, who spake the world into existence by a word; who holds it, like an Atlas, upon his shoulders, who poises the destiny of all creation upon his finger; that God, stooping from his majesty, takes hold of thy hand and makes a covenant with thee. Oh! is it not a deed, the stupendous condescension of which might ravish our hearts for ever if we could really understand it? Oh! the depths! "HE hath made with me a covenant." A king has not made a covenant with me - that were somewhat: an emperor has not entered into a compact with me; but the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Shaddai, the Lord of all flesh, the Jehovah of ages, the everlasting Elohim. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant." O blessed thought! it is of divine origin.

But notice its particular application. "Yet hath he made with ME an everlasting covenant." Here lies the sweetness of it to me, as an individual.

"Oh how sweet to view the flowing
Of Christ's soul-redeeming blood,
With divine assurance knowing,
That he made my peace with God."

It is nought for me that he made peace for the world; I want to know whether he made peace for me: it is little that he hath made a covenant, I want to know whether he has made a covenant with ME. David could put his hand upon his heart and say, "Yet hath he made a covenant with ME." I fear I shall not be wrong in condemning the fashionable religion of the day, for it is a religion which belongs to the crowd; and not a personal one which is enjoyed by the individual. You will hear persons say, "Well, I believe the doctrine of justification; I think that men are justified through faith." Yes, but are you justified by faith? "I believe," says another, "that we are sanctified by the Spirit." Yes, all very well, but are you sanctified by the Spirit? Mark you, if ever you talk about personal piety very much, you will always be run down as extravagant. If you really say from your heart, "I know I am forgiven; I am certain that I am a pardoned sinner;" - and every Christian will at times be able to say it, and would always, were

it not for his unbelief - if you say, "I know in whom I have believed; I am confident that I have not a sin now recorded in the black roll; that I am free from sin as if I had never transgressed, through the pardoning blood of Jesus," men will say it is extravagant. Well, it is a delightful extravagance, it is the extravagance of God's Word; and I would to God more of us could indulge in that holy, blessed extravagance. For we may well be extravagant when we have an infinite sum to spend; we may well be lavish when we know we never can exhaust the treasure. Oh! how sweet it is to say, "Yet hath he made with ME an everlasting covenant. It is nought that you talk to me of my brother being saved. I am very glad that my friend should get to glory, and I shall rejoice to meet you all; but after all, the thing is, "Shall I be there?"

"Shall I amongst them stand,
To see his smiling face?"

Now, Christian, thou canst apply this personally. The covenant is made with thee. Man, open thine eyes; there is thy name in the covenant. What is it? It is some plain English name, perhaps. It never had an M.P. nor an M.A. after it, nor a "Sir," before it. Never mind, that name is in the covenant. If you could take down your Father's family Bible in heaven, you would find your name put in the register. O blessed thought! my name - positively mine! not another's. So, then, these eyes shall see him, and not another's for me. Rejoice, Christian; it is a personal covenant. "Yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant."

Furthermore, this covenant is not only divine in its origin, but it is everlasting in its duration. I have had some very pretty letters sent me from anonymous writers who have listened to me; and being great cowards (whom I always abhor) they cannot sign their names. They may know what fate they receive; the condign punishment I appoint to them. I cut them asunder, and thrust them into the fire. I hope the authors will not have a similar fate. Some of them, however, quarrel with me, because I preach the everlasting gospel. I dare not preach another, for I would not have another if it were offered to me. An everlasting gospel is the only one which I think worthy of an everlasting God. I am sure it is the only one which can give comfort to a soul that is to live throughout eternity. Now,

you know what an "everlasting covenant" signifies. It meant a covenant which had no beginning, and which shall never, never end. Some do not believe in the everlasting nature of God's love to his people. They think that God begins to love his people when they begin to love him. My Arminian friends, did you ever sing that verse in your meeting? - of course you have -

"O yes, I do love Jesus,
Because he first lov'd me."

That is a glorious Calvinistic hymn, though we know whose hymn book it is in. Well, then, if Jesus loved you before you loved him, why cannot you believe that he always did love you? Besides, how stupid it is to talk so, when you know God does not change. There is no such thing as time with him; there is no past with him. If you say, "he loves me now," you have in fact said, "he loved me yesterday, and he will love me for ever." There is nothing but now with God. There is no such thing as past or future; and to dispute about eternal election and so on, is all of no avail; because, if God did choose his people at all - and we all admit that he chooses them now - I do not care about whether you say he did so ten thousand, thousand years ago, because there is no such thing as the past with God; with him it is all now. He sees things, past and future, as present in his eye. Only tell me that he loves me now; that word "now," in God's dictionary, means everlasting. Tell me that God has now pardoned my sins; it means, that he always has, for his acts are eternal acts. Oh how sweet to know an everlasting covenant! I would not barter my gospel for fifty thousand other gospels. I love a certain salvation; and when I first heard it preached, that if I believed, God's grace would keep me all my life long, and would never let me fall into hell, but that I should preserve my character unblemished, and walk among my fellow-creatures pure and holy, then said I, "That is the gospel for me; an everlasting gospel." As for that sandy gospel, which bets you fall away and then come back again, it is the wickedest falsehood on earth. If I believed it, I would preach the gospel and be holy on the Sunday, and fall away on the Monday, and be a Christian again on the Tuesday; and I should say, "I have fallen from grace and have got up again." But now, as a true Calvinistic Christian, I desire to have in myself, and see in others, a life of constant consistency;

nor can I think it possible to fall away, and then return, after the many passages which assert the impossibility of such a thing. That is the greatest safeguard on earth - that I have something within me that never can be quenched; that I put on the regimentals of a service which I never must leave, which I cannot leave without having proved that I never was enlisted at all. Oh! that keeps me near my God. But once make me doubt that, and you will see me the vilest character living under the sun. Take from me the everlastingness of the gospel, and you have taken all. Dear old Watts Wilkinson once said to Joseph Irons, when he said, "I love you to preach the covenant everlasting nature of God's love," - " Ah!" said the old saint, "What is there else in the gospel if you do not preach it?" Brother, what is there else? If we do not preach an everlasting gospel, the gospel is not worth twopence. You may get anything uncertain anywhere else; it is in the Bible alone that we get everlasting things.

"I to the end shall endure
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
Are the glorified spirits in heaven."

But notice the next word, for it is a sweet one, and we must not let one portion go, " It is ordered in all things." "Order is heaven's first law," and God has not a disorderly covenant. It is an orderly one. When he planned it, before the world began, it was in all things ordered well. He so arranged it, that justice should be fully satisfied, and yet mercy should be linked hand-in-hand with it. He so planned it that vengeance should have its utmost jot and tittle, and yet mercy should save the sinner. Jesus Christ came to confirm it, and by his atonement, he ordered it in all things; he paid every drop of his blood; he did not leave one farthing of the ransom-money for his dear people, but he ordered it in all things. And the Holy Spirit, when he sweetly applies it, always applies it in order; he orders it in all things. He makes us sometimes understand this order, but if we do not, be sure of this, that the covenant is a well-ordered covenant. I have heard of a man who bought a piece of land, and when the covenant was being made, he thought he knew more about it than the lawyer; but you know it is said that when a man is his own lawyer he has a fool for his client. In this case the man had a fool for his client; and he drew up the

covenant so badly, that in a few years it was discovered to be good for nothing, and he lost his property. But our Father's covenant is drawn up according to the strictest rules of justice; and so is ordered in all things. If hell itself should search it - if it were passed round amongst a conclave of demons, they could not find a single fault with it. There are the technical terms of heaven's court; there is the great seal at the bottom, and there is the signature of Jesus, written in his own blood. So it is "ordered in all things."

That word things is not in the original, and we may read it persons, as well as things. It is ordered in all persons - all the persons whose names are in the covenant; it is ordered for them, and they shall come according to the promise: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." O my beloved Christian, stop at this promise a moment, for it is a sweet well of precious water to slake thy thirst and refresh thy weariness. It is "ordered in all things." What dost thou want more than this? Dost thou need constraining grace? It is "ordered in all things." Dost thou require more of the spirit of prayer? It is "ordered in all things." Dost thou desire more faith? It is "ordered in all things." Art thou afraid lest thou shouldst not hold out to the end? It is "ordered in all things." There is converting grace in it; pardoning grace in it; justifying grace, sanctifying grace, and persevering grace; for it is "ordered in all things, and sure." Nothing is left out; so that whene'er we come, we find all things there stored up in heavenly order. Galen, the celebrated physician, says of the human body, that its bones are so well put together, all the parts being so beautifully ordered, that we could not change one portion of it without spoiling its harmony and beauty; and if we should attempt to draw a model man, we could not, with all our ingenuity, fashion a being more wondrous in workmanship than man as he is. It is so with regard to the covenant. If we might alter it, we could not change it for the better; all its portions are beautifully agreed. I always feel when I am preaching the gospel covenant that I am secure. If I preach any other gospel, I am vulnerable, I am open to attack; but standing upon the firm ground of God's covenant, I feel I am in a tower of strength, and so long as I hold all the truths, I am not afraid that even the devils of hell can storm my castle. So secure is the man who believes the everlasting gospel; no logic can stand against it. Only let our

preachers give the everlasting gospel to the people, and they will drink it as the ox drinketh water. You will find they love God's truth. But so long as God's gospel is smothered, and the candle is put under a bushel, we cannot expect men's souls will be brought to love it. I pray God that the candle may burn the bushel up, and that the light may be manifest.

But now, to wind up our description of this covenant, it is sure. If I were a rich man, there would be but one thing I should want to make my riches all I desire, and that would be, to have them sure, for riches make to themselves wings, and fly away. Health is a great blessing, and we want but to write one word on it to make it the greatest blessing, that is the adjective "sure." We have relatives, and we love them; ah! if we could but write "sure" on them, what a blessed thing it would be. We cannot call anything "sure" on earth; the only place where we can write that word is on the covenant, which is "ordered in all things and sure." Now there is some poor brother come here this morning who has lost his covenant, as he thinks. Ah! brother, you once had peaceful hours and sweet enjoyment in the presence of God; but now you are in gloom and doubt; you have lost your roll. Well, let me tell you, though you have lost your roll, the covenant is not lost, for all that. You never had the covenant in your hands yet; you only had a copy of it, You thought you read your title clear, but you never read the title-deeds themselves; you only held a copy of the lease and you have lost it. The covenant itself; where is it? It is under the throne of God; it is in the archives of heaven, in the ark of the covenant; it is in Jesus's breast, it is on his hands, on his heart - it is there. Oh! if God were to put my salvation in my hands, I should be lost in ten minutes; but my salvation is not there - it is in Christ's hands. You have read of the celebrated dream of John Newton, which I will tell you to the best of my recollection. He thought he was out at sea, on board a vessel, when some bright angel flew down and presented him with a ring, saying, "As long as you wear this ring you shall be happy, and your soul shall be safe." He put the ring on his finger, and he felt happy to have it in his own possession. Then there came a spirit from the vasty deep, and said to him; "That ring is nought but folly;" and by cajolery and flattery the spirit at last persuaded him to slip the ring from off his finger, and he dropped it in the sea. Then there came fierce things from the deep; the mountains bellowed, and hurled upward their volcanic lava: all the earth was on fire,

and his soul in the greatest trouble. By-and-bye a spirit came, and diving below, fetched up the ring, and showing it to him, said, "Now thou art safe, for I have saved the ring." Now might John Newton have said, "Let me put it on my finger again." "No, no; you cannot take care of it yourself;" and up the angel flew, carrying the ring away with him, so that then he felt himself secure, since no cajolery of hell could get it from him again, for it was up in heaven. My life is "hid with Christ in God." If I had my spiritual life in my own possession, I should be a suicide very soon; but it is not with me; and as I cannot save myself, as a Christian I cannot destroy myself, for my life is wrapped up in the covenant: it is with Christ in heaven. Oh, glorious and precious covenant!

III. Now to close our meditation. The Psalmist had a satisfaction in his heart. "This is," he said, all my salvation, and all my desire." I should ill like the task of riding till I found a satisfied worldly man. I suspect there is not a horse that would not be worn off its legs before I found him; I think I should myself grow grey with age before I had discovered the happy individual, except I went to one place - that is, the heart of a man who has a covenant made with him, "ordered in all things, and sure." Go to the palace, but there is not satisfaction there; go to the cottage, though the poet talks about sweet retirement and blest contentment, there is not satisfaction there. The only solid satisfaction - satisfying the mouth with good things - is to be found in the true believer, who is satisfied from himself, satisfied with the covenant, Behold David: he says, "As for my salvation, I am secure; as for my desire, I am gratified: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." He is satisfied with his salvation. Bring up the moralist. He has been toiling and working in order to earn salvation. Are you confident that if you died you would enter into heaven? "Well, I have been as good as other people, and, I dare say, I shall be more religious before I die;" but he cannot answer our question. Bring up the religious man - I mean the merely outwardly religious man. Are you sure that if you were to die you would go to heaven? "Well, I regularly attend church or chapel, I cannot say that I make any pretensions to be able to say, 'He hath made with me an everlasting covenant.'" Very well, you must go. So I might introduce a score of men, and there is not one of them who can say, "This is all my salvation." They always want a little supplement, and most of you intend making that supplement a little

while before you die. An old Jewish Rabbi says, that every man ought to repent at least one day before his last day; and as we do not know when our last day shall be, we ought to repent to-day. How many wish they knew when they were going to die, for then they fancy they would be sure to repent, and be converted a little while before. Why, if you had it revealed to you, that you would die at twenty minutes past twelve next Sunday, you would go on in sin up till twelve o'clock, and then you would say, "There are twenty minutes more - time enough yet;" and so until the twenty minutes past had come, when your soul would sink into eternal flames. Such is procrastination. It is the thief of time; it steals away our life; and did we know the hour of our dissolution, we should be no more prepared for it than we are now. You cannot say, can you, that you have all your salvation? But a Christian can. He can walk through the cholera and the pestilence, and feel that should the arrow smite him, death would be to him the entrance of life; he can lie down and grieve but little at the approach of dissolution, for he has all his salvation; his jewels are in his breast, gems which shall shine in heaven.

Then, the Psalmist says, he has all his desire. There is nought that can fill the heart of man except the Trinity. God has made man's heart a triangle. Men have been for centuries trying to make the globe fill the triangle, but they cannot do it: it is the Trinity alone that can fill a triangle, as old Quarles well says. There is no way of getting satisfaction but by gaining Christ, getting heaven, winning glory, getting the covenant, for the word covenant comprises all the other things. "All my desire," - says the Psalmist.

"I nothing want on earth, above,
Happy in my Saviour's love."

I have not a desire; I have nothing to do but to live and be happy all my life in the company of Christ, and then to ascend to heaven, to be in his immediate presence, where

"Millions of years these wondering eyes
Shall o'er my Saviour's beauties rove,
And endless ages I'll adore

The wonders of his love."

Just one word with my friends who do not agree with me in doctrine. I am sure, my dear friends, that I wish not to anathematize any of those whose creed is the reverse of mine; only they must allow me to differ from them and to speak freely; and if they do not allow me they know very well that I shall. But I have this much to say to those dear friends who cannot bear the thought of an everlasting covenant. Now, you cannot alter it, can you? If you do not like it, there it is. "God hath made with me an everlasting covenant." And you must confess, when you read the Bible, that there are some very knotty passages for you. You might, perhaps, remove them out of your Bible; but then you cannot erase them out of divine verities. You know it is true, that God is immutable, do you not? He never changes - you must know that, for the Bible says so. It declares that when he has begun a good work, he will carry it through. Do not get reading frothy commentators any longer; take the Bible as it stands, and if you do not see everlasting love there, there is some fault in your eyes, and it is a case rather for the Ophthalmic hospital, than for me. If you cannot see everlasting, eternal security, blood-bought righteousness, there, I am hopeless altogether of your conversion to the truth, while you read it with your present prejudices. It has been my privilege to give more prominence in the religious world to those old doctrines of the gospel. I have delighted in the musty old folios which many of my brethren have kept bound in sheepskins and goatskins, on their library shelves. As for new books, I leave them to others. Oh! if we might but go back to those days when the best of men were our pastors - the days of the Puritans. Oh! for a puritanical gospel again; then we should not have the sleepy hearers, the empty chapels, the drowsy preachers, the velvet-mouthed men who cannot speak the truth; but we should have "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will towards men." Do go home and search. I have told you what I believe to be true; if it is not true, detect the error by reading your Bibles for yourselves, and searching out the matter. As for you, ye ungodly, who hitherto have had neither portion nor lot in this matter, recollect that God's Word speaks to you as well as to the Christian, and says, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?" graciously promising that whosoever cometh to Christ he will in no wise cast out. It is a free gospel, free as the air, and he who has but life to

breathe it may breathe it; so that every poor soul here, who is quickened, and has a sense of his guilt, may come to Christ.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream."

All the evidence you require is to feel your need of Christ; and recollect, if you only once come, if you do but believe, you will be safe through all eternity; and amidst the wreck of matter, the crash of worlds, the conflagration of the universe, and the destruction of all terrestrial things, your soul must still be eternally secure in the covenant of God's free grace. God enable you now to become his adopted children by faith in Jesus.

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The Day Of Atonement

This shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. - Leviticus 16:34

The Jews had many striking ceremonies which marvellously set forth the death of Jesus Christ as the great expiation of our guilt and the salvation of our souls. One of the chief of these was the day of atonement, which I believe was pre-eminently intended to typify that great day of vengeance of our God, which was also the great day of acceptance of our souls, when Jesus Christ "died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." That day of atonement happened only once a year, to teach us that only once should Jesus Christ die; and that though he would come a second time, yet it would be without a sin offering unto salvation. The lambs were perpetually slaughtered; morning and evening they offered sacrifice to God, to remind the people that they always needed a sacrifice; but the day of atonement being the type of the one great propitiation, it was but once a year that the high priest entered within the vail with blood as the

atonement for the sins of the people. And this was on a certain set and appointed time; it was not left to the choice of Moses, or to the convenience of Aaron, or to any other circumstance which might affect the date; it was appointed to be on a peculiar set day, as you find at the 29th verse: "In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month;" and at no other time was the day of atonement to be, to show us that God's great day of atonement was appointed and predestinated by himself. Christ's expiation occurred but once, and then not by any chance; God had settled it from before the foundation of the world; and at that hour when God had predestinated, on that very day that God had decreed that Christ should die, was he led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers he was dumb. It was but once a year, because the sacrifice should be once; it was at an appointed time in the year, because in the fulness of time Jesus Christ should come into the world to die for us.

Now, I shall invite your attention to the ceremonies of this solemn day, taking the different parts in detail. First, we shall consider the person who made the atonement; secondly, the sacrifice whereby the atonement was typically made; thirdly, the effects of the atonement; and fourthly, our behaviour on the recollection of the atonement, as well set forth by the conduct prescribed to the Israelites on that day.

I. First, THE PERSON WHO WAS TO MAKE THE ATONEMENT. And at the outset, we remark that Aaron, the high priest, did it. "Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place; with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering." Inferior priests slaughtered lambs; other priests at other times did almost all the work of the sanctuary; but on this day nothing was done by any one, as a part of the business of the great day of atonement, except by the high priest. Old rabbinical traditions tell us that everything on that day was done by him, even the lighting of the candles, and the fires, and the incense, and all the offices that were required, and that, for a fortnight beforehand, he was obliged to go into the tabernacle to slaughter the bullocks and assist in the work of the priests and Levites, that he might be prepared to do the work which was unusual to him. All the labour was left to him. So, beloved, Jesus Christ, the High Priest, and he only, works the atonement. There are other priests, for "he hath made us priests and kings unto God." Every

Christian is a priest to offer sacrifice of prayer and praise unto God, but none save the High Priest must offer atonement; he, and he alone, must go within the vail; he must slaughter the goat and sprinkle the blood; for though thanksgiving is shared in by all Christ's elect body, atonement remains alone to him, the High Priest.

Then it is interesting to notice, that the high priest on this day was a humbled priest. You read in the 4th verse, "He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments." On other days he wore what the people were accustomed to call the golden garments; he had the mitre with a plate of pure gold around his brow, tied with brilliant blue; the splendid breastplate, studded with gems, adorned with pure gold and set with precious stones; the glorious ephod, the tinkling bells, and all the other ornaments, wherewith he came before the people as the accepted high priest. But on this day he had none of them. The golden mitre was laid aside, the embroidered vest was put away, the breastplate was taken off, and he came out simply with the holy linen coat, the linen breeches, the linen mitre, and girded with a linen girdle. On that day he humbled himself just as the people humbled themselves. Now, that is a notable circumstance. You will see sundry other passages in the references which will bear this out, that the priest's dress on this day was different. As Mayer tells us, he wore garments, and glorious ones, on other days, but on this day he wore four humble ones. Jesus Christ, then, when he made atonement, was a humbled priest. He did not make atonement arrayed in all the glories of his ancient throne in heaven. Upon his brow there was no diadem, save the crown of thorns; around him was cast no purple robe, save that which he wore for a time in mockery; on his head was no sceptre, save the reed which they thrust in cruel contempt upon him; he had no sandals of pure gold, neither was he dressed as king; he had none of those splendours about him which should make him mighty and distinguished among men; he came out in his simple body, ay, in his naked body, for they stripped off even the common robe from him, and made him hang before God's sun and God's universe, naked, to his shame, and to the disgrace of those who chose to do so cruel and dastardly a deed. Oh! my soul, adore thy Jesus, who when he made

atonement, humbled himself and wrapped around him a garb of thine inferior clay. Oh! angels, ye can understand what were the glories that he laid aside. Oh! thrones, and principalities, and powers, ye can tell what was the diadem with which he dispensed, and what, the robes he laid aside to wrap himself in earthly garbs. But, men, ye can scarce tell how glorious is your High Priest now, and ye can scarce tell how glorious he was before. But oh! adore him, for on that day it was the simple clean linen of his own body, of his own humanity, in which he made atonement for your sins.

In the next place, the high priest who offered the atonement must be a spotless high priest; and because there were none such to be found, Aaron being a sinner himself as well as the people, you will remark that Aaron had to sanctify himself and make atonement for his own sin before he could go in to make an atonement for the sins of the people. In the 3rd verse you read, "Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering." These were for himself. In the 6th verse it is said, "And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house." Yea, more, before he went within the vail with the blood of the goat which was the atonement for the people, he had to go within the vail to make atonement there for himself. In the 11th, 12th, and 13th verses, it is said, "And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself. And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail. And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." "And he shall take of the blood of the bullock (that is, the bullock that he killed for himself), and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times." This was before he killed the goat, for it says, "Then shall he kill the goat." Before he took the blood which was a type of Christ within the vail, he took the blood (which was a type of Christ in another sense), wherewith he purified himself. Aaron must not go within the vail until by the bullock

his sins had been typically expiated, nor even then without the burning smoking incense before his face, lest God should look on him, and he should die, being an impure mortal. Moreover, the Jews tell us that Aaron had to wash himself, I think, five times in the day; and it is said in this chapter that he had to wash himself many times. We read in the 4th verse, "These are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on." And at the 24th verse, "He shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments." So you see it was strictly provided for that Aaron on that day should be a spotless priest. He could not be so as to nature, but, ceremonially, care was taken that he should be clean. He was washed over and over again in the sacred bath. And besides that, there was the blood of the bullock and the smoke of the incense, that he might be acceptable before God. Ah! beloved, and we have a spotless High Priest; we have one who needed no washing, for he had no filth to wash away; we have one who needed no atonement for himself, for he, for ever, might have sat down at the right hand of God, and ne'er have come on earth at all. He was pure and spotless; he needed no incense to wave before the mercy seat to hide the angry face of justice; he needed nothing to hide and shelter him; he was all pure and clean. Oh! bow down and adore him, for if he had not been a holy High Priest, he could never have taken thy sins upon himself, and never have made intercession for thee. Oh! reverence him, that, spotless as he was, he should come into this world and say, "For this cause I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." Adore and love him, the spotless High Priest, who, on the day of atonement took away thy guilt.

Again, the atonement was made by a solitary high priest—alone and unassisted. You read in the 17th verse, "And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel." No other man was to be present, so that the people might be quite certain that everything was done by the high priest alone. It is remarkable, as Matthew Henry observes, that no disciple died with Christ. When he was put to death, his disciples forsook him and fled; they crucified none of his followers with him, lest any should suppose that the disciple shared the

honor of atonement. Thieves were crucified with him because none would suspect that they could assist him; but if a disciple had died, it might have been imagined that he had shared the atonement. God kept that holy circle of Calvary select to Christ, and none of his disciples must go to die there with him. O glorious High Priest, thou hast done it all alone. O, glorious antitype of Aaron, no son of thine stood with thee; no Eliezer, no Phineas, burned incense; there was no priest, no Levite save himself. "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me." Then give all the glory unto his holy name, for alone and unassisted he made atonement for your guilt. The bath of his blood is your only washing; the stream of water from his side is your perfect purification. None but Jesus, none but Jesus, has wrought out the work of our salvation.

Again, it was a laborious high priest who did the work on that day. It is astonishing how, after comparative rest, he should be so accustomed to his work as to be able to perform all that he had to do on that day. I have endeavoured to count up how many creatures he had to kill, and I find that there were fifteen beasts which he slaughtered at different times, besides the other offices, which were all left to him. In the first place, there were the two lambs, one offered in the morning, and the other in the evening; they were never omitted, being a perpetual ordinance. On this day the high priest killed those two lambs. Further, if you will turn to Numbers xxix. 7-11, "And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month an holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work therein: But ye shall offer a burnt unto the Lord for a sweet savour; one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year; they shall be unto you without blemish: And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals to a bullock, and two tenth deals to one ram. A several tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: One kid of the goats for a sin offering: besides the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and the meat offering of it, and their drink offerings." Here, then, was one bullock, a ram, seven lambs, and a kid of the goats; making ten. The two lambs made twelve. And in the chapter we have been studying, it is said in the 3rd verse: "Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering;" which makes the number

fourteen. Then, after that, we find there were two goats, but only one of them was killed, the other being allowed to go away. Thus, then, there were fifteen beasts to be slaughtered, besides the burnt offerings of thanksgiving which were offered by way of showing that the people now desired to dedicate themselves to the Lord from gratitude, that the atonement of sin offering had been accepted. He who was ordained priest in Jeshurun, for that day, toiled like a common Levite, worked as laboriously as priest could do, and far more so than on any ordinary day. Just so with our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, what a labour the atonement was to him! It was a work that all the hands of the universe could not have accomplished; yet he completed it alone. It was a work more laborious than the treading of the wine-press, and his frame, unless sustained by the divinity within, could scarce have borne such stupendous labour. There was the bloody sweat in Gethsemane; there was the watching all night, just as the high priest did for fear that uncleanness might touch him; there was the hooting and the scorn which he suffered every day before—something like the continual offering of the Lamb; then there came the shame, the spitting, the cruel flagellations in Pilate's hall; then there was the via dolorosa through Jerusalem's sad streets; then came the hanging on the cross, with the weight of his people's sins on his shoulders. Ay, it was a Divine labour that our great High Priest did on that day—a labour mightier than the making of the world: it was the new making of a world, the taking of its sins upon his Almighty shoulders and casting them into the depths of the sea. The atonement was made by a toilsome laborious High Priest, who worked, indeed, that day; and Jesus, thought he had toiled before, yet never worked as he did on that wondrous day of atonement.

II. Thus have I led you to consider the person who made the atonement: let us now consider for a moment or two **THE MEANS WHEREBY THIS ATONEMENT WAS MADE**. You read at the 5th verse, "And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering." And at the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th verses, "And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell,

and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness." The first goat I considered to be the great type of Jesus Christ the atonement: such I do not consider the scapegoat to be. The first is a type of the means whereby the atonement was made, and we shall keep to that first.

Notice that this goat, of course, answered all the pre-requisites of every other thing that was sacrificed; it must be a perfect, unblemished goat of the first year. Even so was our Lord a perfect man, in the prime and vigour of his manhood. And further, this goat was an eminent type of Christ from the fact that it was taken of the congregation of the children of Israel, as we are told at the 5th verse. The public treasury furnished the goat. So, beloved, Jesus Christ was, first of all, purchased by the public treasury of the Jewish people before he died. Thirty pieces of silver they had valued him at, a goodly price; and as they had been accustomed to bring the goat, so they brought him to be offered: not, indeed, with the intention that he should be their sacrifice, but unwittingly they fulfilled this when they brought him to Pilate, and cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Oh, beloved! Indeed, Jesus Christ came out from the midst of the people, and the people brought him. Strange that it should be so! "He came unto his own, and his own received him not;" his own led him forth to slaughter; his own dragged him before the mercy seat.

Note, again, that though this goat, like the scapegoat, was brought by the people, God's decision was in it still. Mark, it is said, "Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats: one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat." I conceive this mention of lots is to teach that although the Jews brought Jesus Christ of their own will to die, yet, Christ had been appointed to die; and even the very man who sold him was appointed to it—so saith the Scripture. Christ's death was fore-ordained, and there was not only man's hand in it, but God's. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." So it is true that man put Christ to death, but it was of the Lord's disposal that Jesus Christ was slaughtered, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

Next, behold the goat that destiny has marked out to make the atonement. Come and see it die. The priest stabs it. Mark it in its agonies; behold it struggling for a moment; observe the blood as it gushes forth. Christians, ye have here your Saviour. See his Father's vengeful sword sheathed in his heart; behold his death agonies; see the clammy sweat upon his brow; mark his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth; hear his sighs and groans upon the cross; hark to his shriek, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," and you have more now to think of than you could have if you only stood to see the death of a goat for your atonement. Mark the blood as from his wounded hands it flows, and from his feet it finds a channel to the earth; from his open side in one great river see it gush. As the blood of the goat made the atonement typically, so, Christian, thy Saviour dying for thee, made the great atonement for thy sins, and thou mayest go free.

But mark, this goat's blood was not only shed for many for the remission of sins as a type of Christ, but that blood was taken within the veil, and there it was sprinkled. So with Jesus's blood, "Sprinkled now with blood the throne." The blood of other beasts (save only of the bullock) was offered before the Lord, and was not brought into the most holy place; but this goat's blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat, to make an atonement. So, O child of God, thy Saviour's blood has made atonement within the veil; he has taken it there himself; his own merits and his own agonies are now within the veil of glory, sprinkled now before the throne. O glorious sacrifice, as well as High Priest, we would adore thee, for by thy one offering hast made atonement for ever, even as this one slaughtered goat made atonement once in a year for the sins of all the people.

III. We now come to the EFFECTS.

One of the first effects of the death of this goat was sanctification of the holy things which had been made unholy. You read at the end of the 15th verse, "He shall sprinkle it upon the mercy seat: and he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them

in the midst of their uncleanness." The holy place was made unholy by the people. Where God dwelt should be holy, but where man comes there must be some degree of unholiness. This blood of the goat made the unholy place holy. It was a sweet reflection to me as I came here this morning. I thought, "I am going to the house of God, and that house is a holy place;" but when I thought how many sinners had trodden its floors, how many unholy ones had joined in its songs, I thought, "Ah! it has been made defiled; but oh! there is no fear, for the blood of Jesus has made it holy again." "Ah!" I thought, "there is our poor prayer that we shall offer: it is a holy prayer, for God the Holy Spirit dictates it, but then it is an unholy prayer, for we have uttered it, and that which cometh out of unholy lips like ours, must be tainted." "But ah!" I thought again, "it is a prayer that has been sprinkled with blood, and therefore it must be a holy prayer." And as I looked on all the harps of this sanctuary, typical of your praises, and on all the censers of this tabernacle, typical of your prayers, I thought within myself, "There is blood on them all; our holy service this day has been sprinkled with the blood of the great Jesus, and as such it will be accepted through him." Oh! beloved, it is not sweet to reflect that our holy things are now really holy; that through sin is mixed with them all, and we think them defiled, yet they are not, for the blood has washed out every stain; and the service this day is as holy in God's sight as the service of the cherubim, and is acceptable as the psalms of the glorified; we have washed our worship in the blood of the Lamb, and it is accepted through him.

But observe, the second great fact was that their sins were taken away. This was set forth by the scapegoat. You read at the 20th, "And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." When that was done, you see, the great and wonderful atonement was finished, and the effects of it were set forth to the people. Now, I do not know how many opinions there are about this

scapegoat. One of the most strange opinions to me is that which is held by a very large portion of learned men, and I see it is put in the margin of my Bible. Many learned men think that this word scapegoat, Azazel, was the name of the devil who was worshipped by the heathen in the form of a goat; and they tell us that the first goat was offered to God as an atonement for sin, and the other went away to be tormented by the devil, and was called Azazel, just as Jesus was tormented by Satan in the wilderness. To this opinion, it is enough to object that it is difficult to conceive when the other goat was offered to God, this should be sent among demons. Indeed, the opinion is too gross for belief. It needs only to be mentioned to be refuted. Now the first goat is the Lord Jesus Christ making atonement by his death for the sins of the people; the second is sent away into the wilderness, and nothing is heard of it any more for ever; and here a difficulty suggests itself—"Did Jesus Christ go where he was never heard of any more for ever?" That is what we have not to consider at all. The first goat was a type of the atonement; the second is the type of the effect of the atonement. The second goat went away, after the first was slaughtered, carrying the sins of the people on its head, and so it sets forth, as a scapegoat, how our sins are carried away into the depth of the wilderness. There was this year exhibited in the Art Union a fine picture of the scapegoat dying in the wilderness: it was represented with a burning sky above it, its feet sticking in the mire, surrounded by hundreds of skeletons, and there dying a doleful and miserable death. Now, that was just a piece of gratuitous nonsense, for there is nothing in the Scripture that warrants it in the least degree. The rabbis tell us that this goat was taken by a man into the wilderness and here tumbled down a high rock to die; but, as an excellent commentator says, if the man did push it down the rock he more than God ever told him to do. God told him to take a goat and let it go: as to what became of it neither you nor I know anything; that is purposely left. Our Lord Jesus Christ has taken away our sins upon his head, just as the scapegoat, and he is gone from us—that is all: the goat was not a type in its dying, or in regard to its subsequent fate. God has only told us that it should be taken by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. The most correct account seems to be that of one Rabbi Jarchi, who says that they generally took the goat twelve miles out of Jerusalem, and at each mile there was a booth provided where the man who took it might refresh himself till he came to

the tenth mile, when there was no more rest for him till he had seen the goat go. When he had come to the last mile he stood and looked at the goat till it was gone, and he could see it no more. Then the people's sins were all gone too. Now, what a fine type that is if you do not enquire any further! But if you will get meddling where God intended you to be in ignorance, you will get nothing by it. This scapegoat was not designed to show us the victim or the sacrifice, but simply what became of the sins. The sins of the people are confessed upon that head; the goat is going; the people lose sight of it; a fit man goes with it; the sins are going from them, and now the man has arrived at his destination; the man sees the goat in the distance skipping here and there overt the mountains, glad of its liberty; it is not quite gone; a little farther, and now it is lost to sight. The man returns, and says he can no longer see it; then the people clap their hands, for their sins are all gone too. Oh! soul; canst thou see thy sins all gone? We may have to take a long journey, and carry our sins with us; but oh! how we watch and watch till they are utterly cast into the depths of the wilderness of forgetfulness, where they shall never be found any more against us for ever. But mark, this goat did not sacrificially make the atonement; it was a type of the sins going away, and so it was a type of the atonement; for you know, since our sins are thereby lost, it is the fruit of the atonement; but the sacrifice is the means of making it. So we have this great and glorious thought before us, that by the death of Christ there was full, free, perfect remission for all those whose sins are laid upon his head. For I would have you notice that on this day all sins were laid on the scapegoat's head—sins of presumption, sins of ignorance, sins of uncleanness, sins little and sins great, sins few and sins many, sins against the law, sins against morality, sins against ceremonies, sins of all kinds were taken away on that great day of atonement. Sinner, oh, that thou hadst a share in my Master's atonement! Oh! that thou couldst see him slaughtered on the cross! Then mightest thou see him go away leading captivity captive, and taking thy sins where they might ne'er be found.

I have now an interesting fact to tell you, and I am sure you will think it worth mentioning. Turn to Leviticus xxv. 9, and you will read: "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall yet make the trumpet

sound throughout all your land." So that one of the effects of the atonement was set forth to us in the fact that when the year of jubilee came, it was not on the first day of the year that it was proclaimed, but "on the tenth day of the seventh month." Ay, methinks, that was the best part of it. The scapegoat is gone, and the sins are gone, and no sooner are they gone than the silver trumpet sounds,

"The year of jubilee is to come,
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home."

On that day sinners go free; on that day our poor mortgaged lands are liberated, and our poor estates which have been forfeited by our spiritual bankruptcy are all returned to us. So when Jesus dies, slaves win their liberty, and lost ones receive spiritual life again; when he dies, heaven, the long lost inheritance is ours. Blessed day! Atonement and jubilee ought to go together. Have you ever had a jubilee, my friends, in your hearts? If you have not, I can tell you it is because you have not had a day of atonement.

One more thought concerning the effects of this great day of atonement, and you will observe that it runs throughout the whole of the chapter—entrance within the vail. Only on one day in the year might the high priest enter within the vail, and then it must be for the great purposes of the atonement. Now, beloved, the atonement is finished, and you may enter within the vail: "Having boldness, therefore, to enter into the holiest, let us come with boldness into the throne of the heavenly grace." The vail of the temple is rent by the atonement of Christ, and access to the throne is now ours. O child of God, I know not of any privilege which thou hast, save fellowship with Christ, which is more valuable than access to the throne. Access to the mercy seat is one of the greatest blessings mortals can enjoy. Precious throne of grace! I never should have had any right to come there if it had not been for the day of atonement; I never should have been able to come there if the throne had not been sprinkled with the blood.

IV. Now we come to notice, in the fourth place, what is our PROPER BEHAVIOUR WHEN WE CONSIDER THE DAY OF ATONEMENT. You

read at the 29th verse, "And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls." That is one thing that we ought to do when we remember the atonement. Sure, sinner, there is nothing that move thee to repentance like the thought of that great sacrifice of Christ which is necessary to wash away thy guilt. "Law and terrors do but harden." but methinks, the thought that Jesus died is enough to make us melt. It is well, when we hear the name of Calvary, always to shed a tear, for there is nothing that ought to make a sinner weep like the mention of the death of Jesus. On that day "ye shall afflict your souls." And even you, ye Christians, when ye think that your Saviour died, should afflict your souls: ye should say,

"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?"

Drops of grief ought to flow, ay, streams of undissembled sympathy with him; to show our grief for what we did to pierce the Saviour. "Afflict your souls," O ye children of Israel, for the day of atonement is come. Weep o'er your Jesus; weep for him that died; weep for him who was murdered by your sins, and "afflict your souls."

Then, better still, we are to "do not work at all," as ye find the same verse, 29th. When we consider the atonement, we should rest, and "do no work at all." Rest from your works as God did from his on the great Sabbath of the world; rest from your own righteousness; rest from your toilsome duties: rest in him. "We that believe do enter into rest." As soon as thou seest the atonement finished, say, "it is done, it is done? Now will I serve my God with zeal, but now I will no longer seek to save myself, it is done, it is done for aye."

Then there was another thing which always happened. When the priest had made the atonement, it was usual for him, after he had washed himself, to come out again in his glorious garments. When the people saw him they attended him to his house with joy, and they offered burnt offerings of praise on that day: he being thankful that his life was spared,

(having been allowed to go into the holy place and to come out of it) and they being thankful that the atonement was accepted; both of them offering burnt offerings as a type that they desired now to be "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God." Beloved, let us go into our houses with joy; let us go into our gates with praise. The atonement is finished; the High Priest is gone within the veil; salvation is now complete. He has laid aside the linen garments, and he stands before you with his breastplate, and his mitre, and his embroidered vest, in all his glory. Hear how he rejoices over us, for he hath redeemed his people, and ransomed them out of the hands of his enemies. Come, let us go home with the High Priest; let us clap our hands with joy, for he liveth, he liveth; the atonement is accepted, and we are accepted too; the scapegoat is gone, our sins are gone with it. Let us then go to our houses with thankfulness, and let us come up to his gates with praise, for he hath loved his people, he hath blessed his children, and given unto us a day of atonement, and a day of acceptance, and a year of jubilee. Praise ye the Lord? Praise ye the Lord!

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The Day Of Salvation

Behold, now is the day of salvation. - 2 Corinthians 6:2

The outward features of a day none can change. The kings of the earth cannot command for themselves bright days nor inflict upon their enemies days of tempest. It belongs to a higher than they to command the morning and cause the day-star to know his place. It is little they can do in reference to the light and the sun, and the clouds, and the rain; they cannot bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades nor loose the bands of Orion. Still rulers and governors and kings have accomplished much in shaping the social character of the days of their subjects. Sometimes, like

the king of Nineveh, they have proclaimed days of fasting, and their subjects have been clothed in sackcloth; and on other occasions they have exercised the prerogative to ordain days of feasting, as Ahasuerus did at the palace of Shushan, when for a hundred and fourscore days" he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty," by filling the capital with feasting. Kings of the older stamp were more able to affect the days of their people than they are now; in former times, when men had less wit and more faith in the fable of divine right than they have now, despot could cause a thick darkness over all the land, even darkness that might be felt. They made war according to their own fancy or frenzy, and what is that but moral midnight? What does war mean but crime, suffering, death, poverty? Is it not usually the sum of all villainies? Everything that is evil either marches with it or follows in its train. The very thought of war for our beloved country darkens our heavens. Alas, with what a light heart have despots drawn the sword and sought to wade through slaughter to imaginary glory, shutting the gates of mercy on mankind that they might seize a province or avenge a jest. Kings can also brighten men's days when they have a mind to be quiet: they make peace and then the nations bask in the sun, and earth covers her battle-fields with verdure. Peace gives the poor world respite to bind up her gaping wounds and remedy a little of the mischief of the bloody fight. Hard labor and stern self-denial are not grudged by the suffering peasants if they may but have breathing time, and the land may enjoy her Sabbaths; but why should such toil and suffering have been demanded? Simply because kings quarrel, and their subjects must die to end the strife. Princes have also on occasion exercised their prerogative by proclaiming days of amnesty and oblivion: a long rebellion has been crushed out, and there has been no fear of its return, and then the monarch has thought it best to refrain from undue severity, and overlook the evil which he has subdued; accordingly he proclaims that the past shall be blotted out if by a certain time rebellious ones will surrender, yield up their arms, and promise loyalty. Such days are calm and clear, and bring light to despairing rebels who saw no end but the gallows tree. Thus, for humiliation or rejoicing, for war, for peace, or for pardon, monarchs can set their seal upon a day, and mark it with their signature in history. If earthly monarchs can somewhat affect the days of men; what then can be done by the King of kings? The Creator of day and night can

surely order all our lights and shades. The Ancient of days is he who can give us "mornings without clouds" or make the day dark with gloom. How often has he made the sun of prosperity to gladden us, and how suddenly has he shrouded us beneath the thick clouds of adversity! Our days are in his hand; and he is Lord of all. You and I, looking back, may well bow before the power and majesty of the Eternal, who hath such infinite power over us that none of us can stay his hand nor say unto him, "What doest thou?" The Lord has had his days of vengeance; are they not written in the book of the wars of the Lord? How terrible was the hour when he opened the sluices of the firmament that the rain might descend in torrents, and bade the fountains of the great deep rise to meet the descending floods. How dreadful were the forty days wherein the floods above the firmament, in tumultuous mirth, leaped downward to embrace their brethren of the ocean, till the whole earth was covered with one all-devouring deluge, and sea monsters whelped and stabled in the palaces of kings. That was the assize of justice, and the day of vengeance of our God. Such days have been at other times, as, for instance, when he poured hell out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah; when he overthrew Pharaoh and all his host in the midst of the Red Sea; and when his sword stayed not from blood till Hivite and Perizzite and all the Canaanites fell before the hand of Joshua because the iniquity of the people was full, and the hour of execution had arrived. Those were the "dies irae," and there is another far more terrible yet to come, when heaven and earth shall flee away before the face of him that shall sit upon the great white throne. Blessed be God, we are not at this time living under the rod of vengeance, but our text tells us that "now is the day of salvation." When it is a day of vengeance the Lord does his strange but necessary work thoroughly; for it is Written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The prophet said of him, "The Lord revengeth, and is furious." Well did Miriam sing, "The Lord is a man of war, Jehovah is his name": but when he putteth on the silken robes of mercy, and proclaims with silver trumpet the day of salvation, "blessed are the people that know the joyful sound." I trust that we are among that happy company, and have heard with the inner ear the note of grace. At any rate the Lord hath set a period of salvation, even from the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus to this present hour. The day of salvation has not been suspended, it lasts on, and it shall last till the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout: then shall come the judgment,

and strict justice shall sit upon the throne.

The apostle when he was writing this very wonderful sentence dreaded lest men should not avail themselves of its great truth. Read the first verse of the chapter,- "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." The day of salvation is a great favor from God, and it would be a fearful thing if we should live in it and miss its privilege. Dear hearers, it is only of divine favor that we enjoy this day of amnesty, oblivion, and forgiveness; and, therefore, we beseech you not to let its golden hours pass over you in vain. This is the great anxiety of my heart at this time in addressing you; I have great fear lest some of you should live in the day of salvation and yet die without being saved, should live in the midst of light with blinded eyes, should dwell with deaf ears, where the silver trumpet soundeth and so the kingdom of God should come very nigh unto you and yet you should not enter it. It will be sad indeed if you should see strangers from afar brought into the kingdom of heaven, and yourselves, who live on its borders, should be utterly thrust out. May the Holy Spirit bless the words which shall now be spoken, so that the evil which we fear may not come upon you, but that you may receive this grace or favor of God to your eternal good.

That you may not receive this grace in vain I shall try, first, to show the grand reason for this day of salvation; secondly, I shall speak of the glorious day itself; and thirdly, for a minute or two I shall dwell upon the dark shade which may close that day, if the Spirit do not lead us into salvation.

I. First, then, **THE GRAND REASON FOR THIS DAY** - "Now is the day of salvation." Will you kindly read the context in order to understand why there is a present day of salvation? I will take you a little away from the text to the 20th verse of the preceding chapter, and ask you to bear in mind that the division into chapters is purely arbitrary, and we need take no notice of it whatever. The apostle says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in

him." Here then is the secret of the whole matter. This day is the day of salvation because "he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." There could have been no day of salvation if a Savior had not appeared, and if that Savior had not become our substitute and surety, salvation would have been denied us by the stern voice of justice. But now Christ hath come into the world and died for sin, and because he hath finished all the works which he undertook, the Lord our God proclaims for us the day of salvation.

Notice that according to the context this is the day of salvation, because we may now be reconciled to God. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The Lord would not set his ministers to pray men to be reconciled to him if peace were out of the question. He would not send us upon an impossible errand. God is already reconciled to every sinner who has an interest in the blood of Jesus. Towards those the Lord is full of peace. Nothing is wanted now to reconcile God to the believing man. The great thing that is required is to bring men to believe in Jesus Christ that they may be reconciled to God. The feud between you and God, poor prodigal child, need not be continued. You quarrelled with your Father, and you went into the far country; and now you have spent your substance, but your Father sends to you this message, "Be reconciled. Come home, a loving reception awaits you; return at once." Because Jesus hath died the partition wall is broken down; the great gulf between a holy God and unholy man is bridged by the atoning blood. Ye may be reconciled; there is no reason why the terrible quarrel should continue, and therefore, because reconciliation is possible, it is a day of salvation. As long as man remains an enemy to God he cannot of course be saved, for enmity to God is the very essence of his ruin and the sting of his condemnation. While a man lives in enmity to God he is, and he must be, under the power of an evil spirit which curses him; and therefore reconciliation to God is absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of salvation. I repeat that, because reconciliation is possible, this day of salvation has come.

Next, lest any one should exclaim, "But how is it and why is it that so great a boon is conferred? I cannot understand it and therefore I am

plunged in doubt"-the plain statement of the 21st verse explains it all: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Here is the grand doctrine of substitution. Oh soul, if thou believest in Christ Jesus thou shalt be saved because he stood in thy stead, he took thy sin, and the Lord made him to be sin on thine account, and exacted at his hand satisfaction for thine iniquity. He bruised him and put him to grief, so that he was made a curse for us and bore in our stead the wrath of heaven. Now therefore the righteous God will not, cannot, need to vindicate his law a second time. If he has made the Lord Jesus to be sin for us, then he need not visit us for sin nor punish the same offense a second time. Nay, it would be injustice to lay sin once upon the substitute and afterwards upon the sinner; therefore well may there be a day of salvation proclaimed since Christ has finished transgression and made an end of sin.

To help us to understand mercy's great expedient still better, the Holy Spirit tells us that the divine design in Christ Jesus is to make us the "righteousness of God" in Christ. Wonderful expression! I shall not attempt to enter into its fullness, but I will content myself with saying that the two expressions of the verse set forth the imputation of sin to Christ and of righteousness to us, the substitution of Christ in our place, and the standing of our souls in Christ's place, in terms so forcible that he must be determined not to believe the doctrine who does not see it in the words before us. Our Lord is not merely made a sin-offering, but he is made sin, and we are not merely made righteous in Christ, but we are made righteousness itself, ay, and the righteousness of God, too, which is the very highest conceivable righteousness. I never wish to strain expressions, nor push them one inch beyond their proper meaning, but I think it difficult to do so here, since the language is so very forcible and explicit. If the doctrine which I have explained were intended to be taught, I do not see how it could be more clearly stated. Now, soul, if thou desirest salvation, see how God can give it thee. As he takes thy sin and lays it upon Christ so he takes Christ's righteousness and lays it upon thee. He looks at thee as if thou wert as righteous as his Son who represents thee. He treats thee as if thou hadst been obedient to all his law; he looks upon the model man Christ Jesus, the perfect humanity, and he sees in Christ all his people, and treats them accordingly. He looks

upon his people as if they themselves had magnified the law and made it honorable by a sinless life. Wondrous doctrine this, but he that believes it shall find rest unto his soul; and it is because of it that we are authorized to come forth this day and declare the day of salvation. The guilt of the believing sinner is put away, for Christ has carried it; and now righteousness belongs to the sinner, for God imputes it to him without works: therefore this is the day of salvation.

Still keeping to the context, and illustrating in an other way-the grand reason for the day of salvation, will you kindly read the verse itself which contains our text? "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." It is a quotation: Paul says, "he saith." Where does God say that? We have no difficulty in discovering: it is in the 49th of Isaiah, which passage should be carefully read by you and heartily pondered. I wish to call your special attention to it as opening up the glorious reason for the famous proclamation of which we are preaching. That chapter, from the sixth to the twelfth verse eminently applies to the Messiah, that is, to our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom else could the prophet have spoken as in the seventh verse "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers"? Who is this but our Lord as he stood before Herod and Pilate? To this very day he is abhorred of the Jews: they mention him ordinarily by the name of "the Crucified," and to them that term is the embodiment of the utmost scorn.

We glory in that word, but to them it is the essence of contempt. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." We are sure that Isaiah spake concerning him, the Crucified, whom we adore, and our next enquiry is, what did he say of him? Read the fifth and sixth verses: "And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be

my salvation unto the end of the earth." Beloved, are you not glad to hear these words. If you are not curious to hear me, but eager to hear my Master's truth, your heart will be rejoiced at this blessed news, that now Christ has come to be the salvation of the Gentiles. We were out in the cold, we were the younger branch of the family, and the heir despised us, we had not yet come into our portion, we were left in darkness and in sin; but now our turn has come, and we are favored. From the day when Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" our privileges began. From the day when Paul said, "Seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles," ours has been a day of favor, and the portion which once belonged alone to the seed of Abraham we have obtained, only that we have obtained it to a far larger extent, and we see more clearly its deep spiritual meaning and wealth of blessing. What was veiled under types and shadows is evidently set forth before our eyes. Beloved, tell it all over the world to-day, that salvation has come to the Gentiles, and especially to the dwellers in the islands. How remarkable it is that islands are so often alluded to in the Scriptures, and that they receive the gospel so much more readily than any other parts of the world. As for the ends of the earth, surely we are intended by that term, for our forefathers dwelt where Phoenicians made distant and dangerous journey to find tin and other metals, and our land was thought to be upon creation's verge, inhabited by a barbarous people of uncouth tongue and yet to us, even to us, hath the gospel come, and now -

"The British islands are the Lord's,
Here Abraham's God is known;
While powers and princes, shields and swords,
Submit before his throne."

Jehovah, the God of the whole earth is our God at this day; in this let us exult, for it proves that to the Gentiles the day of salvation has come.

Further, he goes on to say in the eighth verse, "Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee." Mark this well. God saves us because he heard the Lord Jesus. There is the secret of all the answers of grace to the prayers of penitents. He saith, "I have heard thee in an accepted time:

behold, now is the day of salvation." In the lonely watches of the night our great Intercessor prayed for his own. He lived a life of supplication, and he prayed not in vain, for he once said to the Father, "I know that thou hearest me always," and indeed it was always so. His prayers may be said to have reached their highest point when he offered the marvellous intercession recorded in John 17th, and followed it up by his strong crying and tears in the garden when he poured out his soul in agony, while prostrate among the olives he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. Mysterious was that bloody sweat! Oh ye precious drops, ye fell not by chance; what wrote ye on the soil of Gethsemane in crimson hieroglyphs? Ye wrote upon the earth the reversal of the curse which fell upon the ground, and the ending of the day of wrath in the day of salvation. That sacred sweat bedewed a garden which henceforth yields the oil of joy, wherewith believers may anoint their faces with gladness. Jesus was heard in that he feared, and henceforth to the chief of sinners it is a gospel of good cheer. "In an acceptable time have I heard thee." Is it not wonderful that Jesus in the garden made intercession for transgressors who as yet had not learned to pray for themselves? I trust that among those who hear me there are persons unconverted as yet who nevertheless are special objects of the Redeemer's intercession, and who shall find salvation because their great Substitute was heard on their account. We were all heard when our Great High-priest was heard; the Father's answer to him was an answer of peace to all his people.

It is added, "In a day of salvation have I helped thee." Help came to the man Christ Jesus in his hour of agony; the Father succoured him, and there appeared unto him an angel strengthening him. How must that angel have marvelled as he saw the face of the incarnate God red with a sweat of blood. The whole scene is beyond conception strange and singular: the prostrate Savior in agonizing pangs utters strong cryings, and is helped of his God.

"His earnest prayer, his deepening groans,
Were heard before angelic thrones;
Amazement wrapt the sky:
'Go, strengthen Christ!' the Father said:
The astonish'd seraph bow'd his head,

And left the realms on high."

The angel came to strengthen our champion, not to join in the fight. None could share the conflict, Jesus must tread the wine-press alone; but the angel was empowered to communicate strength to the manhood of Christ, and he did so. Then was it that, being succoured in his hour of need, our Master took the appointed cup so full of woe, and drank it to its utmost dregs, and said, "It is finished!" 'Twas then that by one dreadful draught he pledged the justice of God, and gave this day of salvation to the sons of men.

You see, then, that our present day of privilege has come to us through the Lord's hearing and succouring our Daysman and Redeemer; but, beloved, salvation comes to us also, because according to the eighth verse it is written, "I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth." Jesus is now God's covenant with man, and that covenant is one of peace and favor. The Lord says to each believing man "Thy sin will I remember no more. A new heart also will I give thee, and a right spirit will I put within thee. Thou shalt be mine. I will sanctify thee and glorify thee with my Son. Behold, in token of my faithfulness I have given my Son to be the seal, the surety, and the sum of my covenant.

Behold, I have given him for a covenant to the people, a leader and commander for the people." Brethren, you are not under the covenant of Moses to-day, you are under the covenant of Jesus; you are not under law, but under grace, and because of this to-day is the day of salvation.

I cannot at this time enlarge upon the other blessed verses which make up the 49th of Isaiah; but let me say it is because Christ is now anointed to give liberty to all captives, and say to them, "Go forth"; it is because he brings the darkened ones out of death-shade and says, "show yourselves," that therefore this is a day of salvation. And, furthermore, when we are delivered from bondage and darkness then because Christ is a shepherd, and leads his flock, and makes them to feed in the ways, and finds pasture for them in high places, and protects them from hunger and thirst, and gives them springs of water to drink of, - it is because of all

this that now is the day of salvation.

I will not further enlarge, but only say if I now preach the day of salvation, as I will try to do, with the utmost boldness and fullness, if any of you enquire, "How is it? How is it? Why is grace so free at this day?" I shall tell you that the cause is quite as marvellous as the fact, that the way of salvation is as surprising as salvation itself, and that Jesus Christ the Son of God, who hath done, and is doing it all, is the most wonderful of all. In his eyes I see the stars which can shine away the midnight of despair; in his hands I see the majestic might which can break the fetters of Satanic bondage; and in his face I see the sacred guidance which shall bring the sacramental host of his elect safe home in unbroken ranks, to the land of the tearless eyes.

II. Now, kindly leave Isaiah and turn again to the text. Under the second head we have to speak upon THE GLORIOUS DAY ITSELF, for the day of salvation is rich with blessing.

First, I would commend that day because of its fourfold excellence. Read again the verse in which our text stands. Although the words must be regarded as spoken, in the first place, to our Lord, the best expositors say that they are also addressed to his church in him. The word came to him as the Head and Representative of his people, and so to his chosen as one with him. So then, beloved, in this day of salvation our prayer will be heard: "I have heard thee in a time accepted." Dear hearer, if you will sincerely pray in the name of Jesus you will be heard. Are you very guilty?

Ask mercy, and you will be heard. "I have heard thee in an accepted time." Have you condemned yourself? Have you written your own death warrant?

Are you bowed down with a sense of guilt? Pray and pray, and pray again!

Oh, brother, pray, I beseech thee. If thou be between the jaws of hell, still pray, for now is the day of salvation, and it is a day in which he that asketh receiveth, he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Secondly, we are further told that this day help will be given. What does it say? "In the day of salvation have I succoured thee." Are you helpless, are you hopeless? This is a day in which God will come to your relief. Do you need strength to break the chains of habit? Do you need power even to repent? Do you need help to feel your helplessness? Do you need everything? "Behold," he says, "in the day of salvation have I succoured thee." He will help you; only ask him, only trust him. When there was a great straitness of business in the Manchester district during the American war, and many were out of work and starving, many instances occurred in which persons were found near to death's door, "clamping" as they called it, or dying of starvation. When they were kindly visited and asked why they did not apply for relief, they answered that they could not ask. British independence, as we call it, and a very noble spirit it is within proper bounds, was strong within them, and many a man said, "I could not bring myself to ask." I admire that spirit between man and man, but I do not admire it when it touches the matter of the soul, and lies between a poor worthless sinner and the great and ever blessed God. Do not be proud and say, "I cannot bring myself to ask," for behold your prayer will be answered now and whatever help you require will be freely given you.

Does not that one fact show that we live in the day of salvation?

And then it is added, "Behold, now is the accepted time," so that the third blessing is that coming sinners will be accepted. If you will come to God he will not reject you, whoever you may be. However poor your repentance and weak your faith, it is a gracious time and the Lord will freely accept your sincere desires for his Son's sake. Does not this fact encourage you to come? The door of mercy is open and no man can shut it. The Lord Jesus has never yet rejected a coming sinner and he never will, for it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." It is a season of acceptance, not of rejection: come and partake in the blessing.

And then the fourth excellence is that it is a time of salvation, of which we will speak at greater length. You need saving; be glad then that it is salvation's own day. All that can be needed to secure the salvation of a

sinner has been fully prepared by Christ and is now freely presented in the preaching of the word to every soul that is willing to receive it. Jesus was born to save, he died to save, and lives to save.

Now, let me notice that this ought to be peculiarly pleasant news to those who are heavily laden with guilt. I have known the day when, if I had heard such words as those I try to speak, I think I should have leaped at them at once, as a hungry dog doth at a bone. Sinners, this is the day of salvation, not a day of justice. Come and confess your sin: you shall not be accused, condemned, and punished, but freely forgiven. It is a day in which you may mourn to think you have sinned, but need not despair nor indulge a single unbelieving thought, for that would be unsuitable to the time, which is a day of good tidings. From now till the day when you shall pass out of this mortal state it is one long and blessed day of grace. There was a week of creation, and the Lord God performed great wonders of creating power and put not forth his left hand to destroy; so now there is a day of salvation, and all around angels of love are hovering, singing still, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men." God is saving all that come to him by Jesus Christ. Everything proclaims salvation; the air is full of gentle voices; in fact, your very existence, continued by longsuffering, is a message of grace. You being found in a house of prayer this morning has an eye towards your being saved. Your eager attention gives me hope it shall be so. Shall it not be now accomplished by your believing in Jesus? The fountain to wash your guilt away is filled; the "best robe" to cover you is prepared; the finger ring of everlasting love is ready to be put upon your finger, and the shoes of gladness and of peace are waiting you. Oh, poor soul, to-day I have nothing to preach but salvation; salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel," said our Lord Jesus, and that gospel is salvation, free salvation to the sons of men.

The truth of our text should also be very encouraging to those who are fighting against inward sin. I know some who can trust Christ for pardon, but their chief difficulty is how they can be made holy. I greatly delight in seekers in whom this is the main thought; not so much to escape punishment as to avoid future sin. Well, if you are fighting against evil in the name of Jesus Christ, do not be discouraged, you will master it,

because it is the day of salvation, and it is written, "They shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Do I address a drunkard? Has the intoxicating cup a strange fascination for you, and have you gone back to drinking, after having often loathed yourself for it? You need not be a slave to it any longer, for this is a day of salvation from that sin: by faith in Christ you shall be delivered out of that deadly snare. Or have you been tempted to some other gross iniquity which holds you spellbound? Does a certain vice fix its basilisk eyes upon you and enchant you till you can no longer restrain yourself? Rejoice, then, for this is the day of salvation from sin. Neither saint nor sinner need sit down under the power of any sin, for in Christ Jesus' name we can overcome the power of evil. Do not excuse yourselves by talking of besetments, ye must thrust away all sin; ye must overcome temptation, for if any sin shall totally vanquish you, you will be lost for ever, since it is only to "him that overcometh" that the crown is given. How, then, can you overcome? Why, only by the power of Christ, who bids us this day lay hold upon salvation from sin. Come to him and trust him, and he will destroy the works of the devil within you.

While this is very encouraging to penitents and to those who are fighting with sin it should be equally cheering to tried believers. Beloved, are you in deep trouble just now? Is your spirit overwhelmed within you? Be of good cheer, for this is the day of salvation. It is not a time for saints to die in; it is not a day in which the enemy shall triumph over believers; it is for us the day of salvation. Be glad, then, O ye who are assailed by the enemy.

Though your foe may put his foot upon your neck, yet he cannot crush your life out, but you may boldly cry, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise again." it is the day in which believers must be saved. Did not Christian, in "Pilgrim's Progress," find it so from the very day in which he left the city of destruction to the time when he passed through the river and said, "I feel the bottom, and it is good"? He had days of conflict, days of weariness, and days of deep distress of mind, but all along he was saved, saved from the lions, and saved from Giant Despair, saved from the flatterer's net, and saved from the last river with its chill floods. We also live in the day of salvation. "Ah," said a Popish bishop once to one of our martyrs, "You are a heretic, and you will be

damned." "My lord," said the heroic man, "there I am at a pass with you; I may be burned, but I never shall be damned." "Why so?" said his adversary. The man replied by quoting that passage in the old translation, "There is therefore now no damnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Who shall condemn those for whom Christ hath died? it is the day of salvation, not of accusation. It is the day of victory, not of defeat, not of captivity, much less a day of destruction to the true people of God. Let us, then, as is most meet, hang out the streamers of joy, and with glad music set our souls in fit trim to keep the feast of salvation.

And do you not think this truth should encourage all who are at work to win souls for Jesus? Brethren, if I had my pick of days I should like to go forth and preach the gospel when it was a day of salvation, would not you?

One likes to go down the river with the tide, and if you can have a fair wind as well it is grand sailing: but surely, now, whenever you seek for souls you have wind and tide with you, for it is the day of salvation. God is saving men, it is his daily business, and his crowning glory, and he has set his heart on it; just as I remarked that Ahasuerus ordained a season of feasting and banqueted the people, and there is no doubt that they did feast at a royal rate, so when the infinite Jehovah proclaims a day of salvation the people shall be saved, and there shall be no question about it.

Thousands upon thousands of erring ones shall repent and believe, and so shall be saved to the glory of his grace. Do not tell me that London is very wicked, I know it is; but the Lord has much people in this city, and he will redeem them from all iniquity. Our rural population may also be in many places perishing in gross darkness, but "the Lord knoweth them that are his": he has jewels in yonder cottages, and he will make them to be his own. His chosen are hidden away in the dark mines of iniquity, but he will find out his gold and purify it. His everlasting purpose shall not fail, and his infinite pity shall not be stayed. Glory be to his blessed name, he will accomplish all his purposes, for this is a day of salvation, and his people shall be called to him by some means, by any means, by every

means. They shall be brought up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; and they shall know that the Lord saveth not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit.

I think I have worked out that point sufficiently. "Now is the day of salvation."

I wonder whether anybody mistakes me. Dear friends, you know we commonly call this year 1878 a year of grace. We are quite right, for it is so. We say Anno Domini, the year of our Lord, and so it is; it is Jesus Christ's year. Any time between the first of January and the last of December in which you seek him, he will be found of you. Suppose you try it now, There cannot be a better hour. Here, where many have found him, consecrate that seat on which you sit. Dear brother, may the Holy Spirit help you to do so by now saying, "I would be reconciled to thee, my God, by the great Mediator: I would accept this salvation which thou hast freely set before me." I pray you do so.

III. To some of you I have spoken these many years, getting now into the twenty-fifth year, and shall I speak in vain? Our last word was to be something about A DARK CLOUD WHICH MAY DARKEN THE CLOSE OF THIS DAY OF SALVATION. I pray it may not, yet I fear it. My dread is lest you receive this great favor in vain, lest you live in this day of salvation and yet are lost. That will be for me a calamity, for I shall lose my labor; and more, there will be your mother's tears all lost, your father's prayers all lost, and your Sabbath school teacher's earnest instructions all lost, and other ministers' frequent invitations all gone for nothing. May it not be so, for that is unprofitable for you as well as for us. You will have lost all those Sabbaths, all those Bible readings, all those prickings of conscience. I know some of you are very attentive hearers and yet you have not found grace in this day of salvation. Salvation is all round you, yet you have it not. You have wasted golden opportunities. Ah, there will come a day when you will wish for another Sabbath but it will be denied you; your last sermon shall have been heard and your last warning shall have been received. Do not lose, I pray you, the privileges you enjoy of being born in a Christian land, of having an open Bible, of listening to an earnest ministry. Do not let those who never enjoyed such

privileges have in the eternal world the start of you. Do not let Sodom and Gomorrah and Tyre and Sidon have to tell you that it is more tolerable for them in hell than for you. The Lord Jesus assures us that it will be so if you have been hearers of the gospel and lived in the day of salvation and received this grace in vain.

The text says it is a day; and a day comes to an end. These are no words of mine, but the words of Scripture. "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day if ye will hear his voice." Do you not see that the day of salvation, though it has lasted eighteen hundred years and more, is still a day, and will surely end? The opportunity of mercy lasts not for ever, let none deceive you as to that matter. The hope of grace will end with the day of grace; let not the smooth-tongued ministers of the devil who enter the pulpits of Christ now-a-days delude you as to any vain hope that another day of grace will come. I have no such flattering message to speak to you, but I speak as this Book teacheth. If you let this day of salvation pass, and if you glide into another world unsaved you are lost for ever. I know no more, but I know that this Bible so declareth it. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." Do not indulge vain dreams. If the Lord speaks of a day, be sure that he hath limited the day; and if he declares this to be the day of salvation, you are not authorized to expect that another such period will ever come. "If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses" (listen to that): "of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God." Oh, yield to the Lord Jesus, accept his salvation, and trust him at once. I pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. Amen.

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A Day To Be Remembered

And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house. - Luke 19:9

Observe, dear friends, that our Lord spoke this sentence to Zacchaeus. Some of us may have fancied that he said it to the objecting people, but he did not. They may have heard it, and their objection may have been answered by it, but the main purpose of our blessed Lord, in uttering those words, was not to answer objectors, but to comfort one who might feel dispirited by their murmuring remark. Therefore, "Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house."

It is always better to comfort believers than to answer cavillers. The cavillers scarcely deserve a reply, for they are pretty sure to find fault again; it is according to their nature to do so. But as for the poor distressed people of God, who gladly receive the truth, and yet have to endure unkind observations, let these be cheered, for has not the Lord himself said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people"? Now, what could give Zaccheus greater consolation than for the Lord Jesus Christ to bear witness to the fact of his salvation. "Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house."

I fancy that I can hear some of you say, "We should count it the happiest day in our lives if the Lord Jesus would come and tell us that salvation had come to us." But, beloved, you cannot have him come, in the flesh, to say that to you, for he has gone away, to carry on his service elsewhere; among other things, he has gone to prepare a place for you who believe in him. But his Spirit is equally divine, and he is with us as always; and you may have the Spirit of God bearing witness with your spirit that you are the children of God. Nay, I trust that you not only believe that you may have this witness, but that you actually have had it—you have had that secret, silent, inward evidence which no man understands but the one who receives it; and you know, in your own soul, that you have passed from death unto life, because the Holy Spirit has sealed that truth upon your heart. Therefore, dear friend, be joyful; yea, be exceedingly glad. If anything can make a man leap for joy, it ought to be the assurance of his eternal safety. If salvation has come to your heart, you ought to be as happy as an angel; I think that there are some reasons why you should be even happier, for an angel cannot know, by personal experience, the bliss of having his sins forgiven. You, who have realized this wondrous

blessing, ought to cause the wilderness and the solitary place to resound with the melody of your thanksgiving, and with the music of your grateful delight you should make even the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Oh, what bliss it is to be assured by the Holy Spirit himself that you have passed from death unto life, and that salvation has indeed come unto you! May many of you enjoy that bliss from this very hour!

Now let us come directly to the text. "This day," says Christ, "is salvation come to this house." You will not forget the outline of the sermon, for it is very simple, and one that can be easily remembered. First, This day,—what? Secondly, This day,—why? Thirdly, This day,—why not?

I. First, THIS DAY,—WHAT? What about this day?

Christ says, "This day is salvation come to this house." He seemed to cut that day out of all the rest of time, and to say concerning it, "This day,—this particular day,—on this very day,—is salvation come to you." Then, let this day be a holy day, and let it be a holiday; let it be remembered for many a year; yea, let it be recollected throughout all time and throughout eternity, too: "this day."

You know that there are some people who observe certain days which God has not ordained to be kept in any special manner. The Galatians did so, and therefore Paul wrote to them, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." We do not, judge those who act in a similar way to-day; but, still, like Paul, we are afraid of them; that is to say, we fear they are mistaken in what they do. But there are some days which God commanded to be observed.

The first was, the day when the work of creation was finished, concerning which we read, "On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." The completion of the creation, when, "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," deserves to be remembered. And does not the new creation also deserve to be remembered? When the Lord creates

in a man a new heart and a right spirit, shall we not say, one to another, "This day—this joyful day—this divine day—this, new creation day—is a day to be observed very specially"?

It is clear, from the practice of the apostles, that the Lord intends us to observe the first day of the week, because that was the day of Christ's resurrection from the dead, the day of the completion of our redemption; and well may we commemorate the complete redemption even more than the complete creation. Shall not each saved man specially celebrate the day when he was redeemed from sin? Shall he not count it worthy to be observed, with holy rites of preaching, praise, and prayer, and to be had in grateful remembrance as long as he lives? Each believer can say of the Lord's day, "This day, the Lord redeemed my soul out of the land of the enemy, and set me free for ever." God has appointed but one day to be kept sacred above all others; that is the Lord's day. Your Christmas days, and your Good Fridays, and all such seasons, are only observed by man's ordinance; but the Sabbath is ordained of God, and that is to be observed as the emblem of rest. Now, surely, when a man comes into rest, and "we which have believed do enter into rest," then that day should be specially observed by him. It should become a Sabbath unto the Lord throughout the man's whole life,—that happy day in which salvation came to him. Let, then, "this day" stand as a special day in your calendar; mark it with a red line, if you like; or mark it with a golden seal, and let it be had in remembrance evermore.

Our Lord said to Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to this house." From these Words I learn, first, that salvation is a speedy blessing. It can come to a house in a day; nay, more, it can take possession of a man's heart in a day; nay, to go further, this great work can be "accomplished in a single moment. I suppose that the new birth is actually a thing which requires no appreciable period of time;—a flash, and it is done. If a man be dead, and he is restored to life:, there may be, in certain respects, a gradual operation upon that man, and some time may elapse before he is able to walk; but there must be a certain instant in which there is life in the man, whereas, a moment before, there was no life in him. The actual quickening must be a thing that is instantaneous, so that the working of salvation in a man may not only be performed this. day, or this hour, or

this quarter of an hour, but this minute, or even this second. Between light and darkness there is usually a period of twilight, and so there is in the soul; but, even in twilight:, there is a measure of light, and there must be a moment when the first real beam of light begins to smite the ebonite darkness. So there must be a moment when grace first enters the soul, and the man, who before was graceless, becomes gracious. I think this is a good point to be remembered. You poor deluded souls, who hope to save yourselves by your own works, will have to keep on throughout your whole lives at that useless occupation, and even when you lie dying, you may be sure that you are not saved if you have been trusting to your own works. But he that believes in Christ Jesus is saved there and then, and he can joyfully sing,

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

This is a blessed fact, that salvation can come to a soul this very hour; nay, as I have already reminded you, long ere the hand of that clock shall have reached the end of this hour, salvation may have entered into many hearts that are in this place, as truly as it entered into the house of Zacchaeus.

Next, I learn from our text that salvation is a discernible blessing: "This day is salvation come to this house." Christ could see it, so that it was something which could be seen. Ay, and salvation was also seen by Zacchaeus himself, and the fruits of it were soon seen by those who were in the house with him. Do not suppose that a man can be saved, and yet know nothing about the great change that has been wrought in him. It is not every man who can say for certain that he is saved, for faith is a thing of growth and assurance may not come at once; but when a man is really and completely saved, he has but to use the proper means, and he may become absolutely certain of it. God the Holy Spirit is willing and waiting to give the full assurance of faith and of understanding to those who seek it at his hands.

Next, salvation is a perfect blessing: "This day is salvation come to this house." Well, but only as late as yesterday, that man had not even Seen

Jesus. Half an hour ago, he was climbing a tree, like a boy might have done, with no wish but just to get a sight of Jesus; and, now, is that man saved! "Yes," says Christ, "this day is salvation come to this house." "But, surely, you don't talk as positively as that concerning a man who came here to-night unsaved, and who has just trusted in Jesus. You must mean that he has reached a hopeful stage in his experience, and that, after several years, he may perhaps come to be really assured that he is a saved man." I mean nothing of the sort; I mean just what the text implies, which is that, the moment the Lord Jesus Christ crossed the threshold of the house of Zacchaeus, his sins were forgiven him, his heart was renewed, his spirit was changed, and he was a saved man. "But," someone asks, "is anybody ever saved before he dies?" Yes, certainly. Were those persons dead of whom Paul wrote, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." They were living men and women, yet the apostle said that they were saved, and so they were. And, at the present moment, here are hundreds of thousands of believers in Jesus, upon the face of this earth, who are as truly saved now as they will be when they stand before the burning throne of God "without spot, or wrinkle or any such thing." In God's judgment, by virtue of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on whom they are resting by faith, they have been delivered from condemnation, they have escaped, from the dominion of sin, and, in a word, they are saved. So, you see dear friends, that salvation is a perfect blessing.

Notice, next, that it is a much-containing blessing. A man who believes in Christ is saved directly, but he does not fully know how much that word "saved" means yet. It is like a big box that comes into the house, and you begin to open it, and to take out first one thing and then another. "There," you say, "that is all." "Oh, no!" says somebody, who looks more carefully, "here is another packet." "Well, then, that is surely all; there is nothing but straw now at the bottom of the box." You put your hand in, and you cry, "Why! there is something more, and something more; what a boxful it is!" And what a boxful salvation is! You have no idea what there is in it, not only the pardon of sin, but justifying righteousness; not only that, but regeneration, a new heart, and a right; spirit; not only that, but sanctification, adoption, acceptance, power in prayer, preservation,

perseverance, victory;—yea, we are to be more than conquerors through him that hath loved us;—and all that is in the box. Ay, and more too; for we are to have a safe and happy departure out of this world, and an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God our Father. All that is in the box; and all that had come into the house of Zacchaeus when the Lord Jesus Christ came there; and you also have all that if you have Christ, for it is all in Christ. You know how he said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." You will never get to the bottom of that box which bears the name "salvation." However great your needs may be, you may keep on taking out of it all that you require, and still there shall be more left; or, to change the figure, salvation is a springing well, from which the more you draw the more there is remaining, for drawn wells are always the sweetest, and usually the fullest. So, bring your buckets to this great well of gospel grace that is springing up at your very feet. Thus, you see that salvation is an all-containing blessing.

And, next, it is a spreading blessing, for salvation had come to the house of Zacchaeus,—not to himself only, but to his wife, his children, and his Servants, I hope it means. I never like to have the servants left out, though I am afraid that they often are. You servants who live in Christian families, mind that you do not get left out; for, remember that Noah, although he was a good man, did not get a servant into the ark with him and his family. Recollect Lot also, he was a good man of a very poor sort, and he only got his two children out of Sodom, and no servant went with them. It is a sad thing when you live and labor in the midst of Christian people, and yet you yourselves remain unsaved. I hope and believe that, in the case of Zacchaeus, all in his house were saved when salvation came there.

But, once more, the salvation which had come to the house of Zacchaeus, was an abiding blessing, for I never read that it went away again. If salvation comes to a man's house, it comes to stay there, as Christ said to Zacchaeus, "I must abide at thy house." I can never believe in a man being saved for a time, and then falling from grace, and having to begin

all over again. If he does not hold on his way to the end, it is clear that he never was really saved at all. As I have often told you, I can understand a man being regenerated:, that is, being born again; but then some people tell us that it is possible for him, afterwards, to fall away from grace. But what is to become of him the next time? Why, I suppose that he must be re-regenerated—born again and again; but I never read, in Scripture, anything of the kind. A man may be born again once, but he cannot be born again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again. That cannot be; when the work of regeneration is done once, it is done for ever. The work of man comes to an end, but the work of God fails not. That which is born of God is as immortal as God himself; the new life, that comes into the converted man from God, cannot die. How often do we ring in the ears of our friends those glorious words of our Lord, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Happy is the man to whose house salvation comes, for it comes to stay world without end.

That must suffice for the first head, This day,—what?

II. Now, secondly, we are to think of another aspect of the subject, that is, THIS DAY,—WHY? Why had salvation come to the house of Zacchaeus that day?

I answer, because, that day, Zacchaeus was called by effectual grace; and whenever effectual grace comes to anyone, it brings salvation. "Wherefore, brethren," as Peter says, "give diligence to make your calling and election sure," for these are the "things that accompany salvation." If you are sure that you are called of God, you may be quite certain that you are saved, for "this day"—the day in which a man is effectually called by grace, this day does salvation come to his house. Look, dear friends, God chose his people in his everlasting purpose, but salvation did not come to their houses that day. They knew nothing of it at that time, for they were not then born. Christ redeemed his people when he died on the cross, but salvation did not come to their houses that day, for the most of them were

not then in existence. But, in the fulness of time, the gospel was preached to them, and they heard it; yet, in all cases, salvation did not come to their houses that day, for though they heard it, they refused it. But the moment that effectual grace says to anyone, "To-day I must abide at thy house," that grace at once gains admission, and salvation comes there and then to that, man's house. You remember how the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans: "Whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." These great blessings are joined together, like the links of a chain, and you cannot pull them asunder. There is the calling that fits into the justification, and the chain is so made that the two links never can be separated. And then justification fits into glorification in such a way that you cannot possibly part them. It is no use for anyone to try to separate them. The devil may pull and hammer as much as ever he likes, but all his efforts will be in vain. I have sometimes likened that passage in Romans to a vast suspension bridge between earth and heaven: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." If you get your foot firmly resting on that great plank of effectual calling, you may be quite sure that you will be able to cross all the rest of the bridge, and will most certainly reach the other side, and be "for ever with the Lord."

But how do we know that Zacchaeus was really called? I answer in such a way that you may know whether you also are called or not. The call of Zacchaeus was an effectual call, first, because it was a personal call. He was up in the sycomore tree, and he heard Christ call, "Zacchaeus." "Why!" he said to himself, "That is my name; he is calling me." "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down." "Then he can see that I am up here; his description exactly fits my case." Now, when you come and hear me preach the gospel, I try to put the truth before you in a clear and very pointed manner. Some people say that it is wrong to be personal in preaching, but I always try to be as personal as ever I can. Yet I know that many of my hearers pass on to their neighbors and friends what I say to them. "Oh! that just fits Mrs. So-and-So," says somebody. No, my dear sir,—it is meant for you, but you will not take it home to yourself. But

when the Lord Jesus Christ himself calls, then the man says, "Dear me! I do not believe that the preacher can see me right away here, yet he is speaking straight at me; I am sure that he is. How singular! He just mentioned something that cannot have occurred to anybody but me; he has exactly described my case." Those are the times when God is about to bless the soul,—when the man feels himself picked out from the rest of the congregation, and the gospel sharpshooter is just covering him with his rifle of grace. I pray that the blessed bullet of the gospel may find its billet in the very center of your heart, and bring you down at the feet of Jesus as a weeping penitent: "Zacchaeus!" The Lord knew that was the name of the man up the sycamore; and he also knows your name and your character; and when he means to call you by his effectual grace, he will hold your photograph up, and make you say, "Yes, that is my portrait; there is nobody else exactly like that."

Next, it was a royal call. Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "To-day I must abide at thy house." One of our proverbs says, "Must is for the king;" and when the King speaks, he must be obeyed. We who are his ministers try to be very pressing and urgent; but when the Master himself utters the call, where: the word of that King is there is power. I hope he is saying to someone here, "To-day I must abide in thy heart." Now you have come to the point when you also will have to say, "I must." There must be no turning back now, dear friend; you must not say to Christ, "Go thy way for this time." No; but you must say, "This time present, is the time when I also will say 'must' as Christ says it to me." That is an effectual call when it comes as a royal mandate, a warrant from the King: "I must."

Then, next, it was a call which produced immediate obedience. The Lord said to Zacchaeus, "Make haste, and come down;" and we read, "He made haste, and came down." I think I see him coming down that tree a great deal faster than he had gone up; he had not moved at such a rate as that for a long while; but he scurried down, for he was told to make haste by One whose command compelled him to obey. When the Lord Jesus Christ calls any of you effectually, you will not put off your decision till the next morning; you will not say, "I will wait till I can get home and pray;" you will not even say, "I will wait till the end of the service, and then talk with a Christian person;" but your prayer will be, "Lord, help me

to look to Jesus now. I yield myself up to thee this very instant. I am in a hurry about it. Lord, I am making haste to get to thee; make haste to come and save me. I would not delay a single second longer. I want to be thine alone, and thine at once." That is a mark of effectual calling, when immediate obedience is given to the call.

Another mark in the case of Zacchaeus was, that it was joyful obedience; "He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." oh! the joy of the heart that receives Christ when Christ himself does really come to the soul! The moment I believed in Christ, I wanted to shout "Hallelujah"; and if I had done so, I think that I might have been forgiven. The moment one believes in Christ and knows that his sin is all gone, what extravagance would be extravagant under such circumstances! Is not the man justified in being joyful when at length his iniquity is blotted out, and his transgression is covered? It is a mark of effectual calling when we receive Christ joyfully.

In the case of Zacchaeus, observe that his obedience was complete, for Christ said, "To-day I must abide at thy house;" and "he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully" at his house, for the people murmured because Christ had gone to be his guest Now, dear friends, will you also receive Christ? That is the point. Are you willing to let him come unto you, and be your salvation? Are you eager that he should come? Do you beg him to Come? Depend upon it, he will come to you when you are ready to receive him; but mind you do not trust for salvation to anything else or anyone else but Christ. Be satisfied with nothing but the everliving Savior to be your Savior from first to last.

There was yet one more mark of the effectual calling of Zacchaeus, and that was that he received Christ in a spiritual sense, for he did not only take him into his house, but he took him into his heart. I know that he did so because he began at once to purge his heart by driving out covetousness. That was a splendid way of getting rid of it when he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor?" Then he began to drive put his former grasping habit, for he said, "And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." That was clear evidence that he meant to receive Christ, in all his holy, gracious

teaching, no merely as a man and a stranger; but, spiritually, as his Master, his Ruler, his Teacher, his Guide,—in a word, as his Savior.

III. Now, lastly, THIS DAY—WHY NOT?

And now I change the day altogether, for I mean this very day when I am speaking to you, this first of October in the present year of grace 1882. "This day." This day,—why not. Why should we not, "this day," give ourselves to Christ. I have tried to think of any reason why a man should not give himself up to the Lord Jesus Christ this day, and I cannot find one. Then, why should he give himself to Christ this day, on this particular day I think I know several reasons why he should do so.

First, it is late enough. Surely you do not want to wait any longer, How old did you say you are, friend? Seventy-six? Eighty-six? What! as old as that, and not yet saved? You do not need one like me, so much younger, to urge you to speedy decision. Or did you say that you are not more than my own age,—not yet fifty? Well, I find it is quite late enough for me. There are certain influences and sensations creeping over me, which make me realize that I am somewhat different from what I used to be, and I expect it is the same with you. I think it is getting rather late in life for you to be still undecided. Perhaps some younger person says, "But I am only one-and-twenty." Well, that is late enough to be without Christ; it is a thousand pities that the devil should have had one-and-twenty years of your life. I was converted to the Lord Jesus Christ when I was fifteen, but I wish it could have been fifteen years before. Oh, that I had known and loved him as soon as I knew an thing, and had lisped his name with the first words I ever uttered! I think every Christian will say the same. Whatever our age is, the time past may well suffice to have wrought the will of he flesh. Do not you think so, my friend? Have not you had quite enough of sin? What profit have you ever received from it? It is surely quite late enough for you to receive Christ as your Savior.

And, further, it is late enough in the year. It seems to me, when the leaves are falling all around you, as if they all said to you, "We all do fade as a leaf." Is it not fully time to seek the Lord? I know of no season that seems more suited for pensive thought than just now when the year seems to be

weeping itself into its tomb, and burying itself amid falling leaves. Now is the time to yield yourself to the Lord; there cannot be a better period than just now,—ere yet the year is fully gone.

The mercy is, dear friend, that, though it is quite late enough, it is not too late for anybody here. There is yet time for you to seek the Lord. It is a pity to have put the Lord off until you yourself have got into the sere and yellow leaf; but yet there is time to turn unto him. What! have you reached the eleventh hour of life? It is late, it is very late; but, still, it is not yet too late. It is not yet too late even if you are to die this week; and there are some out of this great company who will, I suppose, pass into the unseen world this week. Dear friend, I know not who you are, but you who stand nearest to your eternal destiny, it is not yet too late even for you. I pray you, clutch at once at the great mercy now offered to you. God help you so to do!

Every week, I have to hear of some out of our number who have passed away. There have been some this last week, and some whom I certainly thought we might have had with us for a long time. They were, apparently, in good health, yet now they are to be buried at the beginning of the week, for they have gone from us quite suddenly. And why may not some of you be the next to be taken! Do not postpone your decision any longer; I would that we could say to-night, "This day, October 1st, some soul did receive salvation. Let the recording angel mark it down." The harvest is not quite over, though I thought it was. We down south have almost forgotten it, but there is a farming friend up-with us to-day, who said to me, "We have not finished our harvest, for we have not got the beans in yet." So, you see, the harvest is not quite over, but I do not want you to have to say, The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." I would like to get some of you to come in with the beans, just with the last crop. Oh, that you might be brought to Christ just at this fag end of the harvest! The Master is willing that you should come to him even now, so do not delay. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation."

Remember, also, that to-day is gospel time. Still is Christ preached unto

you, still is the door of mercy set open before you, still is the cry "Come" uttered by the Spirit, and the bride, the Lamb's wife echoes it, "Come." Still the water of life is freely flowing for all who are willing to receive it.

Recollect, too, that this is praying time. You are still on praying ground; a prayer will find God yet. A traveler tells us that, when he was in the East, he saw the procession of a Sultan passing through a certain city. The monarch was there, all bedizened with gems and every kind of barbaric ornament, and surrounded by his guards. There was a poor wretch who wanted to get a petition to the Sultan, and he did not know how to manage it. He had no money with which to bribe the officials, and he could not force his way through the armed men; so, in his desperation, he got near enough to throw the petition down at the monarch's feet, but one of the soldiers stuck a spear through it, and he held it aloft, and that was the end of it, for the Sultan took no notice of the incident, he was much too great a man to attend to the petition of his poor subject. It is never so with God. Cast your petition, now you may, at his dear feet, he will answer it, and send you on your way rejoicing.

You are not only on praying ground, for to-night seems to me to be a very auspicious season, for it is communion time. God's people are presently coming together around his table to remember Christ. Will not you also remember him? We are about to receive Christ spiritually through the emblems of bread and wine which will et him forth to us. Why should not you also receive Christ, in a spiritual fashion, by faith, as your Savior? Oh, that you would press through the throng, and bow at the feet of Jesus Christ, our Lord! If you do so, he will accept you, and again it shall be said, "This day is salvation come to this house." God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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Death And Life In Christ

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. - Romans 6:8-11

The apostles never traveled far from the simple facts of Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and second advent. These things, of which they were the witnesses, constituted the staple of all their discourses. Newton has very properly said that the two pillars of our religion are, the work of Christ for us, and his work in us by the Holy Spirit. If you want to find the apostles, you will surely discover them standing between these two pillars; they are either discoursing upon the effect of the passion in our justification, or its equally delightful consequence in our death to the world and our newness of life. What a rebuke this should be to those in modern times who are ever straining after novelties. There may be much of the Athenian spirit among congregations, but that should be no excuse for its being tolerated among ministers; we, of all men, should be the last to spend our time in seeking something new. Our business, my brethren, is the old labor of apostolic tongues, to declare that Jesus, who is the same yesterday to-day and for ever. We are mirrors reflecting the transactions of Calvary, telescopes manifesting the distant glories of an exalted Redeemer. The nearer we keep to the cross, the nearer, I think, we keep to our true vocation. When the Lord shall be pleased to restore to his Church once more a fervent love to Christ, and when once again we shall have a ministry that is not only flavoured with Christ, but of which Jesus constitutes the sum and substance, then shall the Churches revive—then shall the set time to favor Zion come. The goodly cedar which was planted by the rivers of old, and stretched out her branches far and wide, has become in these modern days like a tree dwarfed by Chinese art; it is planted by the rivers as aforetime, but it does not flourish, only let God the Holy Spirit give to us once again the bold and clear preaching of Christ crucified in all simplicity and earnestness, and the dwarf shall swell into a forest giant, each expanding bud shall burst into foliage, and the cedar shall tower aloft again, until the birds of the air shall lodge in the branches thereof. I need offer you no apology, then, for preaching on those matters which

engrossed all the time of the apostles, and which shall shower unnumbered blessings on generations yet to come.

I. THE FACTS REFERRED TO IN THESE FOUR VERSES CONSTITUTE THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL WHICH WE PREACH.

1. The first fact here very clearly indicated is that Jesus died. He who was divine, and therefore immortal, bowed his head to death. He whose human nature was allied to the omnipotence of his divine nature, was pleased voluntarily to submit himself to the sword of death. He who was pure and perfect, and therefore deserved not death, which is the wages of sin, nevertheless condescended for our sake to yield himself up to die. This is the second note in the Gospel scale. The first note is incarnation, Jesus Christ became a man; angels thought this worthy of their songs, and made the heavens ring with midnight melodies. The second note is this, I say, that, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He died as a sacrifice. Methinks, after many lambs from the flocks of men had poured out their blood at the foot of the altar, it was a strange spectacle to see God's Lamb brought to that same altar to be sacrificed. He is without spot or blemish, or any such thing. He is the firstling of the flock; he is the only one of the Great Master; a right royal, heavenly lamb. Such a Lamb had never been seen before. He is the Lamb who is worshipped in heaven, and who is to be adored world without end. Will that sacred head condescend to feel the axe? Will that glorious victim really be slain? Is it possible that God's Lamb will actually submit to die? He does so without a struggle; he is dumb in the shambles before the slaughterers; he gives up the warm blood of his heart to the hand of the executioner, that he might expiate the wrath of God. Tell it. Let heaven ring with music, and let hell be filled with confusion! Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, the Lamb of Jehovah's Passover, died. His hands were pierced; and his heart was broken; to prove how surely the spear had struck the mark, the vital fluid flowed in a double flood, even to the ground:—Jesus died. If there were any doubt about this, there were doubt about your salvation and mine. If there were any reason to question this fact, then we might question the possibility of salvation. But Jesus died, and sin is put away. The sacrifice smokes to heaven; Jehovah smelleth a sweet savor, and is pleased through Christ

the victim to accept the prayers, the offerings, and the persons of his people. Nor did he die as a victim only. He died as a substitute. We were drawn as soldiers for the great warfare, and we could not go, for we were feeble, and should have fallen in the battle, and have left our bones to be devoured of the dogs of hell. But he, the mighty Son of God, became the substitute for us; entered the battle-field; sustained the first charge of the adversary in the wilderness; three times he repulsed the grim fiend and all his host, smiting his assailants with the sword of the Spirit, until the enemy fled, and angels waited upon the weary Victor. The conflict was not over, the enemy had but retired to forge fresh artillery and recruit his scattered forces for a yet more terrible affray. For three years the great Substitute kept the field against continual onslaughts from the advance guard of the enemy, remaining conqueror in every skirmish. No adversary dared to show his face, or if he shot an arrow at him from a distance, our substitute caught the arrow on his shield, and laughed his foes to scorn. Devils were cast out of many that were possessed; whole legions of them were compelled to find refuge in a herd of swine; and Lucifer himself fell like lightning from the heaven of his power. At last the time came when hell had gathered up all its forces, and now was also come the hour when Christ, as our substitute, must carry his obedience to the utmost length; he must be obedient unto death. He has been a substitute up till now; will he now throw down his vicarious character? Will he now renounce our responsibilities, and declare that we may stand for ourselves? Not he. He undertook, and must go through. Sweating great drops of blood, he nevertheless flinches not from the dread assault. Wounded in hands and in feet he still maintained his ground, and though, for obedience sake, he bowed his head to die, yet in that dying he slew death, put his foot upon the dragons' neck, crushed the head of the old serpent, and beat our adversaries as small as the dust of the threshing-floor. Yes, the blessed Substitute has died. I say if there were a question about this, then we might have to die, but inasmuch as he died for us, the believer shall not die. The debt is discharged to the utmost farthing; the account is cleared; the balance is struck; the scales of justice turn in our favor; God's sword is sheathed for ever, and the blood of Christ has sealed it in its scabbard. We are free, for Christ was bound; we live, for Jesus died. Dying thus as a sacrifice and as a substitute, it is a comfort to us to know that he also died as Mediator between God and

man. There was a great gulf fixed, so that if we would pass to God we could not, neither could he pass to us if he would condescend to do so. There was no way of filling up this gulf, unless there should be found one who, like the old Roman, Curtius, would leap into it. Jesus comes, arrayed in his pontifical garments, wearing the breast-plate, bearing the ephod, a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec: his kingly character is not forgotten, for his head is adorned with a glittering crown, and o'er his shoulders he bears the prophet's mantle. How shall I describe the matchless glories of the prophet-king, the royal priest? Will he throw himself into the chasm? He will. Into the grave he plunges, the abyss is closed! The gulf is bridged, and God can have communion with man! I see before me the heavy veil which shields from mortal eyes the place where God's glory shineth. No man may touch that veil or he must die. Is there any man found who can rend it?—that man may approach the mercy-seat. O that the veil which parts our souls from him that dwelleth between the cherubims could be torn throughout its utmost length! Strong archangel, wouldest thou dare to rend it? Shouldest thou attempt the work, thine immortality were forfeited, and thou must expire. But Jesus comes, the King Immortal, Invisible, with his strong hands he rends the veil from top to bottom, and now men draw nigh with confidence, for when Jesus died a living way was opened. Sing, O heavens, and rejoice O earth! There is now no wall of partition, for Christ has dashed it down! Christ has taken away the gates of death, posts and bars, and all, and like another Samson carried them upon his shoulders far away. This, then, is one of the great notes of the Gospel, the fact that Jesus died. Oh! ye who would be save'd, believe that Jesus died; believe that the Son of God expired; trust that death to save you, and you are saved. 'Tis no great mystery; it needs no learned words, no polished phrases; Jesus died; the sacrifice smokes; the substitute bleeds; the Mediator fills up the gap; Jesus dies; believe and live.

2. But Jesus rises: this is no mean part of the Gospel. He dies; they lay him in the new sepulchre; they embalm his body in spices; his adversaries are careful that his body shall not be stolen away; the stone, the seal, the watch, all prove their vigilance. Aha! Aha! What do ye, men? Can ye imprison immortality in the tomb! The fiends of hell, too, I doubt not, watched the sepulchre, wondering what it all could mean. But the

third day comes, and with it the messenger from heaven. He touches the stone; it rolls away; he sits upon it, as if he would defy the whole universe to roll that stone back again. Jesus awakes, as a mighty man from his slumber; unwraps the napkin from his head and lays it by itself; unwinds the cerements in which love had wrapped him, and puts them by themselves; for he had abundant leisure; he was in no haste; he was not about to escape like a felon who bursts the prison, but like one whose time of jail-deliverance has come, and lawfully and leisurely leaves his cell; he steps to the upper air, bright, shining, glorious, and fair. He lives. He died once, but he rose again from the dead. There is no need for us to enlarge here. We only pause to remark that this is one of the most jubilant notes in the whole gospel scale; for see, brethren, the rich mysteries, which, like the many seeds of the pomegranate, are all enclosed in the golden apple of resurrection. Death is overcome. There is found a man who by his own power was able to struggle with death, and hurl him down. The grave is opened; there is found a man able to dash back its bolts and to rifle its treasures; and thus, brethren, having delivered himself, he is able also to deliver others. Sin, too, was manifestly forgiven. Christ was in prison as a hostage, kept there as a surety; now that he is suffered to go free, it is a declaration on God's behalf that he has nothing against us; our substitute is discharged; we are discharged. He who undertook to pay our debt is suffered to go free; we go free in him. "He rose again for our justification." Nay more, inasmuch as he rises from the dead, he gives us a pledge that hell is conquered. This was the great aim of hell to keep Christ beneath its heel. "Thou shalt bruise his heel." They had gotten the heel of Christ, his mortal flesh beneath their power, but that bruised heel came forth unwounded; Christ sustained no injury by his dying; he was as glorious, even in his human nature, as he was before he expired. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption." Beloved, in this will we triumph, that hell is worsted; Satan is put to confusion, and all his hosts are fallen before Immanuel. Sinner, believe this; it is the Gospel of thy salvation. Believe that Jesus of Nazareth rose again from the dead, and trust him, trust him to save thy soul. Because he burst the gates of the grave, trust him to bear thy sins, to justify thy person, to quicken thy spirit, and to raise thy dead body, and verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt be saved.

3. We now strike a third note, without which the gospel were not complete. Inasmuch as Jesus died, he is now living. He does not, after forty days, return to the grave; he departs from earth, but it is by another way. From the top of Olivet he ascends until a cloud receives him out of their sight. And now at this very day he lives. There at his Father's right hand he sits, bright like a sun; clothed in majesty; the joy of all the glorified spirits; his Father's intense delight. There he sits, Lord of Providence; at his girdle swing the keys of heaven, and earth, and hell. There he sits, expecting the hour when his enemies shall be made his footstool. Methinks I see him, too, as he lives to intercede. He stretches his wounded hands, points to his breastplate bearing the names of his people, and for Zion's sake he doth not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake he doth not rest day nor night, but ever pleadeth—"Oh God! bless thy heritage; gather together thy scattered ones; I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Believer, this it a cluster of camphire to thee, a bundle of myrrh—be thou comforted exceedingly.

"He lives! the great Redeemer lives!
What joy the blest assurance gives!"

Trembling penitent, let a living Savior cheer thee. Exercise faith in him who only hath immortality. He lives to hear thy prayer; cry to him, he lives to present that prayer before his Father's face. Put yourself in his hands; he lives to gather together those whom he bought with his blood, to make those the people of his flock who were once the people of his purchase. Sinner, dost thou believe this as a matter of fact? If so, rest thy soul on it, and make it shine as a matter of confidence, and then thou art saved.

4. One more note, and our gospel-song need not rise higher. Jesus died; he rose; he lives; and he lives for ever. He lives for ever. He shall not die again. "Death hath no more dominion over him." Ages shall follow ages, but his raven locks shall never be blanched with years. "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Disease may visit the world and fill the graves, but no disease or plague can touch the immortal Savior. The shock of the last

catastrophe shall shake both heaven and earth, until the stars shall fall like withered fig-leaves from the tree, but nothing shall move the unchanging Savior. He lives for ever. There is no possibility that he should be overcome by a new death.

"No more the bloody spear,
The cross and nails no more;
For hell itself shakes at his name,
And all the heavens adore."

Would it not be a strange doctrine indeed if any man should dream that the Son of God would again offer his life a sacrifice. He dieth no more. This, too, reveals another part of our precious gospel, for now it is certain, since he lives for ever, that no foes can overcome him. He has so routed his enemies and driven his foes off the battle-field, that they will never venture to attack him again. This proves, too, that his people's eternal life is sure. Let Jesus die, and his people die. Let Christ leave heaven, and, O ye glorified ones! ye must all vacate your thrones, and leave your crowns without heads to wear them, and your harps untouched by fingers that shall wake them to harmony. He lives for ever. Oh! seed of Abraham, ye are saved with an everlasting salvation by the sure mercies of David. Your standing in earth and heaven has been confirmed eternally. God is honored, saints are comforted, and sinners are cheered, for "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Now I would to God that on one of these four anchor-holds your faith might be able to get rest. Jesus died, poor trembler; if he died and took thy griefs, will not his atonement save thee? Rest here. Millions of souls have rested on nothing but Jesus' death, and this is a granite foundation; no storms of hell can shake it. Get a good handhold on his cross; hold it, and it will hold you. You cannot depend on his death and be deceived. Try it; taste and see, and you shall find that the Lord is good, and that none can trust a dying Savior without being with him in Paradise. But if this suffice you not, he rose again. Fasten upon this. He is proved to be victor over your sin and over your adversary; can you not, therefore, depend upon him? Doubtless there have been thousands of saints who have

found the richest consolation from the fact that Jesus rose again from the dead. He rose again for our justification. Sinner, hang on that. Having risen he lives. He is not a dead Savior, a dead sacrifice. He must be able to hear our plea and to present his own. Depend on a living Savior; depend on him now. He lives for ever, and therefore it is not too late for him to save you. If thou criest to him he will hear thy prayer, even though it be in life's last moment, for he lives for ever. Though the ends of the earth were come, and you were the last man, yet he ever lives to intercede before his Father's face. Oh! gad not about to find any other hope! Here are four great stones for you; build your hope on these; you cannot want surer foundations—he dies, he rises, he lives, he lives for ever. I tell thee, Soul, this is my only hope, and though I lean thereon with all my weight it bends not. This is the hope of all God's people, and they abide contented in it. Do thou, I pray thee, now come and rest on it. May the Spirit of God bring many of you to Christ. We have no other gospel. You thought it a hard thing, a scholarly thing, a matter that the college must teach you, that the university must give you. It is no such matter for learning and scholarship. Your little child knows it, and your child may be saved by it. You without education, you that can scarce read in the book, you can comprehend this. He dies; there is the cross. He rises; there is the open tomb. He lives; there is the pleading Savior. He lives for ever; there is the perpetual merit. Depend on him! Put your soul in his hand and you are saved.

If I have brought you under the first head of my discourse to a sufficient height; you can now take another step, and mount to something higher; I do not mean higher as to real value, but higher as a matter of knowledge, because it follows upon the fact as a matter of experience.

II. The great facts mentioned in our text represent **THE GLORIOUS WORK WHICH EVERY BELIEVER FEELS WITHIN HIM.**

In the text we see death, resurrection, life, and life eternal. You observe that the Apostle only mentions these to show our share in them. I will read the text again—"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he

died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Well, then, it seems that as Christ was, so we also are dead. We are dead to sin because sin can no more condemn us. All the sins which God's people have ever committed dare not accuse, much less can they condemn those for whom Jesus died. Sin can curse an unbeliever, but it has no power so much as to mutter half a curse against a man in Christ. I cannot claim a debt of a dead debtor, and although I be a debtor to the law, yet since I am dead, the law cannot claim anything of me, nor can sin inflict any punishment upon me. He that is dead, as says the preceding verse, is freed from sin; being dead to sin we are free from all its jurisdiction; we fear not its curse; we defy its power. The true believer in the day when he first came to Christ died to sin as to its power. Sin had been sitting on a high throne in his heart, but faith pulled the tyrant down and rolled him in the dust, and though it still survives to vex us, yet its reigning power is destroyed. From the day of our new birth, if we be indeed true Christians, we have been dead to all sin's pleasures. Madame Bubble can no longer bewitch us. The varnish and gilt have been worn off from the palaces of sin. We defy sin's most skillful enchantments; it might warble sweetest music, but the dead ear is not to be moved by melodies. Keep thy bitter sweets, O earth, for those who know no better delicacies; our mouths find no flavour in your dainties. We are dead to sin's bribes. We curse the gold that would have bought us to be untruthful, and abhor the comforts which might have been the reward of iniquity. We are dead to its threatenings, too. When sin curses us, we are as little moved by its curses as by its promises. A believer is mortified and dead to the world. He can sing with Cowper -

"I thirst, but not as once I did
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.
It was the sight of thy dear cross
First wean'd my soul from earthly things;
And taught me to esteem as dross

The mirth of fools and pomp of kings."

I am compelled, however, to say that this mortification is not complete. We are not so dead to the world as we should be. Instead of saying here what the Christian is, I think I may rather say what he should be, for where am I to look for men that are dead to the world now-a-days? I see professing Christians quite as fond of riches; I see them almost as fond of gaiety and vanity. Do I not see those who wear the name of Jesus whose dress is as full of vanity as that of the worldling; whose conversation has no more savor of Christ in it than that of the open sinner? I find many who are conformed to this world, and who show but little renewing of their minds. Oh! how slight is the difference now-a-days between the Church and the world! We ought to be, in a spiritual sense, evermore Dissenters—dissenting from the world, standing out and protesting against it. We must be to the world's final day Nonconformists, not conforming to its ways and vanities, but walking without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach. Do some of you recollect the day when you died to the world? Your friends thought you were mad. They said you knew nothing of life, so your ungodly friends put you in the sepulchre, and others of them rolled a great stone against you. They from that day put a ban upon you. You are not asked out now where you once were everybody. The seal is put upon you; they call you by some opprobrious epithet, and so far as the world is concerned, you are like the dead Christ; you are put into your grave, and shut out from the world's life. They do not want you any more at their merry-makings, you would spoil the party; you have now become such a Methodist, such a mean hypocrite, as they put it, that they have buried you out of sight, and rolled back the stone, and sealed it, and set watchers at the door to keep you there. Well, and what a blessed thing that is, for if you be dead with Christ you shall also live with him.

If we be thus dead with Christ, let us see that we live with him. It is a poor thing to be dead to the world unless we are alive unto God. Death is a negative, and a negative in the world is of no great use by itself. A Protestant is less than a nobody if he only protests against a wrong; we want a proclaimer, one who proclaims the truth as well as protests against error. And so, if we be dead to sin we must have, also, the life of

Christ, and I trust, beloved, we know, and it is not a matter of theory to us—I trust we know that in us there is a new life to which we were strangers once. To our body and our soul there has been superadded a spirit, a spark of spiritual life. Just as Jesus had a new life after death, so have we a new life after death, wherewith I trust we rise from the grave. But we must prove it. Jesus proved his resurrection by infallible signs. You and I, too, must prove to all men that we have risen out of the grave of sin. Perhaps our friends did not know us when we first rose from the dead. Like Mary, they mistook us for somebody else. They said, "What! Is this Wilham who used to be such a hectoring, proud, ill-humoured, domineering fellow? Can he put up with our jokes and jeers so patiently?" They supposed us to be somebody else, and they were not far from the mark, for we were new creatures in Christ Jesus. We talked with some of our friends, and they found our conversation so different from what it used to be that it made their hearts burn within them, just as Jesus Christ's disciples when they went to Emmaus. But they did not know our secret; they were strangers to our new life. Do you recollect, Christians, how you first revealed yourselves unto your brethren, the Church? In the breaking of bread they first knew you. That night when the right-hand of fellowship was given to you the new life was openly recognized, and they said—"Come in thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?" I trust, in resurrection-life you desire to prove to all men that this is not the common life you lived before, a life which made you serve the flesh and the lusts thereof; but that you are living now with higher aims, and purer intentions, by a more heavenly rule, and with the prospect of a diviner result. As we have been dead with Christ, dear brethren, I hope we have also, in our measure, learned to live with him.

But now, remember, Christ lives for ever, and so do we. Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. The fourteenth verse is wonderfully similar—"Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Sin made us die once in Adam, but we are not to be slain by it again. If Christ could die now, we could die, but since Christ can never die again, so the believer can never again go back to his old sin. He dies to sin no more; he lives, and sin hath no more dominion over him. Oh! this is a delightful theme! I know not how to express the joy my own heart feels at the sense

of security arising from the fact that Christ dies no more. Death hath no more dominion over him; and sin hath no more dominion over me, if I be in Christ. Suppose, my brethren, suppose for a moment that Christ could die again. Bring out your funeral music! Let the muffled drums beat the Dead march! Let the heavens be clothed in sackcloth, and let the verdant earth be robed in blackness, for the atonement, earth's great hope, is incomplete! Christ must die again. The adversaries we thought were routed have gathered their strength again. Death is not dead; the grave is not open; there will be no resurrection! The saints tremble; even in heaven they fear and quake; the crowns upon glorified heads are trembling; the hearts that have been overflowing with eternal bliss are filled with anxiety, for the throne of Christ is empty; angels suspend their songs; the howlings of hell have silenced the shouts of heaven: the fiends are holding high holiday, and they sliviek for very joy—"Jesus dies again! Jesus dies again! Prepare your arrows! Empty your Quivers! Come up, Ye legions of hell! The famous conqueror must fight, and bleed, and die again, and we shall overcome him yet!" God is dishonored, the foundations of heaven are removed, and the eternal throne quivers with the shock of Christ subjected to a second death! Is it blasphemy to suppose the case? Yet, my brethren, it were equal blasphemy to suppose a true believer going back again to his old lusts and dying again by sin, for that were to suppose that the atonement were incomplete. I can prove that it involves the very same things; it supposes an unfinished sacrifice, for if the sacrifice be finished, then those for whom it was offered must be saved. It supposes hell triumphant—Christ had bought the soul, and the spirit had renewed it, but the devil wipes away the blood of Christ, expels the spirit of the living God, and gets to himself the victory. A saint perish! Then God's promise is not true, and Christ's word is false—"I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish;" then the foundations are removed; eternal justice is a name, and the divine honesty is suspected; the purposes of God are frustrated, and the crown of sovereignty rolls in the mire. Weep angels! Be astonished, O heavens! Rock, O ye hills with earthquake! and hell come up and hold riot! for God himself has ceased to be God, since his people perish! "Because I live ye shall live also" is a divine necessity, and if dominion can ever be had by sin over a believer again, then, mark you, death can again have dominion over Christ; but that is impossible; therefore rejoice and be glad, ye

servants of God.

You will notice, that as they live, so, like Jesus Christ, they live unto God. This completes the parallel. "In that he liveth he liveth unto God." So do we. The forty days which Christ spent on earth he lived unto God, comforting his saints, manifesting his person, giving forth gospel precepts. For the few days we have to live here on earth we must live to comfort the saints, to set forth Christ, and to preach the gospel to every creature. And now that Christ has ascended he lives unto God; what does that mean? He lives, my brethren, to manifest the divine character. Christ is the permanent revelation of an invisible God. We look at Christ and we see justice, truth, power, love; we see the whole of the divine attributes in him. Christian, you are to live unto God; God is to be seen in you; you are to show forth the divine bowels of compassion, longsuffering, tenderness, kindness, patience; you are to manifest God; living unto God. Christ lives unto God, for he completes the divine purpose by pleading for his people, by carrying on his people's work above. You are to live for the same, by preaching, that sinners may hear and that the elect may live; by teaching that the chosen may be saved; teaching by your life, by your actions, that God's glory may be known, and that his decrees may be fulfilled. Jesus lives unto God, delighting himself in God. The immeasurable joy of Christ in his Father no tongue can tell. Live in the same way, Christian. Delight thyself in the Lord! Be blessed; be happy; rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. Our Redeemer lives unto God, that is he lives in constant fellowship with God. Cannot you do so too by the Holy Spirit? You are dead to sin; see to it that you live for ever in fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Now I have been talking riddles to some of you. How many of you understand these things? If any are troubled because they understood the first part and they do trust in Christ's death, but they do not understand the second part—ah! beloved, you shall comprehend one of these days; if you are resting on Christ's death, that death shall yet be made mighty in you. But you that have known something of this, I pray you struggle after more. Ask the Lord to mortify you altogether, to fill you with the divine life, and to help you to persevere unto the end. Pray that you may live unto God and unto God alone.

III. Having brought you thus far, there is only one other step to take, and then we have done; let us notice that the facts of which we have spoken are PLEDGES OF THE GLORY WHICH IS TO BE REVEALED IN US.

Christ died. Possibly we shall die. Perhaps we shall not; we may be alive and remain at the coming of the Son of man; but it may be we shall die. I do not think we should be so certain of death as some Christians are, because the Lord's coming is much more certain than our dying. Our dying is not certain, for he may come before we die. However, suppose we shall die: Christ rose, and so shall we.

"What though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Savior rose,
So all his followers must."

Do not, my brethren, think of the cemetery with tears, nor meditate upon the coffin and the shroud with gloomy thoughts. You only sojourn there for a little season, and to you it will not appear a moment. Your body will sleep, and if men sleep all through a long night it only seems an hour to them, a very short moment. The sleeping-time is forgotten, and to your sleeping-body it will seem no time at all, while to your glorified soul it will not seem long because you will be so full of joy that a whole eternity of that joy would not be too long. But you shall rise again. I do not think we get enough joy out of our resurrection. It will probably be our happiest moment, or rather the beginning of the happiest life that we shall ever know. Heaven is not the happiest place. Heaven at present is happy, but it is not the perfection of happiness, because there is only the soul there, though the soul is full of pleasure; but the heaven that is to be when body and soul will both be there surpasses all thought. Resurrection will be our marriage-day. Body and soul have been separated, and they shall meet again to be re-married with a golden ring, no more to be divorced, but as one indissolubly united body to go up to the great altar of immortality, and there to be espoused unto Christ for ever and ever. I shall come again to this flesh, no longer flesh that can decay, no longer bones that ache—I shall come back to these eyes and these ears, all made channels of new

delight. Say not this is a materialistic view of the matter. We are at least one-half material, and so long as there is material about us we must always expect joy that shall not only give spiritual but even material delight to us. This body shall rise again. "Can these dry bones live?" is the question of the unbeliever. "They must live," is the answer of faith. Oh! let us expect our end with joy, and our resurrection with transport. Jesus was not detained a prisoner, and therefore no worm can keep us back, no grave, no tomb can destroy our hope. Having he lives, and we shall rise to live for ever. Anticipate, my brethren, that happy day. No sin, no sorrow, no care, no decay, no approaching dissolution! Be lives for ever in God: so shall you and I; close to the Eternal; swallowed up in his brightness, glorified in his glory, overflowing with his love! I think at the very prospect we may well say -

"Oh! long-expected day begin,
Dawn on these realms of woe and sin."

We may well cry to him to bid his chariots hasten and bring the joyous season! He comes, he comes, believer! Rejoice with joy unspeakable! Thou hast but a little time to wait, and when thou hast fallen asleep thou shalt leap

"From beds of dust and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day;"

and thou,

"Far from a world of grief and sin
With God eternally shut in,
Shalt be for ever blest!"

May the Lord add his blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Death Of Christ

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. - Isaiah 53:10

What myriads of eyes are casting their glances at the sun! What multitudes of men lift up their eyes, and behold the starry orbs of heaven! They are continually watched by thousands - but there is one great transaction in the world's history, which every day commands far more spectators than that sun which goeth forth like a bridegroom, strong to run his race. There is one great event, which every day attracts more admiration than do the sun, and moon, and stars, when they march in their courses. That event is, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. To it, the eyes of all the saints who lived before the Christian era were always directed; and backwards, through the thousand years of history, the eyes of all modern saints are looking. Upon Christ, the angels in heaven perpetually gaze. "Which things the angels desire to look into," said the apostle. Upon Christ, the myriad eyes of the redeemed are perpetually fixed; and thousands of pilgrims, through this world of tears, have no higher object for their faith, and no better desire for their vision, than to see Christ as he is in heaven, and in communion to behold his person. Beloved, we shall have many with us, whilst this morning we turn our face to the Mount of Calvary. We shall not be solitary spectators of the fearful tragedy of our Saviour's death: we shall but dart our eyes to that place which is the focus of heaven's joy and delight, the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Taking our text, then, as a guide, we propose to visit Calvary, hoping to have the help of the Holy Spirit whilst we look upon him who died upon the cross. I would have you notice this morning, first of all, the cause of Christ's death - "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him," saith the original; "he hath put him to grief." Secondly, the

reason of Christ's death - "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Christ died because he was an offering for sin. And then, thirdly, the effects and consequences of Christ's death. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Come, Sacred Spirit, now, whilst we attempt to speak on these matchless themes.

I. First, we have THE ORIGIN OF CHRIST'S DEATH. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to griefs." He who reads Christ's life, as a mere history, traces the death of Christ to the enmity of the Jews, and to the fickle character of the Roman governor. In this he acteth justly, for the crime and sin of the Saviour's death must lay at the door of manhood. This race of ours became a deicide and slew the Lord, and nailed its Saviour to a tree. But he who reads the Bible with the eye of faith, desiring to discover its hidden secrets, sees something more in the Saviour's death than Roman cruelty, or Jewish malice: he sees the solemn decree of God fulfilled by men, who were the ignorant, but guilty instruments of its accomplishment. He looks beyond the Roman spear and nail, beyond the Jewish taunt and jeer, up to the Sacred Fount, whence all things flow, and traces the crucifixion of Christ to the breast of Deity. He believes with Peter - "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." We dare not impute to God the sin, but at the same time the fact, with all its marvelous effects in the world's redemption, we must ever trace to the Sacred Fountain of divine love. So cloth our prophet. He says, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him. He overlooks both Pilate and Herod, and traces it to the heavenly Father, the first Person in the Divine Trinity. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief."

Now, beloved, there be many who think that God the Father is at best but an indifferent spectator of salvation. Others do belie him still more. They look upon Him as an unloving, severe Being, who had no love to the human race, and could only be made loving by the death and agonies of our Saviour. Now, this is a foul libel upon the fair and glorious grace of God the Father, to whom for ever be honor: for Jesus Christ did not die to make God loving, but he died because God was loving.

"Twas not to make Jehovah's love
Toward his people flame,
That Jesus from the throne above,
A suffering man became.

"Twas not the death which he endured,
Nor all the pangs he bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was love before."

Christ was sent into the world by his Father, as the consequence of the Father's affection for his people. Yea, he "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The fact is, that the Father as much decreed salvation, as much effected it, and as much delighted in it, as did either God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. And when we speak of the Saviour of the world, we must always include in that word, if we speak in a large sense, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, for all these three, as one God, do save us from our sins. The text puts away every hard thought concerning the Father, by telling us that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Jesus Christ. The death of Christ is traceable to God the Father. Let us try if we can see it is so.

1. First it is traceable in decree. God, the one God of heaven and earth, hath the book of destiny entirely in his power. In that book there is nothing written by a stranger's hand. The penmanship of the solemn book of predestination is from beginning to end entirely divine.

"Chained to his throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel's form and size
Drawn by th' eternal pen."

No inferior hand hath sketched even so much as the least minute parts of providence. It was all, from its Alpha to its Omega, from its divine preface to its solemn finis, marked out, designed, sketched, and planned by the

mind of the all-wise, all-knowing God. Hence, not even Christ's death was exempt from it. He that wings an angel and guides a sparrow, he that protects the hairs of our head from falling prematurely to the ground, was not likely, when he took notice of such little things, to omit in his solemn decrees the greatest wonder of earth's miracles, the death of Christ. No; the blood-stained page of that book, the page which makes both past and future glorious with golden words, - that blood-stained page, I say, was as much written of Jehovah, as any other. He determined that Christ should be born of the Virgin Mary, that he should suffer under Pontius Pilate, that he should descend into Hades, that thence he should rise again, leading captivity captive, and then should reign for ever at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Nay, I know not but that I shall have Scripture for my warrant when I say, that this is the very core of predestination, and that the death of Christ is the very center and main-spring by which God did fashion all his other decrees, making this the bottom and foundation-stone upon which the sacred architecture should be builded. Christ was put to death by the absolute foreknowledge and solemn decree of God the Father, and in this sense "it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief."

2. But a little further, Christ's coming into the world to die was the effect of the Father's will and pleasure. Christ came not into this world unsent. He had laid in Jehovah's bosom from before all worlds, eternally delighting himself in his Father, and being himself his Father's eternal joy. "In the fullness of time" God did rend his Son from his bosom, his only-begotten Son, and freely delivered him up for us all. Herein was matchless, peerless love, that the offended judge should permit his co-equal Son to suffer the pains of death for the redemption of a rebellious people. I want your imaginations for one minute to picture a scene of olden times. There is a bearded patriarch, who rises early in the morning and awakes his son, a young man full of strength, and bids him arise and follow him. They hurry from the house silently and noiselessly, before the mother is awake. They go three days, journey with their men; until they come to the Mount, of which the Lord hath spoken. You know the patriarch. The name of Abraham is always fresh in our memories. On the way, that patriarch speaks not one solitary word to his son. His heart is too full for utterance. He is overwhelmed with grief. God has commanded

him to take his son, his only son, and slay him upon the mountain as a sacrifice. They go together; and who shall paint the unutterable anguish of the father's soul, whilst he walks side by side with that beloved son, of whom he is to be the executioner? The third day has arrived; the servants are bidden to stay at the foot of the hill, whilst they go to worship God yonder. Now, can any mind imagine how the father's grief must overflow all the banks of his soul, when, as he walked up that hill-side, his son said to him, "Father, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Can you conceive how he stifled his emotions, and, with sobs, exclaimed, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." See! the father has communicated to his son the fact that God has demanded his life. Isaac, who might have struggled and escaped from his father, declares that he is willing to die, if God hath decreed it. The father takes his son, binds his hands behind his back, piles up the stones, makes an altar, lays the wood, and has his fire ready. And now where is the artist that can depict the anguish of the father's countenance, when the knife is unsheathed, and he holds it up, ready to slay his son? But here the curtain falls. Now the black scene vanishes at the sound of a voice from heaven. The ram caught in the thicket supplies the substitute, and faith's obedience need go no further. Ah! my brethren, I want to take you from this scene to a far greater one. What faith and obedience made man do, that love constrained God himself to do. He had but one son, that son his own heart's delight: he covenanted to yield him up for our redemption, nor did he violate his promise; for, when the fullness of time was come, he sent his Son to be born of the Virgin Mary, that he might suffer for the sins of man. O! can ye tell the greatness of that love, which made the everlasting God not only put his Son upon the altar, but actually do the deed, and thrust the sacrificial knife into his Son's heart? Can you think how overwhelming must have been the love of God toward the human race, when he completed in act what Abraham only did in intention? Look ye there, and see the place where his only Son hung dead upon the cross, the bleeding victim of awakened justice! Here is love indeed; and here we see how it was, that it pleased the Father to bruise him.

3. This allows me to push my text just one point further. Beloved, it is not only true that God did design and did permit with willingness the death of Christ; it is moreover, true that the unutterable agonies that clothed

the death of the Saviour with superhuman terror, were the effect of the Father's bruising of Christ in very act and deed. There is a martyr in prison: the chains are on his wrists, and yet he sings. It has been announced to him that to-morrow is his burning day. He claps his hands right merrily, and smiles while he says, "It will be sharp work to-morrow, I shall breakfast below on fiery tribulations, but afterward I will sup with Christ. Tomorrow is my wedding-day, the day for which I have long panted, when I shall sign the testimony of my life by a glorious death." The time is come; the men with the halberts precede him through the streets. Mark the serenity of the martyr's countenance. He turns to some who look upon him, and exclaims, "I value these iron chains far more than if they had been of gold; it is a sweet thing to die for Christ. There are a few of the boldest of the saints gathered round the stake, and as he unrobes himself, ere he stands upon the fagots to receive his doom, he tells them that it is a joyous thing to be a soldier of Christ, to be allowed to give his body to be burned; and he shakes hands with them, and bids them "Good by" with merry cheer. One would think he were going to a bridal, rather than to be burned. He steps upon the fagots; the chain is put about his middle; and after a brief word of prayer, as soon as the fire begins to ascend, he speaks to the people with manful boldness. But hark! he sings whilst the fagots are crackling and the smoke is blowing upward. He sings, and when his nether parts are burned, he still goes on chanting sweetly some psalm of old. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Picture another scene. There is the Saviour going to his cross, all weak and wan with suffering; his soul is sick and sad within him. There is no divine composure there. So sad is his heart, that he faints in the streets. The Son of God faints beneath a cross that many a criminal might have carried. They nail him to the tree. There is no song of praise. He is lifted up in the air, and there he hangs preparatory to his death. You hear no shout of exultation. There is a stern compression of his face, as if unutterable agony were tearing his heart - as if over again Gethsemane were being acted on the cross - as if his soul were still saying, "If it be possible let this cross pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Hark! he speaks. Will he not sing sweeter songs than ever

came from martyr's lips? Ah! no; it is an awful wail of woe that can never be imitated. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The martyrs said not that: God was with them. Confessors of old cried not so, when they came to die. They shouted in their fires, and praised God on their racks. Why this? Why doth the Saviour suffer so? Why, beloved, it was because the Father bruised him. That sunshine of God's countenance that has cheered many a dying saint, was withdrawn from Christ; the consciousness of acceptance with God, which has made many a holy man espouse the cross with joy, was not afforded to our Redeemer, and therefore he suffered in thick darkness of mental agony. Read the 22nd Psalm, and learn how Jesus suffered. Pause over the solemn words in the 1st, 2nd, 6th, and following verses. Underneath the church are the everlasting arms; but underneath Christ there were no arms at all, but his Father's hand pressed heavily against him; the upper and the nether millstones of divine wrath pressed and bruised him; and not one drop of joy or consolation was afforded to him. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." This, my brethren, was the climax of the Saviour's woe, that his Father turned away from him, and put him to grief.

Thus have I expounded the first part of the subject - the origin of our Saviour's worst sufferings, the Father's pleasure.

II. Our second head must explain the first, or otherwise it is an insolvable mystery how God should bruise his Son, who was perfect innocence, while poor fallible confessors and martyrs have had no such bruising from him in the time of their trial. **WHAT WAS THE REASON OF THE SAVIOUR'S SUFFERING?** We are told here, "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Christ was thus troubled, because his soul was an offering for sin. Now, I am going to be as plain as I can, while I preach over again the precious doctrine of the atonement of Christ Jesus our Lord. Christ was an offering for sin, in the sense of a substitute. God longed to save; but, if such a word may be allowed, Justice tied his hands. "I must be just," said God; "that is a necessity of my nature. Stern as fate, and fast as immutability, is the truth that I must be just. But then my heart desires to forgive - to pass by man's transgressions and pardon them. How can it be done? Wisdom stepped in, and said, "It shall be done thus;" and Love agreed with Wisdom. "Christ Jesus, the Son of God, shall

stand in man's place, and he shall be offered upon Mount Calvary instead of man. Now, mark: when you see Christ going up the Mount of Doom, you see man going there: when you see Christ hurled upon his back, upon the wooden cross, you see the whole company of his elect there; and when you see the nails driven through his blessed hands and feet, it is the whole body of his Church who there, in their substitute, are nailed to the tree. And now the soldiers lift the cross, and dash it into the socket prepared for it. His bones are every one of them dislocated, and his body is thus torn with agonies which can not be described. 'Tis manhood suffering there; 'tis the Church suffering there, in the substitute. And when Christ dies, you are to look upon the death of Christ, not as his own dying merely, but as the dying of all those for whom he stood as the scape-goat and the substitute. It is true, Christ died really himself; it is equally true that he did not die for himself, but died as the substitute, in the room, place, and stead of all believers. When you die you will die for yourselves; when Christ died, he died for you, if you be a believer in him. When you pass through the gates of the grave, you go there solitary and alone; you are not the representative of a body of men, but you pass through the gates of death as an individual; but, remember, when Christ went through the sufferings of death, he was the representative Head of all his people.

Understand, then, the sense in which Christ was made a sacrifice for sin. But here lies the glory of this matter. It was as a substitute for sin that he did actually and literally suffer punishment for the sin of all his elect. When I say this, I am not to be understood as using any figure whatever, but as saying actually what I mean. Man for his sin was condemned to eternal fire; when God took Christ to be the substitute, it is true, he did not send Christ into eternal fire, but he poured upon him grief so desperate, that it was a valid payment for even an eternity of fire. Man was condemned to live forever in hell. God did not send Christ forever into hell; but he put on Christ, punishment that was equivalent for that. Although he did not give Christ to drink the actual hells of believers, yet he gave him a quid pro quo - something that was equivalent thereunto. He took the cup of Christ's agony, and he put in there, suffering, misery, and anguish such as only God can imagine or dream of, that was the exact equivalent for all the suffering, all the woe, and all the eternal tortures of

every one that shall at last stand in heaven, bought with the blood of Christ. And you say, "Did Christ drink it all to its dregs?" Did he suffer it all? Yes, my brethren, he took the cup, and

"At one triumphant draught of love,
He drank damnation dry."

He suffered all the horror of hell: in one pelting shower of iron wrath it fell upon him, with hail-stones bigger than a talent; and he stood until the black cloud had emptied itself completely. There was our debt; huge and immense; he paid the utmost farthing of whatever his people owed; and now there is not so much as a doit or a farthing due to the justice of God in the way of punishment from any believer; and though we owe God gratitude, though we owe much to his love, we owe nothing to his justice; for Christ in that hour took all our sins, past, present, and to come, and was punished for them all there and then, that we might never be punished, because he suffered in our stead. Do you see, then, how it was that God the Father bruised him? Unless he had so done the agonies of Christ could not have been an equivalent for our sufferings; for hell consists in the hiding of God's face from sinners, and if God had not hidden his face from Christ, Christ could not - I see not how he could - have endured any suffering that could have been accepted as an equivalent for the woes and agonies of his people.

Methinks I heard some one say, "Do you mean us to understand this atonement that you have now preached as being a literal fact?" I say, most solemnly, I do. There are in the world many theories of atonement; but I can not see any atonement in any one, except in this doctrine of substitution. Many divines say that Christ did something when he died that enabled God to be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. What that something is they do not tell us. They believe in an atonement made for every body; but then, their atonement is just this. They believe that Judas was atoned for just as much as Peter; they believe that the damned in hell were as much an object of Jesus Christ's satisfaction as the saved in heaven; and though they do not say it in proper words, yet they must mean it, for it is a fair inference, that in the case of multitudes, Christ died in vain, for he died for them all, they say; and yet so ineffectual was

his dying for them, that though he died for them they are damned afterward. Now, such an atonement I despise - I reject it. I may be called Antinomian or Calvinist for preaching a limited atonement; but I had rather believe a limited atonement that is efficacious for all men for whom it was intended, than an universal atonement that is not efficacious for anybody, except the will of man be joined with it. Why, my brethren, if we were only so far atoned for by the death of Christ that any one of us might afterward save himself, Christ's atonement were not worth a farthing, for there is no man of us can save himself - no, not under the gospel; for if I am to be saved by faith, if that faith is to be my own act, unassisted by the Holy Spirit, I am as unable to save myself by faith as to save myself by good works. And after all, though men call this a limited atonement, it is as effectual as their own fallacious and rotten redemptions can pretend to be. But do you know the limit of it? Christ hath bought a "multitude that no man can number." The limit of it is just this: He hath died for sinners; whoever in this congregation inwardly and sorrowfully knows himself to be a sinner, Christ died for him; whoever seeks Christ, shall know Christ died for him; for our sense of need of Christ, and our seeking after Christ, are infallible proofs that Christ died for us. And, mark, here is something substantial. The Arminian says Christ died for him; and then, poor man, he has but small consolation therefrom, for he says, "Ah! Christ died for me; that does not prove much. It only proves I may be saved if I mind what I am after. I may perhaps forget myself; I may run into sin and I may perish. Christ has done a good deal for me, but not quite enough, unless I do something." But the man who receives the Bible as it is, he says, "Christ died for me, then my eternal life is sure. I know," says he, "that Christ can not be punished in a man's stead, and the man be punished afterwards. No," says he, "I believe in a just God, and if God be just, he will not punish Christ first, and then punish men afterwards. No; my Saviour died, and now I am free from every demand of God's vengeance, and I can walk through this world secure; no thunderbolt can smite me, and I can die absolutely certain that for me there is no flame of hell, and no pit digged; for Christ, my ransom, suffered in my stead, and, therefore, am I clean delivered. Oh! glorious doctrine! I would wish to die preaching it! What better testimony can we bear to the love and faithfulness of God than the testimony of a substitution eminently satisfactory for all them that believe on Christ? I

will here quote the testimony of that pre-eminently profound divine, Dr. John Owen: - "Redemption is the freeing of a man from misery by the intervention of a ransom. Now, when a ransom is paid for the liberty of a prisoner, does not justice demand that he should have and enjoy the liberty so purchased for him by a valuable consideration? If I should pay a thousand pounds for a man's deliverance from bondage to him that retains him, who hath power to set him free, and is contented with the price I give, were it not injurious to me and the poor prisoner that his deliverance be not accomplished? Can it possibly be conceived that there should be a redemption of men, and those men not redeemed? That a price should be paid and the ransom not consummated? Yet all this must be made true, and innumerable other absurdities, if universal redemption be asserted. A price is paid for all, yet few delivered; the redemption of all consummated, yet, few of them redeemed; the judge satisfied, the jailer conquered, and yet the prisoners inthralled! Doubtless 'universal,' and 'redemption,' where the greatest part of men perish, are as irreconcilable as 'Roman, and 'Catholic.' If there be a universal redemption of all, then all men are redeemed. If they are redeemed, then are they delivered from all misery, virtually or actually, whereunto they were inthralled, and that by the intervention of a ransom. Why, then, are not all saved? In a word, the redemption wrought by Christ being the full deliverance of the persons redeemed from all misery, wherein they were inwrapped, by the price of his blood, it can not possibly be conceived to be universal unless all be saved: so that the opinion of the Universalists is unsuitable to redemption."

I pause once more; for I hear some timid soul say - "But, sir, I am afraid I am not elect, and if so, Christ did not die for me." Stop sir! Are you a sinner? Do you feel it? Has God, the Holy Spirit, made you feel that you are a lost sinner? Do you want salvation? If you do not want it it is no hardship that it is not provided for you; but if you really feel that you want it, you are God's elect. If you have a desire to be saved, a desire given you by the Holy Spirit, that desire is a token for good. If you have begun believingly to pray for salvation, you have therein a sure evidence that you are saved. Christ was punished for you. And if now you can say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,

Simply to the cross I cling."

you may be as sure you are God's elect as you are sure of your own existence; for this is the infallible proof of election - a sense of need and a thirst after Christ.

III. And now I have just to conclude by noticing the BLESSED EFFECTS of the Saviour's death. On this I shall be very brief.

The first effect of the Saviour's death is, "He shall see his seed." Men shall be saved by Christ. Men have offspring by life; Christ had an offspring by death. Men die and leave their children, and they see not their seed; Christ lives, and every day sees his seed brought into the unity of the faith. One effect of Christ's death is the salvation of multitudes. Mark, not a chance salvation. When Christ died the angel did not say, as some have represented him, "Now by his death many may be saved;" the word of prophecy had quenched all "buts" and "peradventures;" "By his righteousness he shall justify many. There was not so much as an atom of chance work in the Saviour's death. Christ knew what he bought when he died; and what he bought he will have - that, and no more, and no less. There is no effect of Christ's death that is left to peradventure. "Shalls" and "wills" made the covenant fast: Christ's bloody death shall effect its solemn purpose. Every heir of grace shall meet around the throne,

"Shall bless the wonders of his grace,
And make his glories known."

The second effect of Christ's death is, "He shall prolong his days." Yes, bless his name, when he died he did not end his life. He could not long be held a prisoner in the tomb. The third morning came, and the conqueror, rising from his sleep burst the iron bonds of death, and came forth from his prison house, no more to die. He waited his forty days, and then, with shouts of sacred song, he "led captivity captive, and ascended up on high." "In that he died he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth he liveth unto God," no more to die.

"Now by his Father's side he Sits,

And there triumphant reigns,"

the conqueror over death and hell.

And, last of all, by Christ's death the Father's good pleasure was effected and prospered. God's good pleasure is, that that this world shall one day be totally redeemed from sin; God's good pleasure is, that this poor planet, so long swathed in darkness, shall soon shine out in brightness, like a new-born sun. Christ's death hath done it. The stream that flowed from his side on Calvary shall cleanse the world from all its blackness. That hour of mid-day darkness was the rising of a new sun of righteousness, which shall never cease to shine upon the earth. Yes, the hour is coming when swords and spears shall be forgotten things - when the harness of war and the pageantry of pomp shall all be laid aside for the food of the worm or the contemplation of the curious. The hour approacheth when old Rome shall shake upon her seven hills, when Mohammed's crescent shall wane to wax no more, when all the gods of the heathens shall lose their thrones and be cast out to the moles and the bats; and then, when from the equator to the poles Christ shall be honored, the Lord paramount of earth, when from land to land, from the river even to the ends of the earth, one King shall reign, one shout shall be raised, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Then, my brethren, shall it be seen what Christ's death has accomplished, for "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

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The Death Of Christ For His People

He laid down his life for us. - 1 John 3:16

Come, believer and contemplate this sublime truth, thus proclaimed to thee in simple monosyllables: "He laid down his life for us." There is not one long word in the sentence; it is all as simple as it can be; and it is simple because it is sublime. Sublimity in thought always needs simplicity in words to express itself. Little thoughts require great words to explain them; little preachers need Latin words to convey their feeble ideas, but great thoughts and great expressers of those thoughts are content with little words.

"He laid down his life for us." Here there is not much upon which any man can display his eloquence; here is little room for metaphysical discussion or for deep thought; the text sets before us a simple yet sublime doctrine. What, then, shall I do with it? If I would speak of it profitably to myself, since I need not employ my wit to dissect it, nor my oratory to proclaim it, let me exercise my adoration to worship it; let me prostrate all my powers before the throne, and, like an angel when his work is done, and he has nowhere else to fly at his Lord's command, let me fold the wings of my contemplation, and stand before the throne of this great truth, and meekly bow myself, and worship him that was, and is, and is to come,—the great and glorious One who "laid down his life for us."

It will be well for me, in commencing my discourse, to remind you that there is no understanding the death of Christ unless we understand the person of Christ. If I were to tell you that God died for us, although I might be telling you a truth, and you might possibly not misunderstand what I meant, yet I should be at the same time uttering an error. God cannot die; it is, of course, impossible, from his very nature, that he could even for a moment cease to exist. God is incapable of suffering. It is true that we sometimes use words to express emotions On the part of God;

but, then, we speak after the manner of men. He is impassive; he cannot suffer; it is not possible for him to endure aught; much less, then, is it possible for him to suffer death. Yet we are told, in the verse from which our text is taken, "Hereby perceive we the love of God." You notice that the words "of God" are inserted by the translators. They are in italics because they are not in the original. A better translation would be, "Hereby perceive we love." But when we read "of God," it might lead the ignorant to fancy that God could die; whereas, God could not. We must always understand, and constantly remember, that our Lord Jesus Christ was "very God of very God," and that, as God, he had all the attributes of the Most High, and could not, therefore, be capable either of suffering or death. But then he was also man, "man of the substance of his mother," man, just like ourselves, sin alone excepted. And the Lord Jesus died not as God; it was as man that he gave up the ghost; as man, he was nailed to the cross. As God, he was in heaven, even when his body was in the tomb; as God, he was swaying the sceptre of all worlds even when the mock sceptre of reed was in his hand, and the imperial robe of universal monarchy was on the eternal shoulders of his Godhead when the soldier's old purple cloak was wrapped about his manhood. He did not cease to be God, he did not lose his Omnipotence, and his eternal dominion, when he became man; nor did he, as God, die or suffer; it was as man that he "laid down his life for us."

Come, now, my soul, and worship this man, this God. Come, believer, and behold thy Saviour; come to the innermost circle of all sanctity, the circle that contains the cross of Christ, and here sit down; and, whilst thou dost worship, learn three lessons from the fact that "he laid down his life for us." The first lesson should be,—Did he lay down his life for us? Ah! then, my brethren, how great must have been our sins that they could not have been atoned for at any other price! Secondly, did he lay down his life for us? Ah! then, beloved, how great must have been his love! He would not stop short anywhere, until life itself had been resigned. Thirdly, did he lay down his life for us? Ah! then, my soul, be of good cheer; how safe art thou! If such an atonement hath been offered, if such a sure satisfaction hath been given to Almighty God, how secure thou art! Who is he that can destroy him who hath been bought with the blood of such a Redeemer?

I. Come, then, let me believably meditate on the first sad fact. Did Christ lay down his life for me? Then, HOW GREAT MUST HAVE BEEN MY SINS!

Ah! my brethren, I will speak a little of my own experience, and in so doing I shall also be describing yours. I have seen my sins in many different ways. I saw them once by the blazing light of Sinai; and, oh! my spirit shrank within me, for my sins seemed exceeding black. When the sound of the trumpet waxed loud and long, and the lighting and fire flashed into my heart, I saw a very hell of iniquity within my soul, and I was ready then to curse the day that I was born, that I should have had such a heart, so vile and so deceitful. I thought that then I had seen the exceeding blackness of my sin. Alas! I had not seen enough of sin to make me loathe it so as to leave it, for that conviction passed away. Sinai was but a volcano, and it was hushed to silence; and then I began to play with sin again, and loved it as much as ever.

I beheld another sight one day; I saw my sins by the light of heaven. I looked up, and I considered the heavens, the work of God's fingers; I perceived the purity of God's character written on the sunbeams, I saw his holiness engraved upon the wide world, as well as revealed in Scripture; and as I compared myself with him, I thought I saw how black I was. O God! I never knew the heinousness of my own guilt, until I saw the glory of thy character; but now I see the brightness of thy holiness, my whole soul is cast down at the thought of my sinfulness, and my great departure from the living God. I thought that, then, I had seen enough. Ah! I had seen enough to make me worship for a moment; but my gladness was as the early cloud and as the morning dew, and I went my way, and forgot what manner of man I was. When I had lost the sense of the majesty of God, I lost also the consciousness of my own guilt.

Then there came to me another view, and I beheld God's lovingkindness to me; I saw how he had dandled me upon the knee of Providence,—how he had carried me all my life long,—how he had strewn my path with plenty, and given me all things richly to enjoy. I remembered how he had been with me in the hour of trial, how he had preserved me in the day of hurricane, and kept me safe at the moment of storm. I remembered all

his goodness to me; and, struck with surprise at his mercy, I looked upon my sin in the light of his grace; and I said, "O sin, how base thou art, what dire ingratitude dost thou manifest against a God so profoundly kind!"

I thought, then, surely I had seen the worst of sin, when I had laid it side by side, first with the character of God, and afterwards with his bounties. I cursed sin from my inmost heart, and thought I had seen enough of it. But, ah! my brethren, I had not. That sense of gratitude passed away, and I found myself still prone to sin, and still loving it.

But, oh, there came a thrice-happy, yet thrice-mournful hour! One day, in my wanderings, I heard a cry, a groan; methought 'twas not a cry such as came from mortal lip, it had in it such unutterable depths of wondrous woe. I turned aside, expecting to see some great sight; and it was indeed a great sight that I saw. Lo, there, upon a tree, all bleeding, hung a man. I marked the misery that made his flesh all quiver on his bones; I beheld the dark clouds come rolling down from heaven, like the chariots of misery; I saw them clothe his brow with blackness; I saw even in the thick darkness, for mine eyes were opened, and I perceived that his heart was as full of the gloom and horror of grief as the sky was full of blackness. Then I seemed to look into his soul, and I saw there torrents of unutterable anguish,—wells of torment of such an awful character that mortal lip dare not sip, lest it should be burned with scalding heat. I said, "Who is this mighty sufferer? Why doth he suffer thus? Hath he been the greatest of all sinners, the basest of all blasphemers?" But a voice came forth from the excellent glory, and it said, "This is my beloved Son; but he took the sinner's sin upon himself, and he must bear its penalty." O God! I thought, I never saw sin till that hour, when I saw it tear Christ's glories from his head,—when it seemed for a moment even to withdraw the lovingkindness of God from him,—when I saw him covered with his own blood, and plunged into the uttermost depths of oceans of grief. Then I said, "Now shall I know what thou art, O sin, as never before I knew it!" Though those other sights might teach me something of the dire character of evil, yet never, till I saw the Saviour on the tree, did I understand how base a traitor man's guilt was to man's God.

O heir of heaven, lift now thine eye, and behold the scenes of suffering

through which thy Lord passed for thy sake! Come in the moonlight, and stand between those olives; see him sweat great drops of blood. Go from that garden, and follow him to Pilate's bar. See your Matter subjected to the grossest and filthiest insult; gaze upon the face of spotless beauty defiled with the spittle of soldiers; see his head pierced with thorns; mark his back, all rent, and torn, and scarred, and bruised, and bleeding beneath the terrible lash. And O Christian, see him die! Go and stand where his mother stood, and hear him say to thee, "Man, behold thy Saviour!" Come thou to-night, and stand where John stood; hear him cry, "I thirst," and find thyself unable either to assuage his griefs or to comprehend their bitterness. Then, when thou hast wept there, lift thine hand, and cry, "Revenge!" Bring out the traitors; where are they? And when your sins are brought forth as the murderers of Christ, let no death be too painful for them; though it should involve the cutting off of right arms, or the quenching of right eyes, and putting out their light for ever; do it! For if these murderers murdered Christ, then let them die. Die terribly they may, but die they must. Oh! that God the Holy Ghost would teach you that first lesson, my brethren, the boundless wickedness of sin, for Christ had to lay down his life before your sin could be wiped away.

II. Now we will come to the second head, and here we will lift up our hearts from the depths of sadness to the heights of affection. Did the Saviour lay down his life for me? We will read it now, "He laid down his life for me;" and I pray the Lord to help each of you, by faith, to read it so, because, when we say "us", that is dealing in generalities,—blessed generalities, it is true,—but let us, at this time, deal in specialities, and say, each one of us who can do so truthfully, "He laid down his life for me." Then, HOW GREATLY HE MUST HAVE LOVED ME!

Ah, Lord Jesus! I never knew thy love till I understood the meaning of thy death. Beloved, we shall try again, if we can, to tell the story of our own experience, to let you see how God's love is to be learned. Come, saint, sit down, and meditate on thy creation, note how marvellously thou hast been formed, and all thy bones fitted to one another, and see love there. Mark, next, that predestination which placed thee where thou art; for the lines have fallen unto thee in pleasant places, and, notwithstanding all thy troubles, thou hast, compared with many a poor soul, "a goodly

heritage." Mark, then, the love of God displayed in the predestination that has made thee what thou art, and placed thee where thou art. Then look thou back, and see the lovingkindness of thy Lord, as displayed to thee in all thy journey up till now. Thou art getting old, and thy hair is whitening above thy brow; but he hath carried thee all the days of old; not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord thy God hath promised. Recall thy life-story. Go back now, and look at the tapestry of thy life, which God has been working every day with the golden filament of his love, and see what pictures of grace there are upon it. Canst thou not say that Jesus has loved thee? Turn thine eye back, and read the ancient rolls of the everlasting covenant, and see thy name amongst the firstborn, the elect, the Church of the living God. Say, did he not love thee when he wrote thy name there? Go and remember how the eternal settlements were made, and how God decreed and arranged all things so that thy salvation should come to pass. Say, was there not love there?

Pause at the remembrance of thy convictions; think of thy conversion; recollect thy preservation, and how God's grace hath been working upon thee, in adoption, in justification, and in every item of the new covenant; and when thou hast summed up all these things, let me ask thee this question,—Do all these things produce in thee such a sense of gratitude as the one thing that I shall mention now, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? For, my brother, if thy mind is like mine, although thou wilt think highly enough of all these things that God hath given thee, thou wilt be obliged to confess that the thought of the death of Christ upon the cross swallows them all up. This I know, my brethren, I may look back, I may look forward, but whether I look back to the decrees of eternity, or look forward to the pearl-gated city, and all the splendours that God has prepared for his own beloved children, I can never see my Father's love so beaming forth, in all its effulgence, as when I look at the cross of Christ, and see him die thereon. I can read the love of God in the rocky letters of the eternal covenant, and in the blazing letters of heaven hereafter; but, my brethren, in those crimson lines, those lines written in blood, there is something more striking than there is anywhere else, for they say, "He laid down his life for us" Ah, here it is ye learn love. You know the old story of Damon and Pythias,—how the two friends struggled together as to which should die for the other; there was love there. But, ah! there is

no comparison between Damon and Pythias, and a poor sinner and his Saviour. Christ laid down his life, his glorious life, for a poor worm; he stripped himself of all his splendours, then of all his happiness, then of his own righteousness, then of his own robes, till he was naked to his own shame; and then he laid down his life, that was all he had left, for our Saviour had not kept anything back.

Just think of that for a moment. He had a crown in heaven; but he laid that aside, that you and I might wear one for ever. He had a girdle of brightness—brighter than the stars,—about his loins; but he took it off, and laid it by, that you and I might eternally wear a girdle of righteousness. He had listened to the holy songs of the cherubim and seraphim; but he left them all that we might for ever dwell where angels sing; and then he came to earth, and he had many things, even in his poverty, which might have tended to his comfort; he laid down, first one glory, and then another, at love's demand; at last, it came to this, he had nothing left but one poor garment, woven from the top throughout, and that was clinging to his back with blood, and he laid down that also. Then there was nothing left, he had not kept back one single thing. "There," he might have said, "take an inventory of all I have, to the last farthing; I have given it all up for my people's ransom." And there was nought left now but his own life. O love insatiable! couldst thou not stay there? Though he had given up one hand to cancel sin, and the other hand to reconcile us unto God; and had given up one foot that we might have our sinful feet for ever transfixed, and nailed, and fastened, never to wander, and the other foot to be fastened to the tree that we might have our feet at liberty to run the heavenly race; and there was nothing left but his poor heart, and he gave his heart up too, and they set it abroach with the spear, and forthwith there came out thence blood and water.

Ah, my Lord! what have I ever given to thee compared to what thou hast given for me? Some poor things, like some rusty farthings, I have given thee; but how little compared with what thou hast given me! Now and then, my Lord, I have given thee a poor song upon an ill-toned instrument; sometimes, my Lord, I have done some little service for thee; but, alas! my fingers were so black, they spoiled what I intended to have presented to thee white as snow. It is nought I have done for thee, my

Lord. No, though I have been a missionary, and surrendered home and friends; no, though I have been a martyr, and given my body to be burned, I will say, in the last hour, "My Master, I have done nothing for thee, after all, in comparison with what thou hast done for me; and yet, what can I do more? How can I show my love to thee, for thy love to me, so peerless, so matchless? What shall I do? I will do nothing but—

"Dissolved by thy goodness, I'll fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found.'

"That is all I can do, and that I must and will do."

III. Now, beloved, we will change the theme, and go one note higher. We have run up the gamut a long way, and now we have just reached the height of the octave. But we have something else to get out of the text: "He laid down his life for us." Did my Saviour lay down his life for me? Then, HOW SAFE I AM!

We will have no controversy to-night with those who do not see this truth; the Lord open their blind eyes, and show it to them! That is all we will say. We, who know the gospel, see, in the fact of the death of Christ, a reason that no strength of logic can ever shake, and no power of unbelief can remove, why we should be saved. There may be men, with minds so distorted that they can conceive it possible that Christ should die for a man who afterwards is lost; I say, there may be such. I am sorry to say that there are still to be found some such persons, whose brains have been so addled, in their childhood, that they cannot see that what they hold is both a preposterous falsehood and a blasphemous libel. Christ dies for a man, and then God punishes that man again; Christ suffers in a sinner's stead, and then God condemns that sinner after all! Why, my friends, I feel quite shocked in only mentioning such an awful error; and were it not so current as it is, I should certainly pass it over with the contempt that it deserves. The doctrine of Holy Scripture is this, that God is just, that Christ died in the stead of his people, and that, as God is just, he will never punish one solitary soul of Adam's race for whom the Saviour did thus shed his blood. The Saviour did, indeed, in a certain sense, die for all; all men receive many a mercy through his blood, but

that he was the Substitute and Surety for all men, is so inconsistent, both with reason and Scripture, that we are obliged to reject the doctrine with abhorrence. No, my soul, how shalt thou be punished if thy Lord endured thy punishment for thee? Did he die for thee? O my soul, if Jesus was not thy Substitute, and did not die in thy very stead, then he is no Saviour to thee! But if he was thy Substitute, if he suffered as thy Surety, in thy stead, then, my soul, "Who is he that condemneth?" Christ hath died, yea, rather, hath risen again, and sitteth at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us. There stands the master-argument: Christ "laid down his life for us," and "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If the agonies of the Saviour put our sins away, the everlasting life of the Saviour, with the merits of his death added thereunto, must preserve his people, even unto the end.

This much I know,—ye may hear men stammer when they say it,—but what I preach is the old Lutheran, Calvinistic, Augustinian, Pauline, Christian truth,—there is not one sin in the Book of God against anyone that believeth. Our sins were numbered on the Scapegoat's head, and there is not one sin, that ever a believer did commit, that hath any power to damn him, for Christ hath taken the damning power out of sin, by allowing it, to speak by a bold metaphor, to damn himself, for sin did condemn him; and, inasmuch as sin condemned him, sin cannot condemn us. O believer, this is thy security, that all thy sin and guilt, all thy transgressions and thine iniquities, have been atoned for, and were atoned for before they were committed; so that thou mayest come with boldness, though red with all crimes, and black with every lust, and lay thine hand on that Scapegoat's head, and when thou hast put thine hand there, and seen that Scapegoat driven into the wilderness, thou mayest clap thine hands for joy, and say, "It is finished, sin is pardoned."

"Here's pardon for transgressions pest,
It matters not how black their cast;
And oh, my soul, with wonder view,
For sin's to come, here's pardon too!"

This is all I want to know; did the Saviour die for me? Then I will not

continue in sin that grace may abound; but nothing shall stop me of thus glorying, in all the churches of the Lord Jesus, that my sins are entirely removed from me; and, in God's sight, I may sing, as Hart did sing,—

"With Christ's spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

O marvellous death of Christ, how securely dost, thou set the feet of God's people on the rocks of eternal love; and how securely dost thou keep them there! Come, dear brethren, let us suck a little honey out of this honeycomb. Was there ever anything so luscious and so sweet to the believer's taste as this all-glorious truth that we are complete in him; that in and through his death and merits we are accepted in the Beloved? Oh, was there ever anything more sublime than this thought, that he hath already raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, far above all principalities and powers; just where he sits? Surely there is nothing more sublime than that, except it be that a master-thought stamps all these things with more than their own value,—that master-thought that, though the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, the covenant of his love shall never depart from us. "For," saith Jehovah, "I will never forget thee, O Zion;" "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." O Christian, that is a firm foundation, cemented with blood, on which thou mayest build for eternity! Ah, my soul! thou needest no other hope but this. Jesus, thy mercy never dies; I will plead this truth when cast down with anguish,—Thy mercy never dies. I will plead this when Satan hurls temptations at me, and when conscience casts the remembrance of my sin in my teeth; I will plead this ever, and I will plead it now,—

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress."

Yea, and after I die, and even when I stand before thine eyes, thou dread Supreme,—

"When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,

E'en then shall this be all my plea,
'Jesus hath lived and died for me.'

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay ?
While through Christ's blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Ah, brethren, if this is your experience you may come to the table of communion now right happily; it will not be coming to a funeral, but to a feast of gladness. "He laid down his life for us."

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The Death Of The Christian

Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. - Job 5:26

We do not believe all that Job's friends said. They spoke very often as uninspired men, for we find them saying many things that are not true; and if we read the book of Job through, we might say with regard to them, "miserable comforters are ye all," for they did not speak concerning God's servant, Job, the thing that was right. But, nevertheless, they gave utterance to many holy and pious sentences, which are well worthy of regard, as having come from the lips of three men distinguished in their age for their learning, talent, and ability; three grey-headed sires, who from experience were able to speak what they knew. Their mistakes are not to be wondered at, because they had not then that clear, bright, shining light, which we enjoy in these modern times. They had few opportunities to meet together; there were but few prophets in those days who taught them the things of the kingdom. We only marvel that without the light of the gospel revelation they were able to discover so much of the truth as they did. However I must make a remark concerning this

chapter, that I cannot but regard it as being in the main, not so much the utterance of the man—who here speaks—Eliphaz the Temanite—but the very word of God; not so much the simple saying of the unwise comforter who upbraided Job, as the speech of the great Comforter who consoles his people, and who only utters the thing that is right. The opinion is justified by the fact that this chapter is quoted by the apostle Paul. Eliphaz says, in the 13th verse, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." And we find the apostle Paul in the Corinthians, saying, "As it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness;" thus giving sanction to this passage as having been inspired of God, at all events as being most certainly truthful. Most certainly the experience of such a man as Eliphaz is worthy of much regard: and when speaking of the general condition of God's people, that they are hid from the scourge of the tongue, "that they are not afraid of destruction when it cometh," that they laugh at destruction and famine, and so on, we may accept his words as being proven by experience, and authenticated by inspiration. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." Here is a very beautiful comparison, the comparison of the aged Christian—for that I take it lies on the surface of the text—to a shock of corn. Go into the harvest field, and you shall see how much the wheat reminds you of the aged believer. How much anxiety has been expended on that field! When the seed first sprung up the farmer dreaded lest the worm should bite the tender shoots, and the blade should be devoured, or lest some sharp frost should consume the infant plant and cause it to wither and die. And, then, month after month, as the seasons came, how did he anxiously look towards heaven and long that the rains might come, or that the genial sunshine might pour out its vivifying floods of light upon the field. When it has come to somewhat of maturity, how greatly has he feared lest the mildew and blast should shrivel up the precious ears. It stands in the fields now, and in some respects he is freed from his anxiety. The months of his travail are over. He has waited patiently for the precious fruits of the soil, but now they are there. And so with the grey-headed man. How many years of anxiety have been expended upon him! In his youth how likely did it seem that he might be smitten down by death, and yet he has passed safely through youth, manhood, and age. What varied accidents have been warded from him! How has the shield of the Providential Keeper been over his head to keep him from the shafts of

the pestilence, or from the heavy hand of accident that might have smitten his life! How many anxieties has he had himself! How many troubles has he passed through! Look upon the hoary-headed veteran! Mark the scars that troubles have inflicted upon his forehead! And see, deep written in his breast, the dark mementos of the sharp struggles and trials he has endured! And now his anxieties are somewhat over; he is come very nearly to the haven of rest. A few short years of trial and trouble shall land him on fair Canaan's coast, and we look upon him with the same pleasure that the farmer regards the wheat, because the anxiety is over and the time of rest is now approaching. Mark how weak the stem has become! how every wind shakes it to and fro; it is withered and dried! See how the head hangs down to earth, as if it were about to kiss the dust, and show whence it had its origin! So, mark you the aged man; tottering are his steps, "they that look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders cease because they are few, and the grasshopper has become a burden." Yet even in that weakness there is glory. It is not the weakness of the tender blade, it is the weakness of the full ripe corn, it is a weakness that shows its maturity, it is a weakness that gilds it with glory. Even as the colour of the wheat is golden, so that it looks more beautiful than when the greenness of its verdure is on it, so the grey-headed man has a crown of glory on his head. He is glorious in his weakness, more than the young man in his strength, or the maiden in her beauty. Is not a shock of corn a beautiful picture of the state of man, moreover, because very soon it must be taken home? The reaper is coming. Even now I hear the sickle sharpening. The reaper hath well edged it, and he shall soon cut the corn down. See! he is coming across the field to reap his harvest; and then, by-and-bye, it shall be carried into the barn and safely housed, no more subject to blight, or mildew, or insect, or disease. There it shall be secured, where no snow can fall upon it, no winds can molest it. It shall be safe and secure; and joyful shall be the time when harvest home shall be proclaimed, and the shock of corn, fully ripe, shall be carried into the farmer's garner. Such is the aged man. He, too, shall soon be taken home. Death is even now sharpening his sickle, and the angels are getting ready their chariot of gold to bear him up to the skies. The barn is built; the house is provided; soon the great Master shall say, "Bind up the tares in bundles to burn, and gather the wheat into my barn."

This morning, we shall consider the death of Christians in general; not of the aged Christian merely, for we shall show you that while this text does seem to bear upon the aged Christian, in reality it speaks with a loud voice to every man who is a believer. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

There are four things we shall mark in the text. First, we shall consider that death is inevitable, because it says, "Thou shalt come." Secondly, that death is acceptable, because it does not read, "I will make thee go to thy grave," but "thou shalt come there." Thirdly, that death is always timely: "Thou shalt come to thy grave in full age." Fourthly, that death to the Christian is always honourable, for the promise declareth to him, "Thou shalt go to thy grave in full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

I. The first remark, namely, that death, even to the Christian, is INEVITABLE, is very trite, simple and common, and we need scarcely have made it, but we found it necessary, in order to introduce one or two remarks upon it. How hacknied is the thought, that all men must die, and therefore, what can we say upon it? And yet we blush not to repeat it, for while it is a truth so well known, there is none so much forgotten; while we all believe it in the theory and receive it in the brain, how seldom it is impressed on the heart? The sight of death makes us remember it. The tolling of the solemn bell speaks to us of it. We hear the deep-tongued voice of time as the bell tolls the hours and preaches our mortality. But very usually we forget it. Death is inevitable to all. But I wish to make an observation concerning death, and that is, that while it is written, "It is appointed unto all men once to die," yet a time shall come when some Christian men shall not die at all. We know that had Adam never sinned he would not have died, for death is the punishment of sin, and we know that Enoch and Elijah were translated to heaven without dying. Therefore it does seem to follow, that death is not absolutely necessary for a Christian. And, moreover, we are told in Scripture, that there are some who shall be "alive and remain," when Jesus Christ shall come; and the apostle says, "I tell you a mystery—we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." There shall be some who shall be found living, of whom the apostle says,

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." We know that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom; but it is possible that they may be refined by some spiritual process, which shall preclude the necessity of dissolution. Oh! I have thought of that idea very much, and I have wondered whether it should not be possible that some of us might be in that happy number who shall not see death. Even if we are not, there is something very cheering in the thought: Christ did so conquer death that he not only delivers the lawful captive out of the prison, but he saves a band from the jaws of the monster, and leads them by his den unharmed! He not only resuscitates the dead, and puts new life into those that are slain by the fell scythe, but some he actually takes to heaven by a bye-road. He says to death—"Avaunt, thou monster! On these thou shalt never put thy hand! These are chosen men and women, and thy cold fingers shall never freeze the current of their soul. I am taking them straight to heaven without death. I will transport them in their bodies up to heaven without passing through thy gloomy portals, or having been captives in thy dreary land of shades." How glorious is the thought, that Christ has vanquished death; that some men shall not die. But you will say to me, "How can that be? for the body has mortality mingled with its very essence." We are told it is true, by eminent men, that there is a necessity in nature that there should be death, since one animal must prey upon another; and even could all animals be taught to give up their prey, they must feed upon plants, and so devour certain minute insects which had hidden thereon. Death therefore seems to be the law of nature. Be it remembered; that men have already lived far beyond the present allotted term, and it does seem most easy to conceive that the creature, which can subsist a thousand years, could exceed that period. But this objection is not valid, since the saints will not live for ever in this world, but will be removed to a habitation where laws of glory shall supersede laws of nature.

II. And now comes a sweet thought, that death to the Christian is always ACCEPTABLE—"Thou shalt come to thy grave." Old Caryl makes this remark on this verse—"A willingness and a cheerfulness to die. Thou shalt come, thou shalt not be dragged or hurried to thy grave, as it is said of the foolish rich man, Luke 12. This night shall thy soul be taken from thee.

But thou shalt come to thy grave, thou shalt die quietly and smilingly, as it were; thou shalt go to thy grave, as it were upon thine own feet, and rather walk than be carried to thy sepulchre." The wicked man, when he dies, is driven to his grave, but the Christian comes to his grave. Let me tell you a parable. Behold two men sat together in the same house: when Death came to each of them. He said to one, "Thou shalt die." The man looked at him—tears suffused his eyes, and tremblingly he said, "O Death, I cannot, I will not die." He sought out a physician, and said to him, "I am sick, for Death hath looked upon me. His eyes have paled my cheeks, and I fear I must depart. Physician, there is my wealth, give me health and let me live." The physician took his wealth, but gave him not his health with all his skill. The man changed his physician and tried another, and thought that perhaps he might spin out the thread of life a little longer. But, alas! Death came and said, "I have given thee time to try thy varied excuses, come with me; thou shalt die." And he bound him hand and foot, and made him go to that dark land of shades. As the man went, he clutched at every side post by the way; but Death, with iron hands, still pulled him on. There was not a tree that grew along the way but he tried to grasp it, but Death said, "Come on! thou art my captive, and thou shalt die." And unwillingly as the laggard schoolboy, who goeth slowly to school, so did he trace the road with Death. He did not come to his grave, but Death fetched him to it—the grave came to him.

But Death said to the other man, "I am come for thee." He smilingly replied, "Ah, Death! I know thee, I have seen thee many a time. I have held communion with thee. Thou art my Master's servant, thou hast come to fetch me home. Go, tell my Master I am ready; whene'er he pleases, Death, I am ready to go with thee." And together they went along the road, and held sweet company. Death said to him, "I have worn these skeleton bones to frighten wicked men; but I am not frightful. I will let thee see myself. The hand that wrote upon Belshazzar's wall was terrible because no man saw anything but the hand; but," said Death. "I will show thee my whole body. Men have only seen my bony hand, and have been terrified." And as they went along, Death ungirded himself to let the Christian see his body and he smiled, for it was the body of an angel. He had wings of cherubs, and a body glorious as Gabriel. The Christian said to him, "Thou art not what I thought thou wast: I will cheerfully go with

thee." At last Death touched the believer with his hand—it was even as when the mother doth in sport smite her child a moment. The child loves that loving pinch upon the arm, for it is a proof of affection. So did Death put his finger on the man's pulse, and stopped it for a moment, and the Christian found himself by Death's kind finger changed into a spirit; yea, found himself brother to the angels; his body had been etherealized, his soul purified, and he himself was in heaven. You tell me this is only a parable; but let me give you some facts that shall back it up. I will tell you some of the death-bed sayings of dying saints, and show you that, to them, Death has been an agreeable visitant, of whom they were not afraid. You will not disbelieve dying men. It were ill to act the hypocrite's part at such a time. When the play is over men will take off the mask: and so with these men when they came to die—they stood out in solemn unclothed reality.

First, let me tell you what Dr. Owen said—that celebrated prince of Calvinists. While his works are to be found, I am not afraid that men shall lack arguments to defend the Gospel of Free-grace. A friend called to tell Dr. Owen that he had put to press his "Meditations on the Glory of Christ." There was a momentary gleam in his languid eye as he answered, "I am glad to hear it. Oh!" said he, "the long-wished for time has come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or was capable of doing in this world."

But, you may say, this man was a mere theologian, let us hear a poet speak. George Herbert, after some severe struggles, and having requested his wife and nieces, who were weeping in extreme anguish, to leave the room, he committed his will to Mr. Woodnott's care, crying out, "I am ready to die—Lord, forsake me not now, my strength faileth; but grant me mercy for the merits of my Lord Jesus. And now, Lord receive my soul." Then he laid himself back and breathed out his life to God. Thus the poet dies. That glorious fancy of his, that might have pictured gloomy things if it had pleased, was only filled with rapturous sight of angels. As he used to say himself, "Methinks I hear the church bells of heaven ringing." And methinks he did hear them when he came near the river Jordan.

"But," you will say, "one was a theologian, and the other a poet—it might

have been all fancy." Now learn what an active man, a missionary, said—Brainard.

He said, "I am almost in eternity. I long to be there. My work is done. I have done with all my friends. All the world is now nothing to me. Oh, to be in heaven, to praise and glorify God with his holy angels." That is what Brainard said. He who counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and went among wild untutored Indians to preach the gospel.

But it is possible you may say, "These were men of ages gone by." Now, you shall have men of modern times.

And first, hear what the great and eminent Scotch preacher, Haldane, said. He raised himself a little, and distinctly repeated these words, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then we shall appear with him in glory." He was then asked if he thought he was going home. He answered, "Perhaps not quite yet." Mrs. Haldane affectionately said, "Then you will not leave us very soon. He replied with a smile, "To depart and to be with Christ is far better." On being asked if he felt much peace and happiness, he twice repeated, "Exceeding great and precious promises." He then said, "But I must rise." Mrs. Haldane said, "You are not able to get up." He smiled, and answered, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with his likeness." She said, "Is that what rising up you meant?" He replied, "Yes, that is the rising I meant. I must rise!"

And now, what said Howard—the great philanthropist, the man who while possessing true religion, and being the most eminent and distinguished of Christians, would from his plain common sense mode of acting, never be suspected of being a fanatic and an enthusiast? A few days before his death, when the symptoms of his disease began to assume a most alarming appearance, he said to Admiral Priestman, "You endeavour to divert my mind from dwelling on death; but I entertain very different sentiments. Death has no terror for me. I always look forward to it with cheerfulness, if not with pleasure."

But perhaps you may say, "We never knew any of these people. We

should like to hear of somebody whom we did know." Well, you shall hear of one whom you have heard me affectionately mention. He was not of our denomination, but he was a very prince in Israel—I refer to Joseph Irons. Many of you heard the sweet and blessed things that proceeded out of his lips, and will perhaps be able to verify what is said of him. At intervals he repeated short portions of Scripture, and select sentences, such as, "How long, Lord?" "Come, Lord Jesus!" "I long to go home, to be at rest." Seeing his dear wife shedding tears, he said, "Do not weep for me; I am waiting for that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." After a pause, to recover his breath, he added, "He that has preserved me thus far, will never leave, or forsake me. Fear not: all is well. Christ is precious. I am going home, for I am a shock of corn fully ripe." Now that is a man you did know, many of you. And it proves the fact that I have asserted, that to a Christian, death is acceptable come when it may. I am sure I can say, with many of my brethren, here, that could I now have the greatest favour conferred on me that mortals could desire, I would ask that I might die. I never wish to have the choice given to me; but to die is the happiest thing man can have, because it is to lose anxiety, it is to slay care, it is to have the peculiar sleep of the beloved. To the Christian, then, death must be acceptable.

A Christian has nothing to lose by death. You say he has to lose his friends. I am not so sure of that. Many of you have many more friends in heaven than on earth; some Christians have more dearly beloved ones above than below. You often count your family circle, but do you do as that little girl of whom Wordsworth speaks, when she said, "Master, we are seven." Some of them were dead and gone to heaven, but she would have it that they were all brothers and sisters still. Oh I how many brothers and sisters we have up stairs in the upper room in our Father's house; how many dear ones, linked with us in the ties of relationship, for they are as much our relations now as they were then! Though in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, yet in that great world, who has said that the ties of affection shall be severed, so that we shall not even there claim kindred with one another, as well as kindred with Jesus Christ? What have we to lose by death? Come when he may, should we not open the door for him? I would love to feel like that woman who said, when she was dying, "I feel like a door on the latch,

ready to be opened to let my Lord in." Is not that a sweet state, to have the house ready, so that it will require no setting in order? When death comes to a wicked man, he finds him moored fast, he snaps his cable, and drives his ship to sea; but when he comes to the Christian, he finds him winding up the anchor, and he says, "When thou hast done thy work, and shipped the anchor, I will take thee home." With sweet breath he blows on him, and the ship is wafted gently to heaven, with no regrets for life, but with angels at the brow, spirits guiding the rudder, sweet songs coming through the cordage, and canvass silvered o'er with light.

III. Then thirdly, the Christian's death is always TIMELY—"Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age." "Ah!" says one, "that is not true. Good people do not live longer than others. The most pious man may die in the prime of his youth." But look at my text. It does not say, thou shalt come to thy grave in old age—but in a "full age." Well, who knows what a "full age" is? A "full age" is whenever God likes to take his children home. There are some fruits you know that are late in coming to perfection, and we do not think their flavour is good till Christmas, or till they have gone through the frost; while some are fit for table now. All fruit: do not get ripe and mellow at the same season. So with Christians. They are at a "full age" when God chooses to take them home. They are at "full age" if they die at twenty one; they are not more if they live to be ninety. Some wines can be drunk very soon after the vintage. Others need to be kept. But what does this matter, if when the liquor is broached it is found to have its full flavour? God never broaches his cask till the wine has perfected itself. There are two mercies to a Christian. The first is that he will never die too soon; and the second, that he will never die too late.

First, he will never die too soon. Spencer, who blazed out so brilliantly some years ago, preached so wonderfully, that many expected that a great light would shine steadily, and that many would be guided to heaven; but when suddenly the light was quenched in darkness, and he was drowned while yet in his youth, men wept, and said, "Ah! Spencer died too soon." So it has been sung of Kirk White, the poet, who worked so laboriously at his studies. Like the eagle who finds that the arrow that smote him was winged by a feather from his own body, so was his own study the means of his death; and the poet said he died too soon. It was untrue. He did not

die too soon; no Christian ever does. But say some, "How useful might they have been had they have lived." Ah! but how damaging they might have been! And were it not better to die than to do something afterwards that would disgrace themselves, and bring disgrace to the Christian character? Were it not better for them to sleep while their work was going on, than to break it down afterwards? We have seen some sad instances of Christian men who have been very useful in God's cause, but have afterwards had sad falls, and have dishonoured Christ, though they were saved and brought back at last. We could almost wish that they had died rather than lived. You don't know what might have been the career of those men who were taken away so soon. Are you quite sure they would have done so much good? Might they not have done much evil? Could we have a dream of the future, and see what they might have been, we should say, "Ah Lord! let it stop while it is well." Let him sleep while the music playeth, there may be hideous sounds afterwards. We long not to keep awake to hear the dreary notes. The Christian dies well: he does not die too soon.

Again, the Christian never dies too late. That old lady there is eighty years old. She sits in a miserable room, shivering by a handful of fire. She is kept by charity. She is poor and miserable. "What's the good of her?" says everybody: "she has lived too long. A few years ago she might have been of some use; but now look at her! She can scarcely eat unless her food is put into her mouth. She cannot move; and what good can she be?" Do not you find fault with your Master's work. He is too good a husbandman to leave his wheat in the field too long and let it shale out. Go and see her; and you will be reprov'd. Let her speak: she can tell you things you never knew in all your life. Or, if she does not speak at all, her silent un murmuring serenity, her constant submission, teaches you how to bear suffering. So that there is something you can learn from her yet. Say not the old leaf hangeth too long on the tree. An insect may yet twist itself therein, and fashion it into its habitation. O say not the old sear leaf ought to have been blown off long ago. The time is coming when it shall fall gently on the soil; but it remaineth to preach to unthinking men the frailty of their lives. Hear what God says to each of us:—"Thou shalt come to thy grave in full age." Cholera! thou mayest fly across the land and taint the air: I shall die in a "full age." I may preach to-day, and as many

days as I please in the week, but I shall die at a full age. However ardently I may labour, I shall die at a full age. Affliction may come to drain my very life's blood, and dry up the very sap and marrow of my being. Ah! but affliction thou shalt not come too soon—I shall die at a full age. And thou waiting-man! and thou tarrying woman! thou art saying, "O Lord, how long? how long? Let me come home." Thou shalt not be kept from thy beloved Jesus one hour more than is necessary; thou shalt have heaven as soon as thou art ready for it. Heaven is ready enough for thee, and thy Lord will say, "Come up higher!" when thou hast arrived at a full age—but never before nor after.

IV. Now the last thing is, that a Christian will die with HONOUR: "Thou shalt come to thy grave like a shock of corn cometh in in his season." You hear men speak against funeral honours, and I certainly do enter my protest against the awful extravagance with which many funerals are conducted, and the absurdly stupid fashions that are often introduced. It would be a happy thing if some persons could break through them, and if widows were not obliged to spend the money which they need so much themselves, upon a needless ceremony, which makes death not honourable, but rather despicable. But, methinks that while death should not be flaunted out with gaudy plumes, there is such a thing as an honourable funeral which every one of us may desire to have. We do not wish to be carried away just as a bundle of tares, we would prefer that devout men should carry us to the grave and make much lamentation over us. Some of us have seen funerals that were very like a "harvest home." I can remember the funeral of a sainted minister under whom I once sat. The pulpit was hung in black, and crowds of people came together; and when an aged veteran in the army of Christ rose up to deliver the funeral oration over his remains, there stood a weeping people lamenting that a prince had fallen that day in Israel. Then, verily, I felt what Mr. Jay must have experienced when he preached the funeral sermon for Rowland Hill, "Howl fir tree, the cedar is fallen," there was such a melancholy grandeur there. And yet my soul seemed lit up with joy, to think it possible that some of us might share in the same affection, and that the same tears might be wept over us when we come to die. Ah! my brethren here, my brethren in office, my brethren in this church, it may somewhat cheer your hearts to know that when you depart, your

death will be to us a source of the deepest grief and most piercing sorrow. Your burial shall not be that prophesied for Jehoiakim—the burial of an ass, with none to weep over him; but devout men will assemble and say, "Here lies the deacon who for years served his Master so faithfully." "Here lies the Sunday-school teacher" will the child say "who early taught me the Saviour's name;" and if the minister should fall, methinks a crowd of people following him to the tomb would well give him such a funeral as a shock of corn hath when "it cometh in in his season." I believe we ought to pay great respect to the departed saints' bodies. "The memory of the just is blessed." And even ye little saints in the church, don't think you will be forgotten when you die. You may have no grave-stone; but the angels will know where you are as well without a grave-stone as with it. There will be some who will weep over you; you will not be hurried away, but will be carried with tears to your grave.

But, methinks, there are two funerals for every Christian: one, the funeral of the body; and the other, the soul. Funeral did I say of the soul? No I meant not so; I meant not so; it is a marriage of the soul for as soon as it leaves the body the angel reapers stand ready to carry it away. They may not bring a fiery chariot as erst they had for Elijah; but they have their broad spreading wings. I rejoice to believe that angels will come as convoys to the soul across the ethereal plains. Lo! angels at the head support the ascending saint and lovingly they look upon his face as they bear him upwards; and angels at the feet assist in wafting him up yonder through the skies, And as the husbandmen come out from their houses and cry, "A joyous harvest home," so will the angels come forth from the gates of heaven and say, "Harvest home! harvest home! Here is another shock of corn fully ripe gathered in to the garner." I think the most honourable and glorious thing we shall ever behold, next to Christ's entrance into heaven, and his glory there, is the entrance of one of God's people into heaven. I can suppose it is made a holiday whenever a saint enters, and that is continually, so that they keep perpetual holiday. Oh! methinks there is a shout that cometh from heaven whenever a Christian enters it, louder than the noise of many waters. The thundering acclamations of a universe are drowned, as if they were but a whisper, in that great shout which all the ransomed raise, when they cry "Another, and yet another comes;" and the song is still swelled by increasing voices,

as they chant, "Blessed husbandman, blessed husbandman, thy wheat is coming home; shocks of corn fully ripe are gathering into thy garner." Well, wait a little, beloved. In a few years more you and I shall be carried through the ether on the wings of angels. Methinks I die, and the angels approach. I am on the wings of cherubs. Oh, how they bear me up—how swiftly and yet how softly. I have left mortality with all its pains. Oh, how rapid is my flight! Just now I passed the morning star. Far behind me now the planets shine. Oh, how swiftly do I fly, and how sweetly! Cherubs! what sweet flight is yours, and what kind arms are these I lean upon. And on my way ye kiss me with the kisses of love and affection. Ye call me brother. Cherubs; am I your brother? I who just now was captive in a tenement of clay—am I your brother? "Yes!" they say. Oh, hark! I hear music strangely harmonious! What sweet sounds come to my ears! I am nearing Paradise. 'Tis e'en so. Do not spirits approach with songs of joy? "Yes!" they say. And ere they can answer, behold they come—a glorious convoy! I catch a sight of them as they are holding a great review at the gates of Paradise. And, ah! there is the golden gate. I enter in; and I see my blessed Lord. I can tell you no more. All else were things unlawful for flesh to utter. My Lord! I am with thee—plunged into thee—lost in thee just as a drop is swallowed in the ocean—as one single tint is lost in the glorious rainbow! Am I lost in thee, thou glorious Jesus? And is my bliss consummated? Is the wedding-day come at last? Have I really put on the marriage garments? And am I thine? Yes! I am. There is nought else now for me. In vain your harps, ye angels. In vain all else. Leave me a little while. I will know your heaven by-and-bye. Give me some years, yea give me some ages to lean here on this sweet bosom of my Lord; give me half eternity, and let me bask myself in the sunshine of that one smile. Yes; give me this. Didst speak, Jesus? "Yes, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and now thou art mine! thou art with me." Is not this heaven? I want nought else. I tell you once again, ye blessed spirits, I will see you by-and-bye. But with my Lord I will now take my feast of loves. Oh, Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Thou art heaven! I want nought else. I am lost in thee!

Beloved, is not this to go to "the grave in full age, like as a shock of corn," fully ripe? The sooner the day shall come, the more we shall rejoice. Oh, tardy wheels of time! speed on your flight. Oh, angels, wherefore come ye

on with laggard wings? Oh! fly through the ether and outstrip the lightning's flash! Why may I not die? Why do I tarry here? Impatient heart, be quiet a little while. Thou art not fit for heaven yet, else thou wouldst not be here. Thou hast not done thy work, else thou wouldst have thy rest. Toil on a little longer; there is rest enough in the grave. Thou shalt have it there. On! on!

"With my scrip on my back, and my staff in my hand,
I'll march on in haste thro' an enemy's land.
Though the way may be rough it cannot be long;
So I'll smooth it with hope, and I'll cheer it with song.

"My dear friends, you who are not converted, I have no time to say anything to you on this morning. I wish I had. But I pray that all I have said may be yours. Poor hearts, I am sorry I cannot tell you this is yours now. I would I could preach to every one of you, and say that you all shall be in heaven. But God knoweth there are some of you that are on the road to hell; and do not suppose you will enter heaven, if you go hell's road. No body would expect, if he proceeded to the north, to arrive at the south. Nay; God must change thine heart. By simple trust in Jesus, if thou givest thyself up to his mercy, even though the vilest of the vile, thou shalt sing before his face. And methinks, poor sinner, thou wilt say to me, as a poor woman did last Wednesday, after I had been preaching, when I believe every-body had been crying, from the least to the greatest, and even the preacher in the pulpit. As I went down, I said to one, "Are you chaff or wheat?" And she said, "Ah !I trembled to-night, sir." I said to another, "Well, sister, I hope we shall be in Paradise soon." And she replied, "You may, sir." And I came to another, and said, "Well, do you think you will be gathered with the wheat?" And she answered, "One thing I can say—if God ever lets me get into heaven, I will praise him with all my might. I will sing myself away, and shall never think I can sing loud enough." It reminded me of what an old disciple once said: "If the Lord Jesus does but save me he shall never hear the last of it." Let us praise God, then, eternally -

"While life, or thought, or being lasts,
Or immortality endures!"

Now may the Three-One God dismiss you with his blessing.

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Declension From First Love

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. - Revelation 2:4

It is a great thing to have as much said in our commendation as was said concerning the church at Ephesus. Just read what "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness," said of them—"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, we may feel devoutly thankful if we can humbly, but honestly say, that this commendation applies to us. Happy the man whose works are known and accepted of Christ. He is no idle Christian, he has practical godliness; he seeks by works of piety to obey God's whole law, by works of charity to manifest his love to the brotherhood, and by works of devotion to show his attachment to the cause of his Master. "I know thy works." Alas! some of you cannot get so far as that. Jesus Christ himself can bear no witness to your works, for you have not done any. You are Christians by profession, but you are not Christians as to your practice. I say again, happy is that man to whom Christ can say, "I know thy works." It is a commendation worth a world to have as much as that said of us. But further, Christ said, "and thy labour." This is more still. Many Christians have works, but only few Christians have labour. There were many preachers in Whitfield's day that had works, but Whitfield had labour. He toiled and travailed for souls. He was "in labours more abundant." Many were they in the apostle's days who did works for Christ; but pre-eminently the apostle Paul did labour for souls. It is not work merely, it is

anxious work; it is casting forth the whole strength, and exercising all the energies for Christ. Could the Lord Jesus say as much as that of you—"I know thy labour?" No. He might say, "I know thy loitering; I know thy laziness; I know thy shirking of the work; I know thy boasting of what little thou dost; I know thine ambition to be thought something of, when thou art nothing." But ah! friends, it is more than most of us dare to hope that Christ could say, "I know thy labour."

But further, Christ says, "I know thy patience." Now there be some that labour, and they do it well. But what does hinder them? They only labour for a little season, and then they cease to work and begin to faint. But this church had laboured on for many years; it had thrown out all its energies—not in some spasmodic effort, but in a continual strain and unabated zeal for the glory of God. "I know thy patience." I say again, beloved, I tremble to think how few out of this congregation could win such praise as this. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil." The thorough hatred which the church had of evil doctrine, of evil practice, and its corresponding intense love for pure truth and pure practice—in that I trust some of us can bear a part. "And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." Here, too, I think some of us may hope to be clear. I know the difference between truth and error. Arminianism will never go down with us; the doctrine of men will not suit our taste. The husks, the bran, and the chaff, are not things that we can feed upon. And when we listen to those who preach another gospel, a holy anger burns within us, for we love the truth as it is in Jesus; and nothing but that will satisfy us. "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." They had borne persecutions, difficulties, hardships, embarrassments, and discouragements, yet had they never flagged, but always continued faithful. Who among us here present could lay claim to so much praise as this? What Sunday-school teacher have I here who could say, "I have laboured, and I have borne, and have had patience, and have not fainted." Ah, dear friends, if you can say it, it is more than I can. Often have I been ready to faint in the Master's work; and though I trust I have not been tired of it, yet there has sometimes been a longing to get from the work to the reward, and to go from the service of God, before I had fulfilled, as a hireling, my day. I am

afraid we have not enough of patience, enough of labour, and enough of good works, to get even as much as this said of us. But it is in our text, I fear the mass of us must find our character. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." There may be a preacher here present. Did you ever hear of a minister who had to preach his own funeral sermon? What a labour that must have been, to feel that he had been condemned to die, and must preach against himself, and condemn himself! I stand here to-night, not in that capacity, but in one somewhat similar. I feel that I who preach shall this night condemn myself; and my prayer before I entered this pulpit was, that I might fearlessly discharge my duty, that I might deal honestly with my own heart, and that I might preach, knowing myself to be the chief culprit, and you each in your measure to have offended in this respect, even though none of you so grievously as I have done. I pray that God the Holy Spirit, through his renewings, may apply the word, not merely to your hearts, but to mine, that I may return to my first love, and that you may return with me.

In the first place, what was our first love? Secondly, how did we lose it? And thirdly, let me exhort you to get it again.

I. First, WHAT WAS OUR FIRST LOVE? Oh, let us go back—it is not many years with some of us. We are but youngsters in God's ways, and it is not so long with any of you that you will have very great difficulty in reckoning it. Then if you are Christians, those days were so happy that your memory will never forget them, and therefore you can easily return to that first bright spot in your history. Oh, what love was that which I had to my Saviour the first time he forgave my sins. I remember it. You remember each for yourselves, I dare say, that happy hour when the Lord appeared to us, bleeding on his cross, when he seemed to say, and did say in our hearts, "I am thy salvation; I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins." Oh, how I loved him! Passing all loves except his own was that love which I felt for him then. If beside the door of the place in which I met with him there had been a stake of blazing faggots, I would have stood upon them without chains; glad to give my flesh, and blood, and bones, to be ashes that should testify my love to him. Had he asked me then to give all my substance to the poor, I

would have given all and thought myself to be amazingly rich in having beggared myself for his name's sake. Had he commanded me then to preach in the midst of all his foes, I could have said: -

"There's not a lamb amongst thy flock
I would disdain to feed,
There's not a foe before whose face
I'd fear thy cause to plead."

I could realize then the language of Rutherford, when he said, being full of love to Christ, once upon a time, in the dungeon of Aberdeen—"Oh, my Lord, if there were a broad hell betwixt me and thee, if I could not get at thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice but I would plunge through it all, if I might embrace thee and call thee mine."

Now it is that first love that you and I must confess I am afraid we have in a measure lost. Let us just see whether we have it. When we first loved the Saviour how earnest we were; there was not a single thing in the Bible, that we did not think most precious; there was not one command of his that we did not think to be like fine gold and choice silver. Never were the doors of his house open without our being there. if there were a prayer meeting at any hour in the day we were there. Some said of us that we had no patience, we would do too much and expose our bodies too frequently—but we never thought of that "Do yourself no harm," was spoken in our ears; but we would have done anything then. Why there are some of you who cannot walk to the Music Hall on a morning, it is too far. When you first joined the church, you would have walked twice as far. There are some of you who cannot be at the prayer meeting—business will not permit; yet when you were first baptized, there was never a prayer meeting from which you were absent. It is the loss of your first love that makes you seek the comfort of your bodies instead of the prosperity of your souls. Many have been the young Christians who have joined this church, and old ones too, and I have said to them, "Well, have you got a ticket for a seat?" "No, sir." "Well, what will you do? Have you got a preference ticket?" "No, I cannot get one; but I do not mind standing in the crowd an hour, or two hours. I will come at five o'clock so that I can get in. Sometimes I don't get in, sir; but even then I feel that I

have done what I ought to do in attempting to get in." "Well," but I have said, "you live five miles off, and there is coming and going back twice a day—you cannot do it." "Oh, sir," they have said "I can do it; I feel so much the blessedness of the Sabbath and so much enjoyment of the presence of the Saviour." I have smiled at them; I could understand it, but I have not felt it necessary to caution them—and now their love is cool enough. That first love does not last half so long as we could wish. Some of you stand convicted even here; you have not that blazing love, that burning love, that ridiculous love as the worldling would call it, which is after all the love to be most coveted and desired. No, you have lost your first love in that respect. Again, how obedient you used to be. If you saw a commandment, that was enough for you—you did it. But now you see a commandment, and you see profit on the other side; and how often do you dally with the profit and choose the temptation, instead of yielding an unsullied obedience to Christ.

Again, how happy you used to be in the ways of God. Your love was of that happy character that you could sing all day long; but now your religion has lost its lustre, the gold has become dim; you know that when you come to the Sacramental table, you often come there without enjoying it. There was a time when every bitter thing was sweet; whenever you heard the Word, it was all precious to you. Now you can grumble at the minister. Alas! the minister has many faults, but the question is, whether there has not been a greater charge in you than there has been in him. Many are there who say, "I do not hear Mr. So-and-so as I used to,"—when the fault lies in their own ears. Oh, brethren, when we live near to Christ, and are in our first love, it is amazing what a little it takes to make a good preacher to us. Why, I confess I have heard a poor illiterate Primitive Methodist preach the gospel, and I felt as if I could jump for joy all the while I was listening to him, and yet he never gave me a new thought or a pretty expression, nor one figure that I could remember, but he talked about Christ; and even his common things were to my hungry spirit like dainty meats. And I have to acknowledge, and, perhaps, you have to acknowledge the same—that I have heard sermons from which I ought to have profited, but I have been thinking on the man's style, or some little mistakes in grammar. When I might have been holding fellowships with Christ in and through the ministry, I have,

instead thereof, been getting abroad in my thoughts even to the ends of the earth. And what is the reason for this, but that I have lost my first love.

Again: when we were in our first love, what would we do for Christ; now how little will we do. Some of the actions which we performed when we were young Christians, but just converted, when we look back upon them, seem to have been wild and like idle tales. You remember when you were a lad and first came to Christ, you had a half-sovereign in your pocket; it was the only one you had, and you met with some poor saint and gave it all away. You did not regret that you had done it, your only regret was that you had not a great deal more, for you would have given all. You recollected that something was wanted for the cause of Christ. Oh! we could give anything away when we first loved the Saviour. If there was a preaching to be held five miles off, and we could walk with the lay-preacher to be a little comfort to him in the darkness, we were off. If there was a Sunday-school, however early it might be, we would be up, so that we might be present. Unheard-of feats, things that we now look back upon with surprise, we could perform them. Why cannot we do them now? Do you know there are some people who always live upon what they have been. I speak very plainly now. There is a brother in this church who may take it to himself; I hope he will. It is not very many years ago since he said to me, when I asked him why he did not do something—"Well, I have done my share; I used to do this, and I have done the other; I have done so-and-so." Oh, may the Lord deliver him, and all of us, from living on "has beens!" It will never do to say we have done a thing. Suppose, for a solitary moment, the world should say, "I have turned round; I will stand still." Let the sea say, "I have been ebbing and flowing, lo! these many years; I will ebb and flow no more." Let the sun say, "I have been shining, and I have been rising and setting so many days; I have done this enough to earn me a goodly name; I will stand still;" and let the moon wrap herself up in veils of darkness, and say, "I have illuminated many a night, and I have lighted many a weary traveller across the moors; I will shut up my lamp and be dark forever." Brethren, when you and I cease to labour, let us cease to live. God has no intention to let us live a useless life. But mark this; when we leave our first works, there is no question about having lost our first love; that is sure. If there be strength

remaining, if there be still power mentally and physically, if we cease from our office, if we abstain from our labours, there is no solution of this question which an honest conscience will accept, except this, "Thou hast lost thy first love, and, therefore, thou hast neglected thy first works." Ah! we were all so very ready to make excuses for ourselves. Many a preacher has retired from the ministry, long before he had any need to do so. He has married a rich wife. Somebody has left him a little money, and he can do without it. He was growing weak in the ways of God, or else he would have said,

"My body with my charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."

And let any man here present who was a Sunday-school teacher and who has left it, who was a tract distributor and who has given it up, who was active in the way of God but is now idle, stand to-night before the bar of his conscience, and say whether he be not guilty of this charge which I bring against him, that he has lost his first love.

I need not stop to say also, that this may be detected in the closet as well as in our daily life; for when first love is lost, there is a want of that prayerfulness which we have. I remember the day I was up at three o'clock in the morning. Till six, I spent in prayer, wrestling with God. Then I had to walk some eight miles, and started off and walked to the baptism. Why, prayer was a delight to me then. My duties at that time kept me occupied pretty well from five o'clock in the morning till ten at night, and I had not a moment for retirement, yet I would be up at four o'clock to pray; and though I feel very sleepy now-a-days, and I feel that I could not be up to pray, it was not so then, when I was in my first love. Somehow or other, I never lacked time then. If I did not get it early in the morning, I got it late at night. I was compelled to have time for prayer with God; and what prayer it was! I had no need then to groan because I could not pray; for love, being fervent, I had sweet liberty at the throne of grace. But when first love departs, we begin to think that ten minutes will do for prayer, instead of an hour, and we read a verse or two in the morning, whereas we used to read a portion, but never used to go into the world without getting some marrow and fatness. Now, business has so

increased, that we must get into bed as soon as we can; we have not time to pray. And then at dinner time, we used to have a little time for communion; that is dropped. And then on the Sabbath-day, we used to make it a custom to pray to God when we got home from his house, for just five minutes before dinner, so that what we heard we might profit by; that is dropped. And some of you that are present were in the habit of retiring for prayer when you went home; your wives have told that story; the messengers have heard it when they have called at your houses, when they have asked the wife—"What is your husband?" "Ah!" she has said, "he is a godly man; he cannot come home to his breakfast but he must slip upstairs alone. I know what he is doing—he is praying. Then when he is at table, he often says—"Mary, I have had a difficulty to-day, we must go and have a word or two of prayer together." And some of you could not take a walk without prayer, you were so fond of it you could not have too much of it. Now where is it? You know more than you did; you have grown older; you have grown richer, perhaps. You have grown wiser in some respects; but you might give up all you have got, to go back to

"Those peaceful hours you once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!"

Oh, what would you give if you could fill

"That aching void,
The world can never fill,"

but which only the same love that you had at first, can ever fully satisfy!

II. And now, beloved, WHERE DID YOU AND I LOSE OUR FIRST LOVE, if we have lost it? Let each one speak for himself, or rather, let me speak for each.

Have you not lost your first love in the world some of you? You used to have that little shop once, you had not very much business; well, you had enough, and a little to spare. However, there was a good turn came in business; you took two shops, and you are getting on very well. Is it not marvellous, that when you grew richer and had more business, you began

to have less grace?

Oh, friends, it is a very serious thing to grow rich? Of all the temptations to which God's children are exposed it is the worst, because it is one that they do not dread, and therefore it is the more subtle temptation. You know a traveller if he is going a journey, takes a staff with him, it is a help to him; but suppose he is covetous, and says, "I will have a hundred of these sticks," that will be no help to him at all; he has only got a load to carry, and it stops his progress instead of assisting him. But I do believe there are many Christians that lived near to God, when they were living on a pound a week, that might give up their yearly incomes with the greatest joy, if they could have now the same contentment, the same peace of mind, the same nearness of access to God, that they had in times of poverty. Ah, too much of the world is a bad thing for any man! I question very much whether a man ought not sometimes to stop, and say, "There is an opportunity of doing more trade, but it will require the whole of my time, and I must give up that hour I have set apart for prayer; I will not do the trade at all; I have enough, and therefore let it go. I would rather do trade with heaven than trade with earth."

Again: do you not think also that perhaps you may have lost your first love by getting too much with worldly people? When you were in your first love, no company suited you but the godly; but now you have got a young man that you talk with, who talks a great deal more about frivolity, and gives you a great deal more of the froth and scum of levity, than he ever gives you of solid godliness. Once you were surrounded by those that fear the Lord, but now you dwell in the tents of "Freedom," where you hear little but cursing. But, friends, he that carrieth coals in his bosom must be burned; and he that hath ill companions cannot but be injured. Seek, then, to have godly friends, that thou mayest maintain thy first love.

But another reason. Do you not think that perhaps you have forgotten how much you owe to Christ? There is one thing, that I feel from experience I am compelled to do very often, viz., to go back to where I first started: -

" I, the chief of sinners am,

But Jesus died for me."

You and I get talking about our being saints; we know our election, we rejoice in our calling, we go on to sanctification; and we forget the hole of the pit whence we were digged. Ah, remember my brother, thou art nothing now but a sinner saved through grace; remember what thou wouldst have been, if the Lord had left thee. And surely, then, by going back continually to first principles, and to the great foundation stone, the cross of Christ, thou wilt be led to go back to thy first love.

Dost thou not think, again, that thou hast lost thy first love by neglecting communion with Christ? Now preacher, preach honestly, and preach at thyself. Has there not been, sometimes, this temptation to do a great deal for Christ, but not to live a great deal with Christ? One of my besetting sins, I feel, is this. If there is anything to be done actively for Christ, I instinctively prefer the active exercise to the passive quiet of his presence. There are some of you, perhaps, that are attending a Sunday school, who would be more profitably employed to your own souls if you were spending that hour in communion with Christ. Perhaps, too, you attend the means so often, that you have no time in secret to improve what you gain in the means. Mrs. Bury once said, that if "all the twelve apostles were preaching in a certain town, and we could have the privilege of hearing them preach, yet if they kept us out of our closets, and led us to neglect prayer, better for us never to have heard their names, than to have gone to listen to them." We shall never love Christ much except we live near to him. Love to Christ is dependent on our nearness to him. It is just like the planets and the sun. Why are some of the planets cold? Why do they move at so slow a rate? Simply because they are so far from the sun: put them where the planet Mercury is, and they will be in a boiling heat, and spin round the sun in rapid orbits. So, beloved, if we live near to Christ, we cannot help loving him: the heart that is near Jesus must be full of his love. But when we live days and weeks and months without personal intercourse, without real fellowship, how can we maintain love towards a stranger? He must be a friend, and we must stick close to him, as he sticks close to us—closer than a brother; or else, we shall never have our first love.

There are a thousand reasons that I might have given, but I leave each of you to search your hearts, to find out why you have lost, each of you, your first love.

III. Now, dear friends, just give me all your attention for a moment, while I earnestly beseech and implore of you to **SEEK TO GET YOUR FIRST LOVE RESTORED**. Shall I tell you why? Brother, though thou be a child of God, if thou hast lost thy first love, there is some trouble near at hand. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," and he is sure to chasten thee when thou sinnest. It is calm with you to night, is it? Oh! but dread that calm, there is a tempest lowering. Sin is the harbinger of tempest: read the history of David. All David's life, in all his troubles, even in the rocks of the wild goats, and in the caves of Engedi, he was the happiest of men till he lost his first love; and from the day when his lustful eye was fixed upon Bathsheba, even to the last, he went with broken bones sorrowing to his grave. It was one long string of afflictions: take heed it be not so with thee. "Ah, but," you say, "I shall not sin as David did." Brother, you cannot tell: if you have lost your first love, what should hinder you but that you should lose your first purity? Love and purity go together. He that loveth is pure; he that loveth little shall find his purity decrease, until it becomes marred and polluted. I should not like to see you, my dear friends, tried and troubled: I do weep with them that weep. If there be a child of yours sick, and I hear of it, I can say honestly, I do feel something like a father to your children, and as a father to you. If you have sufferings and afflictions, and I know them, I desire to feel for you, and spread your griefs before the throne of God. Oh, I do not want my heavenly Father to take the rod out to you all; but he will do it, if you fall from your first love. As sure as ever he is a Father, he will let you have the rod if your love cools. Bastards may escape the rod. If you are only base-born professors you may go happily along; but the true-born child of God, when his love declines, must and shall smart for it.

There is yet another thing, my dear friends, if we lose our first love—what will the world say of us if we lose our first love? I must put this, not for our name's sake, but for God's dear name's sake. O what will the world say of us? There was a time, and it is not gone yet, when men must point at this church, and say of it, "There is a church, that is like a bright oasis

in the midst of a desert, a spot of light in the midst of darkness." Our prayer meetings were prayer meetings indeed, the congregations were as attentive as they were numerous. Oh, how you did drink in the words; how your eyes flashed with a living fire, whenever the name of Christ was mentioned! And what, if in a little time it shall be said, "Ah, that church is quite as sleepy as any other; look at them when the minister preaches, why they can sleep under him, they do not seem to care for the truth. Look at the Spurgeonites, they are just as cold and careless as others; they used to be called the most pugnacious people in the world, for they were always ready to defend their Master's name and their Master's truth, and they got that name in consequence, but now you may swear in their presence and they will not rebuke you: how near these people once used to live to God and his house, they were always there; look at their prayer meetings, they would fill their seats as full at a prayer meeting as at an ordinary service; now they are all gone back." "Ah," says the world, "just what I said; the fact is, it was a mere spasm, a little spiritual excitement, and it has all gone down." And the worldling says, "Ah, ah, so would I have it, so would I have it!" I was reading only the other day of an account of my ceasing to be popular; it was said my chapel was now nearly empty, that nobody went to it: and I was exceedingly amused and interested. "Well, if it come to that," I said, "I shall not grieve or cry very much; hut if it is said the church has left its zeal and first love, that is enough to break any honest pastor's heart." Let the chaff go, but if the wheat remain we have comfort. Let those who are the outer-court worshippers cease to hear, what signifieth? let them turn aside, but O, ye soldiers of the Cross, if ye turn your backs in the day of battle, where shall I hide my head? what shall I say for the great name of my Master, or for the honour of his gospel? It is our boast and joy, that the old-fashioned doctrine has been revived in these days, and that the truth that Calvin preached, that Paul preached, and that Jesus preached, is still mighty to save, and far surpasses in power all the neologies and new-fangled notions of the present time. But what will the heretic say, when he sees it is all over? "Ah," he will say, "that old truth urged on by the fanaticism of a foolish young man, did wake the people a little; but it lacked marrow and strength, and it all died away!" Will ye thus dishonour your Lord and Master, ye children of the heavenly king? I beseech you do not so—but endeavour to receive again as a rich gift of the Spirit your first love.

And now, once again, dear friends, there is a thought that ought to make each of us feel alarmed, if we have lost our first love. May not this question arise in our hearts—Was I ever a child of God at all? Oh, my God, must I ask myself this question? Yes, I will. Are there not many of whom it is said, they went out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us? Are there not some whose goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew—may that not have been my case? I am speaking for you all. Put the question—may I not have been impressed under a certain sermon, and may not that impression have been a mere carnal excitement? May it not have been that I thought I repented but did not really repent? May it not have been the case, that I got a hope somewhere but had not a right to it? And I never had the loving faith that unites me to the Lamb of God. And may it not have been that I only thought I had love to Christ, and never had it, for if I really had love to Christ should I be as I now am? See how far I have come down! May I not keep on going down until my end shall be perdition, and the never-dying worm, and the fire unquenchable? Many have gone from heights of a profession to the depths of damnation, and may not I be the same? May it not be true of me that I am as a wandering star for whom is reserved blackness of darkness for ever? May I not have shone brightly in the midst of the church for a little while, and yet may I not be one of those poor foolish virgins who took no oil in my vessel with my lamp, and therefore my lamp will go out? Let me think, if I go on as I am, it is impossible for me to stop, if I am going downwards I may go on going downwards. And O my God, if I go on backsliding for another year—who knows where I may have backslidden to? Perhaps into some gross sin. Prevent, prevent it by thy grace! Perhaps I may backslide totally. If I am a child of God I know I cannot do that. But still, may it not happen that I only thought I was a child of God, and may I not so far go back that at last my very name to live shall go because I always have been dead? Oh! how dreadful it is to think and to see in our church, members who turn out to be dead members! If I could weep tears of blood, they would not express the emotion that I ought to feel, and that you ought to feel, when you think there are some among us that are dead branches of a living vine. Our deacons find that there is much of unsoundness in our members. I grieve to think that because we cannot see all our members,

there are many who have backslidden. There is one who says, "I joined the church, it is true, but I never was converted. I made a profession of being converted, but I was not, and now I take no delight in the things of God. I am moral, I attend the house of prayer, but I am not converted. My name may be taken off the books; I am not a godly man." There are others among you who perhaps have gone even further than that—have gone into sin, and yet I may not know it. It may not come to my ears in so large a church as this. Oh! I beseech you, my dear friends, by him that liveth and was dead, let not your good be evil spoken of, by losing your first love.

Are there some among you that are professing religion, and not possessing it? Oh, give up your profession, or else get the truth and sell it not. Go home, each of you, and cast yourselves on your faces before God, and ask him to search you, and try you, and know your ways, and see if there be any evil way in you, and pray that he may lead you in the way everlasting. And if hitherto you have only professed, but have not possessed, seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call ye upon him while he is near. Ye are warned, each one of you; you are solemnly told to search yourselves and make short work of it. And if any of you be hypocrites, at God's great day, guilty as I may be in many respects, there is one thing I am clear of—I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I do not believe that any people in the world shall be damned more terribly than you shall if you perish; for of this thing I have not shunned to speak—the great evil of making a profession without being sound at heart. No, I have even gone so near to personality, that I could not have gone further without mentioning your names. And rest assured, God's grace being with me, neither you nor myself shall be spared in the pulpit in any personal sin that I may observe in any one of you. But oh, do let us be sincere! May the Lord sooner split this church till only a tenth of you remain, than ever suffer you to be multiplied a hundred-fold unless you be multiplied with the living in Zion, and with the holy flock that the Lord himself hath ordained, and will keep unto the end. To-morrow morning, we shall meet together and pray, that we may have our first love restored; and I hope many of you will be found there to seek again the love which you have almost lost.

And as for you that never had that love at all, the Lord breathe it upon you now for the love of Jesus. Amen.

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The Desire Of All Nations

And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. - Haggai 2:7

The second temple was never intended to be as magnificent as the first. The first was to be the embodiment of the full glory of the dispensation of symbols and types, and was soon to pass away. This comparative feebleness had been proved by the idolatry and apostasy of the people Israel, and when they returned to Jerusalem they were to have a structure that would be sufficient for the purposes of their worship, but they were not again to be indulged with the splendours of the former house which God had erected by the hand of Solomon. Had it been God's Providence that a temple equally magnificent as the first should be erected, it might have been very readily accomplished. Cyrus appears to have been obedient to the divine will, and to have been a great favourer of the Jews, but he expressly by edict diminished the length of the walls and gave express command that the walls should never be erected so high as before. We have also evidence that a like decree was made by Darius, an equally great friend of the Jews, who could with the lifting of his finger have outdone the glory of Solomon's temple, but in God's Providence it was not arranged that so it should be, and though Herod, not a Jew, and only a Jew by religious pretence to suit his own particular purpose, lavished a good deal of treasure upon the second temple, for the pleasure of the nation he ruled, and to gain some favour from them, yet he rather profaned than adorned the temple, since he did not follow the prescribed architecture by which it ought to have been built, and he had not the divine approval upon his labours. No prophet ever commanded, and no prophet ever sanctioned, the labours of such a horrible wretch as that Herod. The reason seems to me to be this. In the second temple, during the time it should stand, the dispensation of Christ was softly melted into

the light of spiritual truth. The outward worship was to cease there. It seems right that it should cease in a temple that had not the external glory of the first. God intended there to light up the first beams of the spiritual splendour of the second temple, namely, his true temple, the Church, and he would put a sign of decay on the outward and visible in the temple of the first. Yet he declares by his servant, Haggai, that the glory of the second temple should be greater than the first. It certainly was not so as in respect of gold, or silver, or size, or excellency of architecture; and yet it truly was so, for the glory of the presence of Christ was greater than all the glory of the old temple's wealth; and the glory of having the gospel preached in it, the glory of having the gospel miracles wrought in its porches by the apostles and by the Master, was far greater than any hecatombs of bullocks and he-goats—the glory of being, as it were, the cradle of the Christian Church, the nest out of which should fly the messengers of peace, who, like doves, should bear the olive branch throughout the world. I take it that the decadence of the old system of symbols was a most fitting preparation for the incoming of the system of grace and truth in the person of Jesus Christ; and the second temple hath this glory which excelleth, that while the first was the glory of the moon in all its splendour, the second is the moon going down: the sun is rising beyond her, gilding the horizon with the first beams of the morning.

I intend to speak to you at this time about the true spiritual temple; the true second temple, the spiritual temple, which, I think, is here spoken of—although the second temple literally is also intended—the true spiritual temple built up, according to the text, of the desire of all nations.

I find this passage a very difficult one in the original; and it bears several meanings in itself. The first meaning that I give you, though it runs contrary to the great majority of Christian expositors, is the most accurate explanation of the original. We shall bring in the other explanations by-and-by. Reading it thus, "I will shake all nations," and the desire—the desirable persons, the best part, or as the Septuagint reads it, the elect of all nations—shall come. They shall come—the true temple of God, and they shall be the living stones that shall compose it; or, as others read it, "The desirable things of all nations shall come," which is, no doubt, the meaning, because the eighth verse gives the key:

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts." The desirable things of all nations are to be brought in as voluntary offerings to this true second temple, this spiritual living temple.

Let us begin, then, and take that sense first, and in this case we are told, in the text concerning this second temple, what these living stones are:—

I. THE HISTORICAL DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME.

The choice men, the pick, the best of all men shall come and constitute the true temple of God. Not the kings and princes, not the great and noble after the flesh—these are but the choice of men after the manner of man's choice; but not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen and called; but still, those whom God chooses must be the choice ones of mankind. They will not claim to be so by nature; on the contrary, they will repudiate any idea of any natural betterness in themselves. But God sees them as what they are to be, as what he intends them to be, as what he makes them to be, and in this respect they are the desire, they are the choice of all nations. To God, his people are his royal treasure, his secret jewels, the treasury of kings—they are very precious in his sight. Their very death is precious. He keeps record of their bones, and will raise their dust at the last day. If the nation did but know it, the saints in a nation are the aristocracy of that nation. Those who fear God are the very soul, and marrow, and backbone of a nation. For their sakes God has preserved many a nation. For their sakes he gives unnumbered blessings. "Ye are the salt of the earth": the earth were putrid without them. "Ye are the light of the world": the world would be dark without them. They are the desire, I say, though often the world treats them with contempt, and would cast them out. It has ever been thus with the blind world—to treat its best friends worst, and its worst enemies often receive the most royal entertainment. Now what a joy it is to us to think that God has been pleased to make unto himself a people according to his own sovereign will and good pleasure, and that he has made these to be the desirable ones out of all nations—that with these choice and elect ones he will build up his Church.

But the text not only tell us of the stones, but of the remarkable mode of

architecture. "The desire of all nations shall come"—they shall be brought together. Human means shall be used to bring each one to its place, to excavate each one from its quarry; but while it is God who speaketh, he speaks like God, for he uses shalls and wills most freely, and according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus, or ever the earth was, so shall the fulfilment be. We who preach the gospel may preach with devout assurance of success. The desire of all nations shall come. Out of this congregation the truly desirable ones shall come to Christ. Out of the soil in which the sower sowed—the honest and good ground—is brought forth the harvest. Out of the nations are some choice spirits who come; some whom the Lord looks upon with great delight, and these shall come. We do not labour in vain, neither do we spend our strength for nought. We fall back upon the doctrine of divine working and divine choice for consolation—certainly not for an excuse for indolence, but for consolation when we have done our best, that God is glorified in the end—"the desire of all nations shall come."

And if you will notice in the whole text, it appears that they do not come without much shaking. In one sense, no man comes to God with compulsion; and in another sense, no man comes without compulsion. You see two boxes opened. There are two ways of opening them. You see one box wrenched: there has been used evidently rough means. Who opened it? A thief. God never opens men's hearts in that way. You see another box open—no sign of damage, no sign of any particular labour. Who opened it? The person who had the key—probably the owner. Hearts belong to God, and he has the keys and opens them—sweetly opens them. And yet, though no force is used, that puts aside the positive, free agency of man which God interferes not with; yet there is a spiritual force which may well be described as a shaking. It is only when the tree of the nation has a thorough shaking, that at last the prime, ripe fruit will drop down into the great Master's lap. He shakes by Providence, by the movement of the human conscience. He shakes by the impulses of his Holy Spirit; he shakes the spirit, and as the result the desirable persons out of all the nations are brought to himself. Stones that he would have, come at last out of the quarry, and he builds them up into a temple.

And now observe that these persons, according to another rendering of

the text, when they come to build up the Church, they always bring their desire with them—they bring with them the most desirable thing. The desirable things of all nations shall give the silver, and the gold, and so on. He that comes to Christ brings with him all he has, and he has not come to Christ who has left his true substance behind him. What, now, is the desire of all the nations when hearts are renewed? Well, silver and gold will always be desirable, and men who give their hearts to Christ will bring that they have of that to Christ. But the most desirable things of manhood are not metals—dirt, mere dross, hard materialisms—no, the desirable things of manhood are things of the soul, the heart, the spirit; and into the temple, the great second temple, there shall come, not masses of gold and silver merely, that can adorn with outward splendour, but also love, and faith, and holy virtue, more priceless than gems, far richer in value than rarest mines. Oh! what a sight the Church of God is when holy angels look upon it. We hear of some of the first Spanish invaders going into the temple of Peru, and seeing floors, roofs, and walls made of slabs of gold, and standing astonished. But oh! in the Church there are slabs of faith on the floor of that great temple, and walls of love, of Christian self-sacrifice, and roofs of holy joy and Christian consolation. It is a temple that makes spiritual eyes flash with gladness. What care they for the splendour of kings and princes? But they care much for the true, desirable things of nations—holy emotions, holy desires, ascriptions of gratitude, and devout acts of service of the Lord God. Oh! how glorious is the second temple then, when the desirable men come to it, and bring with them all the desirable things to make it glorious in the sight of God.

And then this temple, thus built and thus adorned, will continue. The text implies that "I will shake all nations." The apostle says that this signifies the things that can be shaken; that the things that cannot be shaken will remain, and that the desire of all nations must be put down as a thing that cannot be shaken. The Church, then, shall never be shaken, and the precious things that the Church gives to her God shall not be shaken. Time will change many things. Great princes will be considered mere beggars by-and-by in the esteem of men who know how to judge by character. Great men will shrivel into very small things—when they come to be tried, even by posterity. And the judgement-day—ah! how will that try the great ones of this earth? But the Christian Church—the very gates

of hell shall not prevail against her. Time shall not be able so much as to chip one of her polished stones. Her treasures of faith, and what not, the rich things that God hath given her—these things shall never be stolen: they can never be shaken. And then the crown of all is, "I will fill this house with my glory," saith the Lord. This is the reason, the great charm of it all. God himself dwells, as he dwells nowhere else, in his glory. The Church, which we think two, and call militant and triumphant, is but one, after all, and God dwelleth in it. Oh! if we had but eyes to see it, the glory of God on earth is not much less than the glory of God in heaven, for the glory of a king in peace is one thing, but the glory of a conqueror in war is another thing, though I know which I prefer; yet if I transfer the figure, I have no preference between the glory of the God of peace in the midst of his obedient servants in his ivory palaces, and the glory of the Lord of Hosts in the thick of this heavenly war, as he conflicts with human evil, and brings forth glory to his saints out of all the mischief that Satan seeks to do to his throne and to his sceptre. God is known in the Jerusalem below, as well as in the Jerusalem above. "The Lord is in the midst of her." Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved; and though the kings gather together for her destruction, yet his presence is the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Yes, glorious things may well be spoken of Zion when we have such stones as precious men, such gifts as precious graces, such abiding character as God gives, and such a presence as the presence of God Himself. But now in the next place, if we take the other rendering of the text:—

II. THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL SECOND TEMPLE IS ACTUALLY THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

"I will shake all nations," and he who is the desire of all nations shall come—a rendering which is not incorrect, and is established by a great mass of theologians, though, according to some of the ablest critics, a rendering scarcely to be sustained by the original. He who is the desire of all nations shall come, and that shall be the glory of the second spiritual temple. Jesus Christ, then, is the desire of all nations, if so we read the text, and this is doubtless true. All nations have a dark and dim desire for him. I say a dark desire, for without that adjective I could scarcely speak

the truth. Most interesting chapters have been written by students of the history of mankind upon the preparedness of men's hearts for the coming of Christ at his incarnation. It is very certain that almost all nations have a tradition of the coming one. The Jews, of course, expected the Messiah. There were persons instructed according to the culture of various nations, which, though they do not expect the Messiah quite so clearly as the Jews, had almost as shrewd a guess as to what he might be and do as the mere ritualistic and Pharisaic Jews had. There was a notion all over the world at that time of Christ's coming, that some great one was to descend from heaven, and to come into this world for this world's good. He was in that respect darkly and dimly the desire of all nations. But in all nations there have been some persons more instructed to whom Christ has really been the object of desire with much more of intelligence. Job was a Gentile and a fearer of God. We have no reason to believe that Job was a solitary specimen of enlightened persons: we have reason rather to hope that in all countries all over the world God has had a chosen people, who have known and feared him, who have not had all the light which has been given to us, but who better used what light they had, and were guided by his secret Spirit to much more of light, perhaps, than we think it right, with our little knowledge, to credit them with. These, then, as representatives of all the nations, were desiring the coming of the great Deliverer, the incarnate God; and in this sense, representatively, the whole of the world was desiring Christ in that higher sense, and he was the desire of all nations. But, my brethren, does this mean, or does it not mean, that Christ is exactly what all the nations need? If they did but know, if they could but understand him, he is just what they would desire and should desire. Were their reason taught rightly, and were their minds instructed by the Spirit to desire the best in all the world, Christ is just what they want. All the world desire a way to God. Hence men set up priests and anoint them with oil, and smear them with I know not what, only that they may be mediators between them and God. They must have something to come between their guilt and God's glorious holiness. Oh; if they knew it, what they want is Christ. You want no priest, but the great "Apostle and High Priest of our profession." You want no mediator with God, but the one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, who is also equal with God. Oh! world, why wilt thou gad about to seek this priest and that other deceiver, when he whom thou wantest is appointed by the Most High? He

whom Jacob saw in his dream as the ladder which reached from earth to heaven is the only means—the Son of Man and yet the Son of God. The world wants a peacemaker; oh! how badly it wants it now! I seem as I walk my garden, as I go to my pulpit, as I go to my bed, to hear the distant cries and moans of wounded and dying men. We are so familiarised each day with horrible details of slaughter, that if we give our minds to the thought, I am sure we must feel a nausea, a perpetual sickness creeping over us. The reek and steam of those murderous fields, the smell of the warm blood of men flowing out on the soil, must come to us and vex our spirits. Earth wants a peacemaker, and it is he, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, and the friend of Gentiles, the Prince of Peace, who will make war to cease unto the ends of the earth. Man wants a purifier. Very many nations feel, somehow or other, that political affairs do not go as one could wish. There are great excellences in personal government, but great disadvantages. There are great excellences in republican government, but great disadvantages. There are supreme excellences, as we think, in our own form of government, but a great many things to be amended, for all that; and this world is altogether out of joint; it is a crazy old concern, and does not seem as if it could be amended with all the tinkering of our reformers in the lapse of years. The fact is, it wants the Maker, who made it, to come in and put it to rights. It needs the Hercules that is to turn the stream right through the Aegean stable; it wants the Christ of God to turn the stream of his atoning sacrifice right through the whole earth, to sweep away the whole filth of ages, and it never will be done unless he does it. He is the one, the true Reformer, the true rectifier of all wrong, and in this respect the desire of all nations. Oh! if the world could gather up all her right desire; if she could condense in one cry all her wild wishes; if all true lovers of mankind could condense their theories and extract the true wine of wisdom from them; it would just come to this, we want an Incarnate God, and you have got the Incarnate God! Oh! nations, but ye know it not! Ye, in the dark, are groping after him, and know not that he is there.

Brethren, I may add, Christ is certainly the desire of all nations in this respect, that we desire him for all nations. Oh! that the world were encompassed in his gospel! Would God the sacred fire would run along the ground, that the little handful of corn on the top of the mountains

would soon make its fruit to shake like Lebanon. Oh! when will it come, when will it come that all the nations shall know him? Let us pray for it: let us labour for it.

And one other meaning I may give to this: he is the desirable one of all nations, bringing back the former translation of this text. He is the choice one of all nations. He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. He, whom we love, is such an one that he can never be matched by another, his rival could not be found amongst the sons of men. There is none like him; there is none like him amongst the angels of light; there is none that can stand in comparison with him. The desire, the one that ought to be desired, the most desirable of all the nations, is Jesus Christ, and it is the glory of the Christian Church, which is the second temple that Christ is in her, her head, her Lord. It is never her glory that she condescends to make an iniquitous union with the State. It is her glory that Christ is her sole King; it is her glory that he is her sole Prophet, and that he is her sole Priest, and that he then gives to all his people to be kings and priests with him, himself the centre and source of all their glory and their power.

I cannot stay longer, though the theme tempts me, but must just give you the last word, which is this, the visible glory of the true second temple will be Christ's second coming. He, himself, is her glory, whether at his first coming, or at his second coming. The Church will be no more glorious at the second coming than now. "What!" say you, "no more glorious!" No; but more apparently glorious. Christ is as glorious on the cross as he is on the throne; it is the appearance only that shall alter. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," but they evermore are brightness itself, in the person of Jesus Christ. Now, brethren, we are to expect, as long as this world lasts, that all things will shake that are to be moved. They will go on shaking. We call the world sometimes "terra firma"; it is not this world, surely, that deserves such a name as that; there is nothing stable beneath the stars; all things else will shake, and as the shaking goes on, Jesus Christ will, to those who know him, become more and more their desire. I suppose, if the world went on, in some things mending and improving, and were to go up to a point, we should not want Christ to come in a hurry; we would rather that things

should be perpetuated; but the shaking will make Christ more and more the desire of the nations. "The whole creation groaneth," is groaning up to now, but it will groan more and more "in pain together travailing"—the apostle saith—"even until now." The travailing pains grow worse and worse, and worse, and it will be so with this world; it will travail till at last it must come to the consummation of her desire. The Church will say, "Come, Lord Jesus." She will say it with gathering earnestness; she will continue still to say it, though there are intervals in which she will forget her Lord, but still her heart's desire will be that he will come; and at last he will surely come and bring to this world not only himself, the desire of all nations, but all that can be desired, for those days of his, when he appeareth, shall be to his people as the days of heaven upon earth, the days of their honour, the days of their rest—the day in which the kingdoms shall belong unto Christ. Oh! brethren, it is not for me to go into details on a subject which would require many discourses, and which could not be brought out in the few last words of a discourse. But here is the great hope of that splendid building, the Church, which is desired. Her glory essentially lies in the Incarnate God, who has come into her midst. Her glory manifestly will lie in the second coming of that Incarnate God, when he shall be revealed from heaven to those that look and are waiting for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God—looking for him with gladsome expectation. And this is the joy of the Church. He has gone, but he has left word, "I will come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye may be also." Remember the words that were spoken of the angels to the Church, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here, gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is gone up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go up into heaven." In propria persona—in very deed and truth, he shall come: -

"These eyes shall see him in that day,
The God that died for me:
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like to thee?"

Then shall come the adoption, the raising of the body, the reception of a glory to that body re-united to the soul, such as we have not dreamed of, for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart

of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him. Though he hath revealed them unto us by His Holy Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God, yet have our ears heard but little thereof, and we have not received the full discovery of the things that shall be hereafter. The Lord bless you! May you all be parts of his Church, have a share in his glory, and a share in the manifestation of that glory at the last.

Dear hearer, I would send thee away with this one query in thine ear—Is Christ thy desire? Couldst thou say, with David, "He is all my salvation and all my desire"? Could you gather up your feet in the bed, with dying Jacob, and say, "I have waited for thy will, O God"? By your desire shall you be known. The desire of the righteous shall be granted. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart.

But the desire of many is a grovelling desire: it is a sinful desire: it is a disgraceful desire—a desire which, if it be attained, the attainment of it will afford very brief pleasure. Oh! sinner let thy desires go after Christ. Remember, if thou wouldest have him, thou hast not to earn him—fight for him—win him—but he is to be had for the asking. "Lay hold," says the apostle, "on eternal life." As if it were ours, if we did but grip it. God give us grace to lay hold on eternal life, for Jesus from the cross is saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth," and from his throne of glory he still is saying, "Come unto me," exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sin, and he will give them both to those who seek him. Seek him, then, this night. God grant it for his Son's sake. Amen.

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The Desire Of The Soul In Spiritual Darkness

With my soul have I desired thee in the night. - Isaiah 26:9

Night appears to be a time peculiarly favorable to devotion. Its solemn stillness helps to free the mind from that perpetual din which the cares of the world will bring around it; and the stars looking down from heaven upon us shine as if they would attract us up to God. I know not how you may be affected by the solemnities of midnight, but when I have sat alone musing on the great God and the mighty universe, I have felt that indeed I could worship him; for night seemed to be spread abroad as a very temple for adoration, while the moon walked as high priest, amid the stars, the worshippers, and I myself joined in that silent song which they sang unto God: "Great art thou, O God! great in thy works. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" I find that this sense of the power of midnight not only acts upon religious men, but there is a certain poet, whose character, perhaps, I could scarcely too much reprobate: a man very far from understanding true religion; one whom I may, I suppose, justly style an infidel a libertine of the worst order, and yet he says concerning night in one of his poems: -

"Tis midnight on the mountains' brown,
The cold round moon shines deeply down;
Blue roll the waters, blue the sky
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light,
So wildly, spiritually bright;
Who ever gazed upon them shining,
And turning to earth without repining,
Nor wish'd for wings to flee away,
And mix with their eternal ray."

Even with the most irreligious person, a man farthest from spiritual thought, it seems that there is some power in the grandeur and stillness of night to draw him up to God. I trust many of us can say, like David, "I have thought upon thee continually, I have mused upon thy name in the night watches, and with desire have I desired thee in the night." But I

leave that thought altogether. I shall not speak of night natural at all, although there may be a great deal of room for poetic thought and expression. I shall address myself to two orders of persons, and shall endeavor to show what I conceive to be the meaning of the text. May God make it useful to you both. First, I shall speak to confirmed Christians; and from this text I shall bring one or two remarks to bear upon their case, if they are in darkness. Second, I shall speak to newly awakened souls, and try if I can find some of them who can say, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night."

I. I am about to address this text to the more confirmed believer; and the first fact I shall educe from it - the truth of which I am sure he will very readily admit - is, that **THE CHRISTIAN MAN HAS NOT ALWAYS A BRIGHT SHINING SUN**: that he has seasons of darkness and of night. True, it is written in God's word, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and it is a great truth that religion - the true religion of the living God - is calculated to give a man happiness below as well as bliss above. But, notwithstanding, experience tells us that if the course of the just be "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," yet sometimes that light is eclipsed. At certain periods clouds and darkness cover the sun, and he beholds no clear shining of the daylight, but walks in darkness and sees no light. Now there are many who have rejoiced in the presence of God for a season; they have basked in the sunshine God has been pleased to give them in the earlier stages of their Christian career; they have walked along the "green pastures," by the side of the "still waters," and suddenly - in a month or two - they find that glorious sky is clouded: instead of "green pastures," they have to tread the sandy desert; in the place of "still waters," they find streams brackish to their taste and bitter to their spirits, and they say, "Surely, if I were a child of God this would not happen." Oh! say not so, thou who art walking in darkness. The best of God's saints have their nights; the dearest of his children have to walk through a weary wilderness. There is not a Christian who has enjoyed perpetual happiness, there is no believer who can always sing a song of joy. It is not every lark that can always carol. It is not every star that can always be seen. And not every Christian is always happy. Perhaps the King of Saints gave you a season of great joy at first because you were a

raw recruit and he would not put you into the roughest part of the battle when you had first enlisted. You were a tender plant, and he nursed you in the hot-house till you could stand severe weather. You were a young child, and therefore he wrapped you in furs and clothed you in the softest mantle. But now you have become strong and the case is different. Capuan holidays do not suit Roman soldiers; and they would not agree with Christians. We need clouds and darkness to exercise our faith, to cut off self dependence, and make us put more faith in Christ, and less in evidence, less in experience, less in frames and feelings. The best of God's children - I repeat it again for the comfort of those who are suffering depression of spirits - have their nights. Sometimes it is a night over the whole church at once; and I fear we have very much of that night now. There are times when Zion is under a cloud, when the whole fine gold becomes dim, and the glory of Zion is departed. There are seasons when we do not hear the clear preaching of the word; when the doctrines are withheld; when the glory of the Lord God of Jacob is dim; when his name is not exalted; when the traditions of men are taught, instead of the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. And such a season is that when the whole church is dark. Of course each Christian participates in it. He goes about and weeps, and cries, "O God, how long shall poor Zion be depressed? How long shall her shepherds be 'dumb dogs that cannot bark?' Shall her watchmen be always blind? Shall the silver trumpet sound no more? Shall not the voice of the gospel be heard in her streets?" O! there are seasons of darkness to the entire church! God grant we may not have to pass through another! but that, starting from this period, the sun may rise ne'er to set, till, like a sea of glory, the light of brilliance shall spread from pole to pole!

At other times, this darkness over the soul of the Christian rises from temporal distresses. He may have had a misfortune as it is called - something has gone wrong in his business, or an enemy has done somewhat against him; death has struck down a favourite child - bereavement has snatched away the darling of his bosom, the crops are blighted; the winds refuse to bear his ships homeward; a vessel strikes upon a rock, another founders, all goes ill with him, and, like a gentle man who called to see me this week, he may be able to say, "Sir, I prospered far more when I was a worldly man than I have done since I

have become a Christian: for, since then, everything has appeared to go wrong with me. I thought," he said, "that religion had the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come." I told him, Yes, it had; and so it should be in the end. But he must remember there was one great legacy which Christ left his people; and I was glad he had come in for a share of it - "In the world ye shall have tribulation; in me ye shall have peace." Yes! you may be troubled about this, you may be saying, "Look at so-and-so: see how he spreads himself like a green bay-tree. He is an extortioner and wicked man, yet everything he does prospers. You may even observe his death, and say, there are no bands in his death. "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men." Ah! beloved! ye are come into the sanctuary of God this morning, and now shall ye understand their end. God hath set them in slippery places, but he casteth them down to destruction. Better to have a Christian's days of sorrow, than a worldling's days of mirth. Better to have a Christian's sorrows than a worldling's joys. Ah! happier to be chained in a dungeon with a Paul than reign in the palace with an Ahab. Better to be a child of God in poverty than a child of Satan in riches. Cheer up, then, thou downcast spirit, if this be thy trial. Remember that many saints have passed through the same; and the best and most eminent believers have had their nights.

"But oh!" says another, "you have not described my night, sir. I have not much amiss in business; and I would not care if I had - but I have a night in my spirit." "O sir," says one, "I have not a single evidence of my Christianity now. I was a child of God, I know; but something tells me that I am none of his now. There was a season when I flattered myself that I knew something about godliness and God; but now I doubt whether I have any part or lot in the matter. Satan suggests that I must dwell in endless flames. I see no hope for me. I am afraid I am an hypocrite. I think I have imposed on the church and upon myself also. I fear I am none of his. When I turn over God's Scriptures there is no promise; when I look within, corruption is black before me. Then while others are commending me, I am accusing myself of all manner of sin and corruption. I could not have thought that I was half so bad. I am afraid there cannot have been a work of grace in my heart, or else I should not have so many corrupt imaginations, filthy desires, hard thoughts of God;

so much pride, so much selfishness and self-will. I am afraid I am none of his." Now, that is the very reason why you are one of his, that you are able to say that: for God's people pass through the night. They have their nights of sorrow. I love to hear a man talk like that. I would not have him do so always. He ought at times to enter into "the liberty where with Christ hath made him free." But I know that frequently bondage will get hold of the spirit, But you say, "Surely no one ever suffers like that." I confess I do myself constantly, and very often there are times when I could not prove my election in Jesus Christ, nor my adoption, though I rejoice that for the most part I can cry, -

"A debtor to mercy alone
Of covenant mercy I sing."

Yet at other seasons I am sure the meanest lamb in Jesu's fold I reckon ten thousand times more in advance than myself and if I might but sit down on the meanest bench in the kingdom of heaven, and did but know I was in, I would barter everything I had, and I do not believe there ever existed a Christian yet, who did not now and then doubt his interest in Jesus. I think, when a man says, "I never doubt," it is quite time for us to doubt him, it is quite time for us to begin to say, "Ah, poor soul, I am afraid you are not on the road at all, for if you were, you would see so many things in yourself, and so much glory in Christ more than you deserve, that you would be so much ashamed of yourself, as even to say, 'It is too good to be true.'"

2. The first part then is fully established by experience, that Christian men very frequently have their nights. But the second thing here is that a Christian man's religion will keep its colour in the night. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night." What a mighty deal of silver-slipper religion we have in this world. Men will follow Christ when every one cries "Hosanna! Hosanna!" The multitude will crowd around the man then, and they will take him by force and make him a king when the sun shines, when the soft wind blows. They are like the plants upon the rock, which sprang up and for a little while were green, but when the sun had risen with fervent heat straightway withered away. Demas and Mr. Hold-the-world, and a great many others, are very pious people in easy times.

They will always go with Christ by daylight, and will keep in company so long as fashion gives religion the doubtful benefit of its patronage. But they will not go with him in the night. There are some goods whose colour you can only see by daylight - and there are many professors the colour of whom you can only see by daylight. If they were in the night of trouble and persecution you would find that there was very little in them. They are good by daylight but they are bad by night. But, beloved, do you not know that the best test of a Christian is the night? The nightingale, if she would sing by day when every goose is cackling, would be reckoned no better a musician than the wren. A Christian if he only remained steadfast by daylight, when every coward is bold, what would he be? There would be no beauty in his courage, no glory in his bravery. But it is because he can sing at night - sing in trouble - sing when he is driven well nigh to despair; it is this which proves his sincerity. It has its glory in the night. The stars are not visible by daylight, but they become apparent when the sun is set. There is full many a Christian whose piety did not burn much when he was in prosperity; but it will be known in adversity. I have marked it in some of my brethren now present, when they were in deep trial not long ago. I had not heard them discourse much about Christ before, but when God's hand had robbed them of their comfort, I remember that I could discern their religion infinitely better than I could before. Nothing can bring our religion out better than that. Grind the diamond a little and you shall see it glisten. Do but put a trouble on the Christian, and his endurance of it will prove him to be of the true seed of Israel.

3. A third remark from this to the confirmed Christian is, all that the Christian wants in the night is his God. "With desire have I desired thee in the night." By day there are many things that a Christian will desire besides his Lord; but in the night he wants nothing but his God. I cannot understand how it is unless it is to be accounted for by the corruption of our spirit, that when everything goes well with us we are setting our affection first on this object and - then on another, and then on another; and that desire which is as insatiable as death and as deep as hell never rests satisfied. We are always wanting something, always desiring a yet beyond. But if you place a Christian in trouble you will find that he does not want gold then - that he does not want carnal honour - then he wants

his God. I suppose he is like the sailor, when he sails along smoothly he loves to have fair weather, and wants this and that to amuse himself with on deck. But when the winds blow all that he wants is the haven. He does not desire anything else. The biscuit may be mouldy, but he does not care. The water may be brackish, but he does not care. He does not think of it in the storm. He only thinks about the haven then. It is just so with the Christian, when he is going along smoothly he wants this and that comfort; he is aspiring after this position, or is wanting to obtain this and that elevation. But let him once doubt his interest in Christ - let him once get into some soul - distress and trouble, so that it is very dark - and all he will feel then is, "With desire have I desired thee in the night." When the child is put upstairs to bed it may lie while the light is there, and look at the trees that shake against the window, and admire the stars that are coming out; but when it gets dark and the child is still awake it cries for its parent. It cannot be amused by aught else. So in daylight will the Christian look at anything. He will cast his eyes round on this pleasure and on that! but, when the darkness gathers, it is "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" "O why art thou so far from me and from the word of my roaring?" Then it is,

"Give me Christ or else I die;
These can never satisfy."

4. But now one more remark before I leave my address to confirmed saints. There are times when all the saints can do is to desire. We have a vast number of evidences of piety: some are practical, some are experimental, some are doctrinal; and the more evidences a man has of his piety the better, of course. We like a number of signatures, to make a deed more valid, if possible. We like to invest property in a great number of trustees, in order that it may be all the safer, and so we love to have many evidences. Many witnesses will carry our case at the bar better than a few: and so it is well to have many witnesses to testify to our piety. But there are seasons when a Christian cannot get any. He can get scarcely one witness to come and attest his godliness. He asks for good works to come and speak him. But there will be such a cloud of darkness about him, and his good works will appear so black that he will not dare to think of their evidences. He will say, "True, I hope this is the right fruit, I hope I

have served God but I dare not plead these works as evidences." He will have lost assurance and with it his enjoyment of communion with God. "I have had that fellowship with him," perhaps he will say, and he will summon that communion to come and be an evidence. But he has forgotten it, and it does not come, and Satan whispers it is a fancy, and the poor evidence of communion has its mouth gagged, so that it cannot speak. But there is one witness that very seldom is gagged, and one that I trust the people of God can always apply, even in the night; and that is, "I have desired thee I have desired thee in the night." "Yes, Lord, if I have not believed in thee, I have desired thee; and if I have not spent and been spent in thy service, yet one thing I know, and the devil cannot beat me out of it, I have desired thee - that I do know - and I have desired thee in the night, too, when no one saw me, when troubles were round about me."

Now, my beloved, I hope there are many of you here this morning who are strong in faith. You do not, perhaps, want what I have said; but I will advise you to take this cordial, and if you do not want to drink it now, put it up in a small phial, and carry it about with you till you do; you do not know how long it may be before you are faint. And as Mr. Greatheart gave Christiana a bottle of wine to take with her that she might drink when she was fatigued, so you take this, and do not laugh at a poor despised believer because he is not so strong as yourself. You may want this yourself some day. I tell you there are times when a Christian will be ready to creep into a mousehole if he might but get into heaven; when he would be glad to throw anything away to get into the smallest crevice to escape from his fears; when the meanest evidence seems more precious than gold; when the very least ray of sunlight is worth all the riches of Peru; and when a doit of comfort is more sweet than a whole heaven of it may have been at other seasons. You may be brought into the same condition, so take this passage with you and have it ready - have it ready to plead at the throne: "With desire have I desired thee in the night."

II. The second part of my sermon is to be occupied by speaking to NEWLY AWAKENED SOULS; and as I have made four remarks to confirmed Christians, I will now endeavor to answer three questions to those who are newly awakened.

The first question they would ask me is this. How am I to know that my desires are proofs of a work of grace in my soul? Some of you may say, I think I can go so far as the text - I have desired God; I know I have desired to be saved. I have desired to have an interest in the blood of Jesus, but how am I to know that it is a desire sent of God, and how can I tell whether it will end in conversion? Hear me, then, while I offer one or two tests.

1. First, you may tell whether your desires are of God by their constancy. Many a man when he hears a stirring sermon, has a very strong desire to be saved; but he goes home and forgets it. He is as a man who seeth his face in a glass, goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he is. He returns again: once more the arrow sticks hard in the heart of the King's enemy; he goes home, only to extract the arrow, and his goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew it passeth away. Has it been so with you? Have you had such a desire? Will to-morrow's business take it away? Are you wanting Christ to-day? and will ye despise him to-morrow? Then I am afraid your desires are not of God; they are merely the desires of a naturally awakened conscience, just the stirrings of mere nature, and they will go as far as nature can go, and no farther. But if your desires are constant ones take comfort. How long have they lasted? Have you been desiring Christ this last month or these last three or four months? Have you been seeking him in prayer for a long season? And do you find that you are anxious after Christ on the Monday as well as on the Sunday? Do you desire him in the shop when the intervals of business allow you to do so? Do you seek him in the night - in the solemn loneliness, when no ministers voice breaks on your ear, when no truth is smiting your conscience? Is it but the hectic flush of the consumption that has come upon your cheek? which is not the mark of health. Or is it the real heat of a true desire, which marks a healthy soul? Are you desiring God constantly? I admit there will be variations even to our more sincere desires, but a certain measure of constancy is essential to their real value as evidences of a divine work.

2. Again: you may discern whether they are right or wrong by their efficacy. Some persons desire heaven very earnestly, but they do not

desire to leave off drunkenness: they desire to be saved, but they do not desire salvation enough to shut their shops up on Sunday morning; or to bridle their tongues, and leave off speaking ill of their neighbors. They desire salvation; but they do not desire it enough to come sometimes on the week-day to hear the gospel. You may tell the truthfulness of your desires by their efficacy. If your desires lead you into real "works meet for repentance," then they come from God. Wishes, you know, are nought unless they are carried out. "Many; say unto you, shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able" "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Seeking will not do; there must be striving. Our prophet here informs us, that whilst he desired God in the night, that desire was very efficacious. For, in the 18th verse, he declares, "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, we have waited for thee." This desire made me wait for thy judgments. How many do I hear say I am waiting for God, it is all I do: there I lie at the pool of Bethesda, and one of these days an angel will come and stir the pool. Stop! How do you know you are not deceiving yourself? There is a friend waiting for me to tea: I will step into the room. There is no kettle on the fire: there is not a bit for me to eat. "Sir, we have been waiting for you." But there is nothing ready in the house! I do not believe them; they could not have been waiting for me, or else they would have been ready. And waiting for God always implies being ready. Says a man, "I am waiting for God." But he is not ready for God at all: he still keeps on his drunkenness, the house is still unswept; he is as worldly as ever. He is waiting. Yes, but waiting implies being ready; and nobody is waiting that is not ready, You are not waiting for the coach until you have your coat and hat on ready to start, and are looking out at the door for it; and you are not waiting for God, until you are ready to go with God. No man ought to say, I am waiting for God. No, beloved, it is God who is waiting for us generally, rather than any of us waiting for him. No sinner can be beforehand with him. But the prophet waited "in the way of God's judgments:" that is, waited in the right place - waited in the house of God - waited under the sound of the gospel. And then this desire led him to seek. "With my spirit within me will I seek thee." It led him to seek after God. Oh! the poor pitiful desires of some of you are very little good. An old writer says, "Hell is paved with good intentions." I was not aware that there was any pavement at all - because it has no bottom, but at the same time I believe that the sides of the pit are hung round with good intentions; and men

will feel themselves pricked and goaded from side to side with good designs that they once formed but never carried out - children that were strangled at the birth - desires that never were brought into living acts - desires that sprang up like the mushroom in the night, and like the fungus were swept away - like smoke from the chimney, that stopped as soon as the fire had gone out. Oh! brethren, if these are your desires, they are not practical, they do not come of God. But if your desires have made you give up your drunkenness - have compelled you to renounce your theatre-going - have constrained you to seek God with full purpose of heart - have brought you to give up one lust and another - take comfort, you are in the right road, if your desires are practical desires.

3. Again: you can tell these desires by their urgency. Ah! you want to be saved some of you, but it must be this day next week. But when the Holy Ghost speaks, he says, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." It must be now or never. "To-day give me grace; to-day give me mercy; to-day give me pardon." Some of you hope to be saved before you die, before the pit closes on you; you hope Jesus Christ will look down upon you in some years to come. You have not set down how many years, I suppose; but it is always in the distant hazy future. But the true desire is now. Does the poor man who stands upon the scaffold with a rope round his neck say, "Pardon me in a year's time?" No, he is afraid he shall the next minute be launched into eternity. He who feels his danger will cry, "Now!" He who wants Christ really, will cry, "Now!" He who is spiritually awakened will cry out, "Now or never!" What! sinner, will it do to postpone salvation? Doth thine heart tell thee it will do by-and-bye? What! when the fire is just coming through the boards of thy little chamber? What! when thy ship has struck upon the rock, and is filling? Yes, she is filling, while the fire at the other end is rushing up; and fire and water together are seeking thy destruction. Wilt thou say, "To-morrow?" Why, thou mayest be dead ere to-morrow's sun has risen. To-morrow! where is it? In the devil's calendar, it is not written in any book on earth. To-morrow! It is some fancied islet in the far-off sea that the mariner has never reached. To-morrow! It is the fool's desire: which he never shall gain. Like a will-o'-the-wisp it dances before him, but only lands him in the marshes of distress. To-morrow! There is no such thing. It is God's. If there is such a day, ours it cannot be. Tillotson well

remarks: - "To be always intending to live a new life, but never to find time to set about it; this is as if a man should put off eating and drinking, and sleeping, from one day and night to another, till he is starved and destroyed"

But you say, "If I have desired God, why have I not obtained my desire before now? Why has not God granted my request?"

In the first place, you have hardly a right to ask the question; for God has a right to grant your petition or not as he pleases; and far be it from man to say to God "What doest thou?" He is a sovereign, and has power to do what he will. But since thine anxiety has dictated the question, let my anxiety attempt to answer it. Perhaps God has not granted thy desire, because he wishes thine own profit thereby. He designs to show thee more of the desperate wickedness of thine heart, that in future thou mayest fear to trust it. He wants thee to see more of the blackness of darkness and of the horrible pit of sin, that like a burnt child thou mayest shun the fire for ever. He lets thee go down into the dungeon, that thou mayest prize liberty the better when it comes. And he is keeping thee waiting, moreover, that thy longings may be quickened. He knows that delay will fan the desire, and that if he keeps you waiting it will not be a loss to you, but will gain you much, because you will see your necessity more clearly, seek him more earnestly, cry more bitterly and your heart will be more in earnest after him. Besides, poor soul, God keeps thee waiting, perhaps in order that he may display the riches of his grace more fully to thee at the last. I believe that some of us who were kept by God a long while before we found him, loved him better perhaps than we should have done if we had received him directly, and we can preach better to others, we can speak more of his loving kindness and tender mercy. John Bunyan could not have written as he did if he had not been dragged about by the devil for many years. Ah! I love that picture of dear old Christian. I know when I first read that book, and saw the old woodcut in it of Christian carrying the burden on his back, I felt so interested for the poor fellow, that I thought I should jump with joy when, after the poor creature had carried his burden so long, he at last got rid of it. Ah! beloved; and God may make you and me carry the burden for a long time till he takes it off that we may leap all the higher with joy when we do get

deliverance; for depend upon it, there is no poor penitent who loves mercy so well as he who has been ferrying for it for a season. Perhaps that is the reason why God keeps you waiting.

One more thought here. Perhaps it has come already. I think some of you are pardoned and you do not know it. I think some of you are forgiven; though you are expecting something wonderful as a sign which you will never receive. Persons have got the strangest notions in the world about conversion. I have heard persons tell the queerest tales you could imagine about how they were converted; though of course I did not believe them. And I fancy some of you think you will have a kind of electric shock - that a sort of galvanism, or something or other, will pass through you, such as you never had before. Do not be expecting any miracles now. If you will not think you are pardoned till you get a vision, you will have to wait many a year. Some people fancy they are not pardoned because they have never heard a voice in their ears. I should be very sorry to have my salvation dependent on a text of Scripture applied to my heart; I should be afraid that the devil had applied it, or that it was the wind whistling behind me. I want something more sure than that. But perhaps you are forgiven, and you do not yet know it. God has spoken the tidings of mercy to your spirit, and you have not yet heard it, because you are saying, "It cannot be that." If you could but sit down and think of this: - "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," methinks you would find that after all you are not excluded. There is no great need for any of these miraculous things that you are reckoning upon. God may have given them to some of his people, but he has never promised them. Perhaps, then, the question may be answered by saying, "The pardon is there, but you do not know it." Oh! may God speak loudly in your soul, that you may know really and certainly that he has forgiven you!

But there is one more serious enquiry: and it is, "Will God grant my desire at last?" Yes, poor soul, verily he will. It is quite impossible that you should have desired God and should be lost, if you have desired him with the desire I have described. For I will suppose that you should go down into the chambers of the lost with the desire still in your spirit: when you entered within the gates you would have to say, "I desired

mercy of God, and he would not give it me: I sought grace at the hands of Jesus, and he would not give it." You know what would be said at once. Satan would be so pleased. "Ah!" he would say, "here is a sinner that perished praying: God has not kept his promise, he said, 'Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved:' "and here is one that did it, and he is lost!" Ah! how they would howl for joy in hell! They would sing a blasphemous song against the Almighty God - that one poor desiring soul should be there! I tell you one thing: I have heard many wicked things in my life - I have heard many men swear and blaspheme God, till I have trembled, but there is one thing I never did hear a man say yet, and I think God would scarcely permit any man to perpetrate such a lie, I never heard even a drunken man say, "I sincerely sought God with full purpose of heart, and yet he has not heard me, and will not answer me, but has cast me away." I scarcely think it possible, although I know that men can be infinitely wicked, that any man could utter such an abominable falsehood as that. At any rate, I can say I never heard it; and I believe there are some of you who can say, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I never seen one penitent sinner who could say, in despair, I am not saved. I have sought God and he will not hear me, he has cast me away from his face and will not give me mercy;" and, I think, as long as you live you will not meet a case. Then why should you be the first? Why, poor penitent, shouldst thou be the first? Dost thou think thou art a chosen mark for all the arrows of the Almighty? Hath he set thee for a butt against which he will direct all the thunderbolts of his vengeance? Art thou to be the first instance in which mercy fails? Art thou to be the one who shall first out-do the infinity of love? Oh! say not so. Despair is mad; but for one instant gather up thy reason thou despairing one. Would God wish to see thee damned? Hath he not said, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but would rather that he should turn to me and live." Do you think it would be a pleasure to the Almighty to have your blood? Oh! far be it from you to conceive it. Do you not think that he loves to pardon? Hath he not said himself he delighteth in mercy? And is it not written, "As the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." What advantage would it be to God to destroy your souls? Would it not be more to his honour to save you? Ah, assuredly; because you would sing his praise in heaven, would you not?

Yes, but recollect, the best argument I can use with you is this: Do you suppose that God would give his Son to die for sinners, and yet would not save sinners? It is written in the Scriptures, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and you are a sinner; you feel that you are a sinner; you know it. Then he came to save you? Only believe that. As a poor penitent you have a right to believe it. If you were a Pharisee you would not have that right; but as a penitent, humble, contrite soul, you have a right to believe in Jesus. The Pharisee has none for it is never written that he came to save the righteous; and if he believed he did he would believe a lie; but every man who is a sinner, every man who lays claim to that title, has a right also to believe that Christ died for him; and not only so but it is the truth. He came into the world for a certain purpose and what he came for he will do. He came into the world to save sinners, and now it is written "Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." When, last Friday, I had the honour of preaching to many thousand persons in the open air, such an assembly as I never dreamed of seeing and such a vast number as I could scarcely have fancied would have met for any religious purpose, I noticed a most singularly powerful echo, constantly taking up the last words of my sentences and sending them back, as if some great giant voice had spoken to confirm what I had said. When I had repeated the words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," echo said, "Saved!" and when I proceeded, "He that believeth not shall be damned," I heard the echo gently say "Damned!" Methinks this morning I hear that echo: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" and the saints above cry, "Saved!" Hark! how they sing before the throne! Hark! how your glorified parents and your immortalized relatives, cry, "Saved!" Hear ye not the echo, as it echoes from the blue sky of heavens - "Saved!" And, oh! doleful thought, when I utter those words, "He that believeth not shall be damned," there comes up that dread word - "Damned!" from the place where there are "hollow groans, and sullen moans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts." God grant that you may never know what it is to be damned! God give you to believe now; for, "to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

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The Desolations Of The Lord, The Consolation Of His Saints

Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire. - Psalm 46:8-9

It seems that everything Christlike must have a history like that of Christ. His beginnings were small—the manger and the stable. So with the beginnings of that society which we love, and which we believe to be the very incarnation of the Spirit of Christ. Its beginnings also were small; but its latter end shall doubtless greatly increase—for, hath not the end of Christ become exceedingly glorious? He hath ascended up on high; he sitteth at the right hand of God, our Father; and doubtless this agency which God now employeth for the conversion of the world, shall have its ascension, and God shall greatly magnify it. But as Christ was called to suffer, so must everything Christlike suffer with him. The Christian who is the most like his Master will understand the most of the meaning of that term, "fellowship with him in his sufferings;" and inasmuch as the Missionary Society is like Christ, and hath Christ's heart, and Christ's aim, it also must suffer like Jesus. This year we have been made to sip of that cup. The blood of our martyrs has been shed; our confessors have witnessed to the faith of the Lord Jesus; at the hands of bloodthirsty and cruel men they have met their fate, and again the seed of the church has been sown in the blood of the martyred saint.

I felt that in addressing you this day, it would be far from me to offer you any advice or counsel, when I am but as the youngest among you all, but that I might be permitted, as sometimes the child doth comfort its parents, to utter some few words of consolation which might cheer you in

the present distress, and nerve your arm for future combat with the great enemy of souls. And upon what subject could I address you, which could be more full of consolation than the present? "Come, behold the works of the Lord." Turn ye from man's bloodshed, and behold your God at work; and from the desolations of rebellion and carnage, and anarchy, turn your eyes here to the desolations which the Lord hath made in the earth. You see how, though the battle-bow still doth twang with the arrow, and though the spear is still imbrued in the heart's blood of men, yet he breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder, and burns the chariot in the fire.

We shall regard this text this morning, first, as a declaration of what has happened, and secondly, as a promise of what shall be achieved.

I. First of all, we shall look upon it AS A DECLARATION OF WHAT HAS ALREADY OCCURRED. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth."

1. And now let us commence the discussion of this part of our subject, by inviting you to the sad spectacle of the desolations which God in his providence has in different ages brought upon divers nations. As it is said of man, that he is full of trouble, so it is with nations; they also are full of sorrows, and some of them exceeding bitter. Wars have devastated countries; plagues have thinned our populations; all kinds of evil have swept athwart the most potent empires, and many of them have been compelled, at last, to yield to the destroying angel, and they slumber with the mighty dead. Doubtless there hath a wail gone up from the face of the earth, when the invasions of barbarians have put an end to the promise of civilization—when cities, renowned for the culture of the arts and sciences, have suddenly become sacked and burned—when nations that had made great advances in knowledge have been carried away captive, and the sun has been made to go back many a degree on the dial of the earth's history.

But I beg you now turn your eyes, and read the page of history, and mark the various catastrophes which have happened to this world; and I appeal to you, as persons who have understanding, and who can trace the Lord's

hand in these matters—have not all these things worked together for good? and hitherto, have not the revolutions, the destructions of empires, and the falls of dynasties, been eminent helps to the progress of the gospel? Far be it from us to lay the blood of men at God's door. Let us not for one moment be guilty of any thought that the sin and the iniquity which have brought war into the world is of God; but, at the same time, as firm believers in the doctrine of predestination, and as firmly holding the great truth of a divine providence, we must hold that God is the author of the darkness as well as of the light—that he creates the providential evil as well as the good—that while he sendeth the shower from on high, he also is the father of the devastating storm. Oh! I say, then, come and see the Lord's hand in "Aceldama, the field of blood." Come ye, and behold the Lord's hand in every shake of the pillars of the constitutions of the monarchies of earth. See the Lord's hand in the crumbling of every tower and the tumbling down of every pinnacle which had aspired to heaven. For he hath done it—he hath done it! God is present everywhere.

And now, I again say, can you not see in all these things, a gracious as well as a terrible God? Can you not feel that everything that has yet happened to the world, has really been for its good? Wars, contusions, and tumults, are but the rough physic wherewith God will purge the diseased body of this earth from its innumerable ills. They are but a terrible tornado with which God shall sweep away the pestilence and fever that lurk in the moral atmosphere; they are but the great hammers with which he breaks in pieces the gates of brass, to make a way for his people; they are but the threshing wains, with which he doth thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff, that Israel may rejoice in the Lord, and that the sons of Jacob may triumph in their God. As it hath been in the beginning, so it shall be even unto the end. The noise and the tumult of war in India shall produce good; the blood of our sisters shall be avenged, not by the sword, but by the gospel. On India's blood-red gods, the arm of the Lord shall yet be felt; the might of him that sits upon the throne shall be acknowledged by the very men, who, first in the fray, have blasphemed the God of Israel. Let us not fear, let us not tremble; the end of all things cometh at last, and that end shall certainly be the desired one, and all the wrath of man shall not frustrate the designs of God. The past troubles assure us for the present, and

console us for the future. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolation. he hath made in the earth."

2. But now, turning from this somewhat dreary subject, I must invite you next to look at some desolations which will ever be fair in the eye of the follower of Jesus—the desolations of false worship. What a pleasant theme! O that we had but power truly to enlarge upon it! Will you turn your minds back to the origin of idolatry, and tell me, if you can, what were the names of the first gods whom men profanely worshipped? Are they known? Are not their names blotted out from history? Or, if any of them be mentioned, are they not a by-word, a hissing, and a reproach? What shall we say of idolatries which are of later date—those which have been noted in Holy Scripture, and therefore handed down to infamy? Who is he that now bows before the god of Egypt? Hath the sacred Ibis now a worshipper? Do any prostrate themselves before the Nile, and drink her sweet waters, and think her a deity? Hath not that idolatry passed away? and are not the temple and the obelisk still standing—"the desolations which the Lord hath made in the earth?" Talk we of the gods of Philistia? Do we mention Baal and Dagon? Where are they? We hear their names; they are but the records of the past; but who is he that doth them homage? Who doth now kiss his hands to the queen of heaven? Who boweth himself in the grove of Ashtaroth, or who worshippeth the hosts of heaven, and the chariots of the sun? They have gone! they have gone! Jehovah still standeth, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." One generation of idols hath passed away, and another cometh, and the desolations stand—memorials of the might of God.

Turn ye now your eyes to Assyria, that mighty empire. Did she not sit alone? She said she should see no sorrow. Remember Babylon, too, who boasted with her. But where are they, and where are now their gods? With ropes about their necks they have been dragged in triumph by our discoverers; and now in the halls of our land, they stand as memorials of the ignorance of a race that is long since extinct. And then, turn ye to the fairer idolatries of Greece and Rome. Fine poetic conceptions were their gods! theirs was a grand idolatry, one that never shall be forgotten. Despite all its vice and lust, there was such a high mixture of the purest poetry in it, that the mind of man, though it will ever recollect it with

sorrow, will still think of it with respect. But where are their gods? Where are the names of their gods? Are not the stars the last memorials of Jupiter, Saturn, and Venus? As if God would make his universe the monument of his destroyed enemy! Where else are their names to be found? Where shall we find a worshipper who adores their false deity? They are past, they are gone! To the moles and to the bats are their images cast, while many an unroofed temple, many a dilapidated shrine, stand as memorials of that which was, but is not—and is passed away for ever.

I suppose there is scarce a kingdom of the world where you do not see God's handiwork in crushing his enemies. It is to the shame of the idolater that he worships a god that his fathers knew not. Although there be some hoary systems of iniquity, in most cases the system is still new—new compared with the giant mountains, the first-born of nature—new compared with these old idolatries that have long since died away in the clouds of forgetfulness. It seems to me to be a very pleasing theme for us to speak of these desolations that God has made, For mark this—again we say it—as it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be. The false gods shall yet yield their sway; the temples shall yet be unroofed; their houses shall be burned with fire, and their names shall be left for a reproach. their dignity shall not be honored, neither shall homage be given unto their name O thou that fearest for the ark of the Lord, thou that tremblest at the firmness with which falsehood keeps its throne, look thou on these desolations and be of good cheer; God hath done mighty things, and he will do them yet again. One can never pass, even in our own country, a ruined abbey, or a destroyed priory, or an old broken down cathedral, without a sweet satisfaction. They are fair ruins, all the fairer because they are ruined, because their inhabitants are forgotten, because the monk no longer prowls our streets, because the nun, though she is here and there to be found, yet is no more honored, because the apostate church to which they belong has ceased to have power among us, as once it had. We will, therefore, seek to honor God, and in all our journeyings we will think of this text—"Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth."

3. And now, in the next place, let me ask you to remember what

desolations God has made with false philosophies. As for stones and timbers, they are things that must decay in the common course of nature, and one might be apt to think that some of the desolate temples we behold were rather the trophies of the tooth of time, than of the hand of God, but thought is a lasting thing: a bold philosophy that shapes into words the wandering thoughts which have taken possession of the hearts of men is an enduring thing; and how have some philosophers believed that they were writing books which would be read for ages! They believed that their philosophy most certainly was eternal, and that to the last day their disciples would be had in reverence. Let any classical student remember how many systems of philosophy have passed away before the progress of the kingdom of Christ. The mighty Stagyrice, once the great master of all minds, who even held in sway many a Christian spirit, at last lost his empire before a purer truth. But I forbear to mention these things; I would rather allude to the passing away of false systems of philosophy in modern times; for there are some of our fathers here, whose hairs have but just turned grey, who can remember the rise and fall of some seven or eight theories of infidelity. You can look back, and you can remember when it was a cursing obscenity with Tom Paine, having just also been the leering, scowling thing that Voltaire made it. You remember how it was the soaring, airy, speculating, scheming thing of Robert Owen; and then you recollect how it became the base, grovelling thing called Secularism. Men have trembled at that, and have thought it will last. I believe I shall live to see the last Secularist buried, and that at the funeral there will be attending the leader of some new system of infidelity, who, despite his hatred to God, will have to say over the tomb, out of very spite against the one who precedes him, "Here lies a fool, yclept a Secularist." You need not be afraid of these things; they live each a very little while. A near moon brings a new phase of the system. The thing that they have fashioned with the utmost diligence, and which they deliver with the most earnest declamation, which they think they have proved with the sureness of logic, which they have built, as they think, upon a rock, against which the gates of heaven shall not prevail, how soon it is crumbled to dust, and not a vestige of it is left—scarce a remembrance of it—but all is past away and gone. And even so shall it be. As it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be. "Every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." The words of the wise are like the

leaves of the tree of life, and they fade not; but the words of the wicked are like the autumn leaves, all withered, soon to become skeletons, and be blown away by the blast, to be heard of no more.

Planted by the rivers of water, the tree of the church still groweth, like a young cedar, fresh and green. But these things are like the heath in the desert: they see not when good cometh; from earth itself they fail to draw their nourishment, and heaven denies to the cursed thing its genial shower, and therefore soon it dies, and without a memorial it passeth away. Be of good cheer, beloved! It matters not where the enemy attack our intrenchments, they have been, and they shall be routed. We tell the enemies of Christ to look to the thousand defeats that they have suffered beforehand; we warn them of their folly in attacking us again. Woe unto you! woe unto you! Though ye quit yourselves like men, ye Philistines, ye must, ye shall be servants unto Israel. Woe unto you, for the voice of a king is in our midst! Your fathers felt our might. Remember who it was that cut Rahab and wounded the dragon. Your sires have trembled before us; our fathers put ten thousand of your sires to flight, and we will do the same with you; and when we have done it we will say of you, "Aha! aha! aha!" and will make you a byword with our children, and a proverb with our menials for ever.

4. But my text has a special reference to war—the desolation of war. Have you not noticed how magnificently peace winneth its reprisals at the hand of war? Look through this country. Methinks if the angel of peace should go with us, as we journey through it, and stop at the various ancient towns where there are dismantled castles, and high mounds from which every vestige of a building has long been swept, the angel would look us in the face, and say, "I have done all this: warscattered my peaceful subjects, burned down my cottages, ravaged my temples, and laid my mansions with the dust. But I have attacked war in his own strongholds and I have routed him. Walk through his halls. Can you hear now the tramp of the warrior? Where now the sound of the clarion and the drum?" The sheep is feeding from the cannon's mouth, and the bird builds his nest where once the warrior did hang his helmet. As rare curiosities we dig up the swords and spears of our forefathers, and little do we reckon that in this we are doing tribute to peace. For peace is the conqueror. It hath been a long

duel, and much blood hath been shed, but peace hath been the victor. War, after all, has but spasmodic triumphs; and again it sinks—it dies, but peace ever reigneth. If she be driven from one part of the earth, yet she dwelleth in another; and while war, with busy hand, is piling up here a wall, and there a rampart, and there a tower, peace with her gentle finger, is covering over the castle with the mees and the ivy, and eating the stone from the top, and letting it lie level with the earth.

I think this is a fine thought for the lover of peace; and who among us is not? Who among us ought not to be? Is not the gospel all peace? And do we not believe, that when the gospel is fully preached, and has its day, wars must cease, to the end of the earth! I therefore say, beloved brothers and sisters, may we not console ourselves under all the recent outbreaks of a most bloodthirsty and cruel massacre, in the fact, that God hath made desolations, even in war. He hath made desolations in the earth, and, as it hath been, so shall it be even unto the end. There is not now a rampart which shall not be sealed by peace. O ye hoary bastions, ye shall yet be destroyed, not by the cannon ball, but by something mightier still. Charged with love, this day we shoot against you the great guns of the gospel of Christ, and we believe that they shall move and shake you to your deep foundations, and ye shall crumble; or if ye stand, ye shall be uninhabited, except by the owl and the bittern. I have a fond belief that the day is coming, when Nelson, on the top of his monument, shall be upset, and Mr. Whitfield set there, or the apostle Paul. I believe that Napier, who stands in the square there, will lose his station. We shall say about these men, "They were very respectable men in the days of our forefathers, who did not know better than to kill one another; but we do not care for them now!" Up goes John Wesley where stood Napier! Away goes some one else, who was an earnest preacher of the gospel, to occupy the place high over the gate where another warrior rides upon his horse. All these things, the trickery of an ignorant age, the gewgaws of a people who loved bloodshed despite their profession of religion, must yet be broken up for old iron and old brass; every statue that stands in London shall yet be sold, and the price thereof cast at the apostles' feet, that they may make distribution as every man hath need. Wars must cease, and every place where war reigneth and hath now its glory, must yet pass away, and fade and wither. We give all honor to these men now, for these

are the days of our ignorance, and God in some degree winketh at us; but when the gospel spreads, we shall then find that when every heart is full of it, it will be impossible for us to tolerate the very name of war; for when God has broken the bow and burned the chariot, we shall break the image and dash the sculpture into a thousand atoms, We shall think, when the trade is done, the men that did it may well be forgotten.

II. I think there is enough to cheer our hearts, and nerve us all for the great battle of Christ. The desolations of the past should lead us to hope that there shall be the like, and greater, in the future. And now I am to look upon my text, and very briefly, AS A PROPHECY WHICH IS TO BE FULFILLED.

I should only needlessly occupy your time, if I were to go over all my heads again, because really every person will be quite as competent as I am to discern how what hath been shall be in a yet higher sense. But we must observe once more, in noticing this as a prophecy, the figure of our text. It was usual, after a great battle, and especially if peace was then firmly established, for the conquerors to gather up the arms of the vanquished into one great heap, and then setting fire to it all, as Israel did to the spoils of Jericho, everything was consumed. One of these days, when Christ shall come in his glory, or when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ—not to say anything which would look like proclaiming the second coming here today, although I most firmly believe it, and am sorry that we should ever have allowed, in any of our missionary meetings, any discussion upon a point which involves the faith of a great proportion of us, who hold this to be as dear and precious a doctrine as any other in the word of God, and we therefore think it unfair that we should at any time have anything said against this; when we meet together in the common bond of union for the spread of the gospel of Christ, we think it a sore thing that we should be attacked then; however, leaving all that, whether it be by a spiritual or a by a personal coming—we believe that one of these days, we shall be roused from our beds by one who shall say to us, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth;" and when we arrive at the spot appointed, it may be, as the old Ephesians brought out all their books and burned them in the street, we shall see

our soldiers marching rank and file, and lay down their arms, and all that they have of murderous implements, piling them into one heap; and happy is that mother's child who shall be there to see it! But see it some one shall, when it shall be truly said, as the fire is kindled over all these things, "He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."

Happy the day, when every war-horse shall be houghed, when every spear shall become a pruning-hook, and every sword shall be made to till the soil which once it stained with blood. It is of that my text prophecies, and my text naturally brings me to that, as the great climax of the gospel. This will be the last triumph of Christ, before death itself shall be dead, death's great jackal, war, must die also, and then shall there be peace on earth, and the angel shall say, "I have gone up and down through the earth, and the earth sitteth still and is at rest; I heard no tumult of war, nor noise of battle." This is what we hope for. Let us fight on, with diligence and earnestness.

And now, having thus enlarged upon my text, you will permit me to offer a few remarks on a more practical subject.

The question naturally arises, "Why has not this promise been more abundantly fulfilled in our own times" Many say, "This is divine sovereignty." Well, we believe divine sovereignty with all our hearts; it is a doctrine which we delight to dwell upon, and ever to acknowledge; but we cannot make divine sovereignty the great sepulcher for our sins. We cannot have it that everything is to be laid at the door of divine sovereignty. We believe there is a sovereignty that ever overrules the sins of the church, as well as of the world. We hold that in the highest and purest sense, but we do think it is a very gross mistake for us always to be saying, if we are defeated, "It is divine sovereignty." Israel of old did not say so. They looked for the accursed thing that was in the camp. They did not say, "Divine sovereignty," when they were beaten by Benjamin; but they enquired of the Lord. They were not content to say it was sovereignty. It was sovereignty, no doubt. but they desired to find another reason which, when discovered, might help them to remove the difficulty, and enable them to conquer.

And now, beloved, there are many reasons, I think, why we do not prosper as we could desire in the missionary field; and permit me very briefly to hint at one or two. I shall mean no offense to any.

One reason is, because we have not a thorough and entire unanimity with regard to the matter. Now, I know something of the Baptist denomination. I have wandered through every county of England, pretty well, and been to a great number of the churches, and I grieve to see that there are many of our churches still standing totally aloof from the missionary field. If they stood aloof from our particular society, I might not so much regret, if they chose to have one of their own; but they have not one of their own either. There is the great thing for which I would blame them. That they should have some objection to unite with those whom they think to be different from them in doctrinal opinions, would not only be excusable, but possibly there might be occasions when it would be praiseworthy; but that any of us, who hold strongly the doctrines of the grace of God, and who, perhaps, give greater prominence than others to the truth as it was taught by Calvin, and, as we believe, taught by Christ, should therefore have no missionary society, is a great and crying sin; and I really think that a defection of a large part of our body, however it may be caused, may be one reason why we have not had such an abundant blessing from God. For, look ye here! Ye say ye can do without them. Very well: so said the people to Joshua, when he led his troops to attack Ai. They said, "Let not all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labor thither; for they are but few." They thought it would be unnecessary, and Joshua left behind him a large part, and only took with him his strong, able-bodied men. But, together with "the accursed thing" that Achan had concealed, I believe that the want of all the army of Israel was a part-cause of the defeat at Ai. So it is with us. Ah! if there be a means whereby we can get every brother who calls himself a Baptist to unite himself with this society, if there be any method of love, if there be any way of making concessions, if there be any mode or any means whereby we all could be bound together in the holy brotherhood as a denomination, I think we are each of us bound to make it. I am sure, as far as I am concerned, I may say that there is not to be found upon the

surface of the world one more strongly attached to the old faith, as I believe it to be—the old, strong, doctrinal faith—coupled with the earnest preaching of the gospel to every creature; yet I find myself not out of place in preaching for a Baptist Mission, nor out of place in helping it, and throwing my whole heart into it. It seems to me, it was founded by ourselves: the very men who held these truths were the first leaders in it; and it seems to me the most strange and marvellous thing, that any brother should, from his love to sound doctrine, stand aloof from missions. I am sure it is a stab against our prosperity as churches at home, if we do not come forward to help the missions at large.

I am just saying this, because it may reach to the ears of many of the brethren who are possibly not present to-day. I trust they will think the matter over. We do not ask them to come with us—we will be very glad if they will—but do let them at the very least have a society of their own. Let them be doing something, and do not let it be said that there is a Baptist existing who does not love to send the gospel to the utmost ends of the earth. That maniac nonsense about God doing his own work, and our sitting still and doing nothing, ought to have been buried long ago. I know not how to characterise it: it has done us immense damage. We know that God has accomplished his own work; but he always has worked and always will work with means. The men who do not approve of working by means, and stand by and say, "I do not sympathise with it," I do not wonder that God does not work with them: they do not deserve to be worked with, if they think so. Let us cast away that, and let us say, "If we can agree with these brethren who associate in missions we will do so; if we cannot agree with those who associate in one society, we will do it somehow else; but do it we will, for it is our anxious wish that the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." But again, it is not all that, my brethren. It is a want of real love to missions in all our churches: and if this should fall scatheless and if any should say, "It is not so of the church of which I am a member," let it be so; I do not mean, when I speak generally, to include each individual. It is, I believe, one reason of our want of success, or of that measure of want of success that we have, that there is not a true love of missions in the churches that really help them. Many love missions; they love the cause of Christ; but they do not love Zion better than their own

households. but, as far as I can judge, there are many whose attention to the mission field is confined to that one day in the year when the sermon is preached. Some of them confine that day very closely too; for the very smallest threepenny piece that can be discovered is appropriated to the collection on that occasion. They love the mission, yes, they do, but their love is that old sort, of which it is said, "She never told her love." They never tell it by any contribution, but they keep it very still in their hearts. We cannot think but that they do desire that the gospel should fly abroad, for they sing it with lusty lungs and with voice vociferous; but when there is aught to be done, they pinch and screw—the purse-string is made half the ordinary circumference, and it cannot be undrawn. There is little to be given for Christ. Christ must take the dregs, the sweepings of their wealth. Ah! if our churches loved missions, if we had more of the true Spirit in our midst, we should find scores of our young men rising up to go out and preach the gospel to the heathen; and then the church, taking an interest in the young men who sprang from its own bowels, would think it its duty to maintain its missionary, and send him forth preaching the gospel to every creature.

I remember Edward Irving once preached a sermon to a vast congregation, upon missions; I think he preached for four hours; and the object of the sermon was to prove that we were all wrong—that we ought to send out our missionaries without purse or scrip, giving them nothing! Edward never volunteered to go himself! If he had done so at the end of the sermon, we might have endorsed his philosophy. But he stayed at home, and did not go. Now, we are no believers in that. We think that if a man cannot have help, it is his business to go without it. If a man loves the ministry, if he can only preach Christ's gospel in poverty, God bless him in his poverty; if he has to be a tent maker, like Paul, and to work for his own living, and to go forth without purse or script. But as a church we cannot have that. "No, no;" we say, "brother, if you are going to a foreign land, and you give your life and health, and if you renounce the comforts of your family, we cannot let you go without anything. The least we can do is to provide for your needs." And one says, "There! though you go without purse or scrip, you cannot get across the sea except you have a ship, I will pay your passage-money." Another says, "You cannot preach to these people without learning the language; and while you are learning

the language you must eat and drink. It is quite impossible that you can live by faith, unless you have something that you can nourish your body with: there is the fund to support you, that you may give all your time to the preaching of the word." Ah! if we did but love Christ better, my brothers' and sisters, if we lived nearer to the cross, if we knew more of the value of his blood, if we wept like him over Jerusalem, if we felt more what it was for souls to perish, and what it was for men to be saved—if we did but rejoice with Christ in the prospect of his seeing the travail of his soul, and being abundantly satisfied—if we did but delight more in the divine decree, that the kingdoms of this world shall be given to Christ, I am sure we should all of us find more ways and more means for the sending forth the gospel of Christ.

But to conclude. Perhaps, I may say, and some of you may with tears confess it is true, it is a want of a revived godliness in our church at home which prevents our hoping for any great success abroad. Ah! brethren, we must till our own vineyards better, or else God will not make us successful in driving the plough across the broad acres of the continents. We want to have our brethren more earnest in prayer. Look at our prayer-meetings—a miserable handful of people, compared with the congregation. We want to have them more earnest in labor. Look at many of our agencies, dying for want of effective laborers, when they are to be found, but they are not willing to come forth. Where is the zeal of olden times? We are not among those that say, "The former times were better than now." In some respects they were, in others not so good; but if they were better, it is not ours to bemoan, but ours to labor to make these better still. We want—gathering up all things into one—we want the outpouring of the divine Spirit in our churches at home. Just as the anointing oil was first poured on Aaron's head, and then went to the skirts of the garment, so must the Holy Spirit be poured on England, and then shall it go to the utmost borders of the habitable earth. We want to have Pentecosts at home, and then, Hedes and Parthians and Elamites shall hear the word. "Begin at Jerusalem," is Christ's ordinance, and it is Christ's method. We must begin there; and as we begin there, in circles wider and wider and wider, yet the gospel shall spread, till, "like a sea of glory, it spreads from pole to pole."

Now, dear brethren and sisters, in repairing to our homes this morning, let us carry away at least one thought. Let us believe firmly that God's purpose shall be accomplished; let us hope joyously that we may be the instruments of its accomplishment; and then let us labor prayerfully, that our wishes may be consummated. What is there that you can do to-day for Christ? Oh! if you love Christ, do not let this day pass till you have done something for him. Speak for him; give to him; pray for him. But let each day be spent as a mission day, and be you each day a missionary for Christ. Begin at home. Enlarge your charity; but begin first at home. Let your own houses be cared for, and then your own synagogues; and then, after that, you may send your missionaries to every part of the earth. I beg for a good collection to-day. It is the first time we have met together in this place, and there is a large number of us; if we do not give a right good collection to-day, we shall not save our own credit. That is a poor way of putting it. It will be a disgrace to us if we do not give well to-day; but besides that, if we save our own credit, we shall not approve our love to Jesus. Give as God hath given to you.

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A Desperate Case - How To Meet It

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. - Matthew 17:19-21

The narrative, of which our text forms a part, describes a scene which took place immediately after the transfiguration of our Lord. Not to divorce it therefore from its connection, let us glance at the antecedents of the case, that nothing may be lost by negligence, or that peradventure we may gain something by meditation.

How great the difference between Moses and Christ! When Moses had been forty days upon the mountain-top, he underwent a kind of transfiguration, so that his face shone with exceeding brightness when he came down among the people, and he was obliged to put a veil over his face; for they could not bear to look upon his glory. Not so our Saviour! He had been really transfigured with a greater glory than Moses could ever know, and yet, as he came down from the mount, whatever radiance shone upon his face, it is not written that the people could not look upon him, but rather they were amazed, and running to him, they saluted him. The glory of the law repelled; for the majesty of holiness and justice, drive the awed spirits away from God. But the greater glory of Jesus attracts; though he is holy, and just, and righteous too, yet blended with these there is so much of truth and grace that sinners run to Jesus, amazed at his goodness, attracted by the charming fascination of his love, and they salute him, become his disciples, and take him to be their Lord and Master. Some of you may be just now blinded by the dazzling brightness of the law of God. You feel its claims on your conscience, but you cannot keep it in your life. It is too high; you cannot attain to it. Not that you find fault with the law; on the contrary, it commands your profoundest esteem. Still you are in no wise drawn by it to God; you are rather hardened in your heart, and you may be verging towards the inference of desperation: "As it is impossible for me to earn salvation by the works of the law, I will continue in my sins." Ah, poor heart! Turn thine eye away from Moses, with all his repelling splendour, and look to Jesus, yonder, crucified for sinful men. Behold his flowing wounds, and thorn crowned head! He is the Son of God, and therein he is greater than Moses. He bears the wrath of God, and therein he shows more of God's justice than Moses' broken tablets could ever do. Look thou to him, and as thou feelest the attraction of his love, fly to his arms and thou shalt be saved.

How different the spirit of Moses and Jesus! When Moses comes down from the mountain, it is to purge the camp. He seems to grasp the fiery sword; he breaks the golden calf; he smites the idolaters; but when Jesus comes down from the mountain, he finds a strife in the camp, as Moses did; he finds his own apostles worsted and beaten, just as Aaron had been defeated by the clamours of the people; but he has not a word of cursing;

there is a gentle rebuke—"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" His actions are actions of mercy—no breaking in pieces, but healing; no cursing, but blessing: love sits smiling on his brow, as he touches the poor wretch who is almost dead with diabolical possession, and restores him to life and health. Go you then, to Jesus; leave the law and your own self-righteousness, for these can do nothing but curse you. Fly to Jesus, for be you whomsoever you may, there are pardons on his lips; there are blessings in his hands; there is love in his heart; and he will not disdain to receive even you.

How much of condescension there is in the manner of Christ! Our Lord, we have told you, had been very glorious on the mountain's top, with Moses and Elias, yet, when he comes down into the midst of the crowd, he doth not disdain the cry of the poor man, not refuse to touch him who was possessed with a devil. Observe my Masters condescension, for he deigns attention, and yet his manner softens into pity and presently it melts into a gracious sympathy, as if this was the only channel through which his peerless power could flow. Then remember, he is the same to-day as he was then.

"Now though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great:"—

He is willing now to receive sinners as when it was said of him, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them:" just as ready to receive you, poor sinners, as when he was called "The friend of publicans and sinners." Come to him. Bow at his feet. His love invites you still. Believe that the transfigured and glorified Jesus is still a loving Saviour, willing to pardon and forgive.

Once again what choice instruction there is in history! After Jesus had been absent for some time, he came back. You may ask for what purpose he had retired? Evidently he went up into the mountain to pray. It was while he was praying (and I make no doubt, fasting likewise) that the fashion of his countenance changed. By his own personal devotion, and by the Father's special revelation, he had thus come back, as it were, with great refreshment to carry on his ministry. Hence we become witnesses of

a marvelous power which he immediately showed forth, and of no less remarkable counsel which he spoke to his disciples, when they felt their own weakness. Thus we have before us, on our text, a peculiar case—a patient, who utterly baffled the skill of all his disciples, healed at once by the great Master; and we have a reason given why the apostles themselves were not able to deliver him.

Let us look for a little time at this very sad case; not so singular either, methinks, but that we may find the round about us. Then let us notice the scene around the case—the father, the disciples, the scribes. Afterwards we shall joyfully observe the Saviour's coming into the midst and deciding all the difficulty; and, lastly, we shall attend to the reason he gives in private to his disciples, why they, before his coming, were utterly powerless to achieve the work.

I. First we have before us a VERY PECULIAR CASE.

It appears that the disciples had cast out devils of all sorts. Wherever they had gone, heretofore, this was their uniform testimony, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us;" but now they are baffled. They seem to have encountered a devil of the worst kind. There are grades in devilry as there are in human sin. All men are evil, but all men are not alike evil. All devils are full of sin, but they are not all sinful to the same degree. Do we not read in Scripture, "Then goeth he and taketh unto him seven other spirits more wicked than himself?" It may be there is a gradation in the wickedness of devils, and perhaps, also, in their power to fulfil their wicked impulses. We can scarcely think that all devils are Satans. There seems to be one chief arch-spirit, one great Diabolus, who is an accuser of the brethren—one mighty Lucifer, who fell down from heaven and has become the prince of the powers of darkness. In all his hosts it is probable that there is not his like. He stands first and chief of those fallen morning stars; the rest of the spirits may stand in different grades of wickedness, a hierarchy of hell. This poor wretch seems to have been possessed of one of the worst, most potent, and violent, and virulent of these evil spirits. I believe, brethren, that here we have a picture of a certain class of individuals who are not only desperately sinful, but subject to extraordinary impulses which carry them to infernal lengths and depths

of infamy; they are incapable of restraint, a terror to their kinfolk, and a misery to themselves. All men are sinful, as I have said before; but the power of depravity in some men is much stronger than in others; at least, if it be not intrinsically stronger, yet it certainly has manifestations in some which we have never perceived in common among men. Let us try and pick out the case according to the narrative. How frequently, dear friends, too frequently, alas! have we seen young people who have answered to the description here given. They have had a precocity of wickedness. When Jesus asked the father, "How long has he been in this way?" the answer was, "Of a child." I remember having once known such a child, over whom, paroxysms of passion came, in which his face would turn black. When he was able to run about, and was sent to a public school, a flint-stone, a club, a brick-bat, anything which might come next to hand, he would throw, without a moment's thought, at any one who vexed him. His knife would be drawn from his pocket and opened in an instant. The young assassin has often been prevented from stabbing others by a careful hand and watchful eye which guarded him. We have noticed this, I say, in the very young. They begin to lie early and to steal soon, and the young lip even assays to swear, while the anxious mother cannot understand where the child could have learnt it. You have protected such a child from contamination, and seemed to shut him in and girdle him about with holy influences; and yet, in these desperate instances, as soon as ever the child could know the right from the wrong, he has deliberately chosen the wrong with a violence of self-will and recklessness of consequences altogether unusual. Some such cases we have seen. O, may God grant it never be your lot or mine, to be the parents of such children. Yet such there have been, and such men there are who have grown up now, and the youthful passions of their childhood have become developed; and you may find them with the low forehead and dark scowling eye, if you will, in our prison-houses. Or if you see them in the streets, you may hopefully wish that they may be in prison ere long, for they are unsafe abroad. Of a child they seem to have been possessed with the chief of devils, and to have been carried captive by him at his will.

This lad seems also to have been afflicted with what is here called lunacy, which was, indeed, only a form of epilepsy. He was constantly subjected,

it seems, to epileptic fits; for I think we can hardly understand lunacy to mean anything short of occasional madness. Attacks of such outrageous violence would come upon him, that there would be no enduring him. He would then dash himself into the fire, or if water were near, he would attempt self destruction by plunging in to it. We have met with persons of this kind, perfectly outrageous and beyond all command, when fits of evil came upon them. I will instance cases which I have observed.

I know a man now, he may be here this morning; if he is , he will recognize his own portrait. At times he is as reasonable as anyone I could wish to associate with. He enjoys listening to the Word of God. He is, in some respects, an amiable, excellent, and respectable man. But occasionally fits of drunkenness come upon him, in which he is perfectly powerless under the influence of the demon; and while it lasts, it matters not, even when he knows he is wrong, a thousand angels could not drag him from it. He is thrown into the water of self-destruction, and he will continue in it. You may urge him and reason with him, and you may think—oh, how often some have thought who love him!—he will never do that again; he is too sensible a man; he has been too well-taught; the Word of God has had such an effect upon him, that he will never do it again; yet he does; he repeats the old paroxysms, and has done for twenty or thirty years; and, if he lives, unless sovereign grace prevent it, he will die a drunkard, as sure as he is a living man, and go from his drink to damnation.

Another case, from which I likewise draw from life. The man is kind, tender, and generous—generous to a fault. He has a home—he had one, I ought to say—he had a home, and he was the light of it. No one ever suspected him—that is, in his better times—of any grievous faults; but sometimes—and this has been concealed by many an indulgent friend—an attack of lasciviousness comes upon him, and at such seasons it matters not what the temptation may be, nor how foul the vice may be, the man runs into it. If you should meet him in the street, and talk with him, and argue with him, it would be all time and labour thrown away; nay, I have known him break up his home, and cross the sea to go to another land, that he might indulge his vile passions without rebuke, or the restraint of associating with former friends. He will come back again,

broken-hearted, wondering that he ever could be such a fool; but he will go again. It is in him. The devil is in him, and, unless God casts it out, he will do the same again, deliberately choosing his own damnation. Though he knows it, yet so possessed of the love of sin is he, that when the fit comes upon him, this diabolical epilepsy, he falls into sin with his whole might and power.

I might go on describing cases of the kind, but you will not need that I should picture any more; it could only be to vary the different forms of sin. However, let me try once more. A lad had as good a father as a child could have. He was bound apprentice. It became whispered in a few weeks that little moneys were missing. The father was very grieved, so indeed was the master, and the matter was quietly hushed up. A little while after the same thing occurred. The indentures were cancelled, and nothing more was said of it; but the father was sorely perplexed. He looked out for some other situation for the boy where he might, perhaps, recover his character. After a time it was precisely the same again. Bad companions had got hold of him, or rather, he had become a ringleader among other bad companions. Well, something else must be tried. It was tried. He has had twenty situations, and they have all been thrown up from the very same cause. And now, what think you is his treatment of his parents? Instead of being grateful for the repeated kindness and longsuffering shown to him, he will break out sometimes into such dreadful passions, that even the lives of his parents are scarcely safe; and when he has been in his old haunts a little more than usual, he is really so terrible a being, that his mother who loves him and who weeps over him, would almost as soon see a fiend from hell as see him; for when he comes home, everything goes wrong; confusion, is in the house, and terror in every heart; he acts precisely as if he were a madman. They have said, "Send him to Australia, or send him to America"—where they do send many of that sort—but if he goes there he will turn up, sooner or later, at the foot of the gallows; he is desperately set on evil, and nothing turns him aside. He tears and foams at the mouth with passion; his whole heart goes forth outrageously after anything like vice, and there appears to be not one redeeming trait in his character; or, if there be, it only seems to be subjected to the power of his lusts. He devises means to be more mighty to do mischief in the world.

What dreadful cases these are! Wherefore am I talking of them? Dear friends, I have taken them because it has been laying upon my heart to encourage and comfort you who are constrained to carry a daily cross in having such relations and such children as these. It is one of the heaviest afflictions which can come upon you.

In the case before us, the child was both deaf and dumb—not, I suppose, through any organic effect, but through the epilepsy, and the Satanic possession. So often we have seen children—shall I look them in the face this morning, as I stand here?—they are no children now—who are positively deaf to all spiritual sounds. They have been pleaded with, but it is vain. They know the truth, they know the whole truth, but they do not know the power of it. They are never absent from family prayer, nor in any prayer are they ever forgotten by their parents. They come to this place; they attend our classes; they go to revival services. Now and then there is something like a little emotion, but it does not come to much; they are precisely similar to the deaf adder which cannot be charmed, charm we never so wisely. Others of the family have been converted. Nearly all the household has now been brought to Christ. Lydia has had her heart opened; God has been much pleased to call young Timothy; but this one remains, and after much anxiety, much effort, much labour, no good has been achieved. The adamant seems as soft as their heart, and the ear of the deaf as much alive to rebuke as their conscience. This again is a very sad case.

I meet sometimes, too, with cases of another kind—persons who are beset with very high doctrine, who have got the devil in them, puffing up their fleshly minds with a vain conceit of sound understanding, and degrading their carnal profession with a loathsome impurity of heart and life. You will talk with them; they will tell you they wish to be saved—would give their right arm to be saved; but it is not in their power. You bid them believe in Jesus. They have no sense, they tell you, of the need of a Saviour; they are not in a fit state to believe. When God's time comes, the thing will occur. They love high doctrine; they will hear nothing else but it; but then their Sunday, if there is a temptation which comes across their path, will be spent anywhere but in the worship of God; and during

the week they give way to all sorts of sins. Whatever temptation comes, they go after it. The comfort they get from their religion, which they wrap about them like a cloak, is this—that no minister speaks the truth except one or two; that the truth is fatalism; that all they have to do is to be carried along like dead, inanimate logs down the stream, and that they are not at all responsible; or if they are responsible, it is merely to maintain with unflinching hardihood their own crude sentiments. I have seen some of these people—good people in their own way too—of whom I have thought that the conversation of drunkards was more hopeful than theirs; for that damnable fatalism, which by some is put instead of the predestination of the Scriptures, has locked them up—put them in an iron cage: and so they are beyond the reach of help, going on in their sin, rejecting the gospel of Christ, while assaying to be connoisseurs of its choicest mysteries.

Now, brothers and sisters, why are such cases as these permitted? Why doth the Lord allow the devil thus to fill the soul with sin?

I think it is, first, to show that there is a reality of sin. If we were all moral and outwardly respectable, we should begin to think sin was but a fancy. These daring sinners show the reality of it.

It is to manifest the reality of divine grace; for when these are saved, then it is we wonder, and we are compelled to say, "There is something in this. If such a hard, iron nature yet melts before the power of divine love, there must be a majesty in it."

It is to humble us too, to throw us on our back, and let us see how utterly powerless human agency is. When you cannot get in the thin end of the wedge, much less the whole wedge; when the ploughshare breaks on the edge of a hard rock; when the edge of the sword turns against the armour, then it is to draw yourself out of self to God. You see it is a deadly evil, where only omnipotence can help. Your soul says, "Lord, put out thine arm! Now do it, and the glory shall be thine." This is probably the chief reason; it is in order that God may get great glory to himself. He lets the devil have it all his own way. "There," he says, "pick your own ground, fight in your own territory, manoeuvre in your own way, and, with a

word, I will crush your power." He gives Satan great advantage, lets him entrench himself firmly in the soul from youth up, so that the victory may be splendid to the greatest degree.

We have thus before us now, for our sorrowful contemplation, the case of one whose disease mocks the physician, laughs at all human endeavours, and defies the watchful care of mild and gentle treatment to mitigate its force, or ameliorate its fearful symptoms.

II. Turn we now with passing glance, to LOOK AT THE SCENE AROUND. The company is made up of five sorts of people.

There are the scribes—cynics, methinks, to a man—"We told you so! We told you so!" they say. "Your Master pretended to give you power to cast out devils. No such thing! you cannot cast out devils. Those whom you healed were not truly possessed. Little enough was ever the matter with them, and so they got better. They were fanciful, and they believed you through enthusiasm. The dupes of credulity, your incantations bewitched them, and so they got better. But you cannot cast out a devil—you cannot cast that devil out." "Now then," says one of the scribes to Andrew, "cast it out. Come, Phillip, try what you can do!" And inasmuch as after all trying, the devil would not go out—"Ah! just so!" they say, "they are impostors. There is nothing in it" Just recall it, friends, to your own memories, have not you seen men of that kind? "Ah yes," they say, "the gospel converts one sort of people, such as always go to places of worship, the more intelligent and respectable of the community, but, you see, it is no good in these tough cases. These hardened ones—it cannot touch them. They are beyond its power." "Aha!" they say, "where is the boasted might of this great physician? He can heal your finger-aches; he does not know how to make these foul diseases fly."

Then here is the poor father, all dejected. "I brought him to you—I knew you did cast out devils, and I thought you could cast my son's devil out, and he would be healed. I am disappointed in you all. Yet I do think your Master can do it, but I am not sure that even he can. If such excellent apostles, as you are, have tried so hard, and have failed, I do not think there can be any chance for me. I am full of unbelief. O, I wish I had never

brought my child here at all, to make a public spectacle of him, that he might be a witness to your failures." That is the poor father. Perhaps that poor father is here this morning and he is saying, "Ah, I do believe, but still I am full of unbelief. I have brought my daughter; I have brought my child under the sound of the Word; I have prayed, and wrestled with God in prayer, and my child is not saved." "I have brought my husband," says one good woman, "but he is just as full of Satan as he ever was. I must give it up in despair."

And then, there are the disciples, and they look pitiable indeed. "Well," they say, "we do not know how to account for it. We cannot tell you how it is. We have said the same in this case that we were wont to say in others." "Why" says one of them, "when I went abroad and just said 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command thee to come out of him,' the unclean spirit always did come out in every other case. I cannot comprehend this. I must give it up." "We all must give it up," says the apostles. For some unknown cause, this seems to be quite out of the catalogue of cases which we are commissioned to cure. And so we sometimes hear dejected ministers, after preaching long at such hard shells as these—they say, "Well, we cannot understand it. 'The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Oh, it must be that these are fore-ordained unto damnation; we must give it up." That is how unbelieving ministers talk—or at least the most part of ministers in their season of misgiving and chagrin.

But then there is the general crowd. They are neither this way nor that. They say they will see fair. "Come, clear the ring out. If Jesus Christ be not an impostor—if he be God—certainly he can heal this poor man." Now here is the test and the ordeal, "If that man be not healed, we," says the crowd, "will not believe; but, if he be, then we will believe that Jesus Christ is sent of God." O dear friends, how often we have thought of those very hard cases in this way. There are hundreds of undecided people looking on and saying, "Ah, if So-and-so were converted, then I should say there was something in it. If truly we could have a new heart and a right spirit, then I, too, would turn to God with full purpose of heart.

There was the fifth party there, and that was the devil himself. Oh, how

triumphant was he! "Ah!" he seemed to say, "try your exorcism; go on with your words; preach at him; pray at me; weep over me; do what you will, you cannot get me out." There he seems to stand intrenched within the stronghold of the poor tortured heart. "Do your best, do your worst, I am not afraid of you. I have got this man, and I will keep him. I have so fixed myself in him that no power shall ever be able to heal him." So we seem to hear that vile shriek of hell over some men, "Yes," saith he, "I will trust him to go into Spurgeon's Tabernacle. I know the thousands there have felt the power of the Holy Ghost in making new men of them, this is a case I can trust. There is nothing that will ever touch him. The great hammer has knocked the chains off many, but it cannot touch his chains; they are harder than iron. I have no fear for him;" and perhaps he is gloating his thoughts now with the torments of the man in another world. Ah, thou foul fiend! if our Master should come here this morning, thou shouldst sing another tune. if he should say, "Come out of him thou foul spirit," thou wilt go back howling to thy vile den; for his voice can do what our voice never could have done. And may we not easily realize such a scene enacted in this congregation? You have the scoffers, you have the anxious parent, the ministry confessedly powerless in the matter; the crowd looking on, and the devil rejoicing that such cases are quite beyond human strength. What more can you want to vivify the picture before your imagination?

III. But look! THE MASTER COMES.

Ah! the master comes! Forthwith the scene changes. The lieutenants and the captains who began the battle did not understand the art of war; they were precipitant and hasty. The right wing was broken; the left began to reel; the centre almost fails. The trumpets of the adversary begin to sound a victory. Here they come—their dread artillery in front. What will become of the army now? Hold! Hold! What is that I see? A cloud of dust. Who comes galloping there? It is the commander-in-chief. "What are you at?" says he, "What are you at?" In a moment he sees this is not the way to fight. He comprehends the difficulties of the case in an instant. "Forward there! Forward There! Backward there!" The scale is turned. The mere presence of the commander-in-chief has changed the whole face of the field; and now, ye adversaries, ye may turn your backs and fly.

It was so in Jesus' case exactly. His lieutenants and captains—the apostles—had lost the day. He comes into the field; comprehends the state of the case. "Bring him hither to me," says he, and the poor wretch, foaming and tormented, is brought to him, and he says, "Come out of him, thou unclean spirit." The thing is done; the victory achieved; the undecided receive Christ as a prophet; the scoffers' mouths are shut; the trembling father rejoices, and the poor demoniac is cured.

And yet when Jesus Christ came to cure this poor man, he was in as bad a state as he well could be. Nay, the very presence of the Saviour seemed to make it worse. As soon as ever the devil perceived that Christ was come he began to rend and tear his poor victim. As quaint old Fuller says—like a bad tenant whose lease is out, he hates the landlord, and so he does all the damage he can, because he has got notice to quit. Often just before men are converted, they are worse than ever; there is an unusual display of their desperate wickedness, for then the devil hath great wrath, now that his time is short.

The struggles of this child are appalling. The devil seemed as if he would kill him before he would be healed; and after great paroxysms of the most frightful kind, the poor youth laid upon the ground, pale, and still as a corpse, insomuch that many said, "He is dead." It is just the same with many conversions of these desperate sinners. Their convictions are so terrible; frequently the work of the devil within them keeping them from Christ is so furious that you would give up all hope. You say, "That man will be driven mad; those acute feelings, the intense agony of his spirit will rob him of all mental power, and then in abject persecution he will die in his sin." Ah! dear friends, this again is only a piece of Satan's infamy. He knew, and knew right well that Christ would set that poor young man free, and therefore he sets upon him with all his might, to torment him while he may. Have I any such desperate case among my hearers this morning—one who has been as a son of Belial among the children of men? Is the devil tormenting you to-day? Do you feel tempted to commit suicide? Are you urged to some freak of yet greater sin in order to drown your griefs and strangle your conscience? O poor soul, do no such thing, for my Master will soon stoop over you, and take you by the hand and lift you up, and your comfort shall begin, because the unclean

spirit is cast out. "Ah! he means to destroy me," says the soul under conviction. Nay, soul, God does not destroy those whom he convinces of sin. Men do not plough fields which they have no intention to sow. If God ploughs you with conviction he will sow you with gospel comfort, and you shall bring forth a harvest of his glory. As a woman at her work first plies the needle with its sharp prick, and then draws the thread after it, so in your case the sharpness of sorrow for sin will be speedily followed by the silver thread of joy and peace in believing.

And oh, mark it! The vision just now, up there on the mountain of glory, resolved itself into "Jesus only." His peerless radiance eclipsed every other. So, too, it is "Jesus only," down there in the valley. His matchless grace can encounter no rival. Keep this forever in your mind's eye—it is the Master who did it all. His appearance on the scene removed all difficulties. In such extreme cases, there will be, and there must be, a most eminent display of God's power; and that power may be unassociated with means. Under any circumstances, it will be the Lord alone doing it, to the praise and glory of his grace.

IV. Now, we come to the last, and perhaps the most important part of the sermon. The riddle is perplexing. "WHY COULD NOT WE CAST HIM OUT?" Let the Master tell us the reasons why these cases thwart our power.

The Saviour said it was for want of faith—want of faith. No man may expect to be the means of the conversion of a sinner without having faith which leads him to believe that the sinner will be converted. Such things may occur, but it is not the rule. If I can preach in faith that my hearers will be saved, they will be saved. If I have no faith, God may honour his Word, but it will be in no great degree; certainly he will not honour me. Abandoned sinners, if converted by means, are usually brought under the power of divine grace through ministers of great faith. Have you observed—there were persons who heard all the small fry of the Whitefieldian age; they had listened to this preacher and to that. Under whom were they converted? Under Mr. Whitefield, because Mr. Whitefield was a man of masterly faith. He believed that the lost could be reclaimed—that the worst diseases could be healed, the most heinous, abandoned, profligate,

blasphemous sinners could be saved. He preached to them as if he expected the deaf would be charmed by the gospel melody, and the dead would be quickened at the commanding call of the great Redeemer's name. At Surrey Chapel, over yonder, in Rowland Hill's day, some of the grossest blackguards and biggest scamps who ever infested London, were saved. Why? Because Rowland Hill preached the gospel to big sinners, and believed the fact of big sinners being converted. The respectable people of his day said, "Oh, yes! it is only tag, rag, and bob-tail who go to hear Mr. Hill." "Just so," said Mr. Hill, "and welcome tag, and welcome rag, and welcome bob-tail; they are the very people that I want" "What is the good of such people as they are, going to hear the gospel? Why does Mr. Hill try to preach to harlots and thieves?" they said. "They are just the very people," said Mr. Hill. "I believe that these people can be saved." It was want of faith in the others; for if a man have faith as a grain of mustard seed, let it be ever so little, yet, if it is true, it is mighty in proportion to its power. Mr. Hill had the power of faith, and he was the means of the conversion of very great sinners. A few years ago it was utterly hopeless to try and reclaim fallen daughters of sin, but a few men had faith that it could be done, and it has been done; and I will now make bold to say that if there be a great sinner here, such as I tried to describe just now, some gross case of infernal possession, if that person be not saved, it is for the want of faith in our case. If we have brought that person before God, and have not been anxious about his salvation, and God has not heard that prayer, it is because we could not believe it possible such a case could be saved. If God gives you the power to believe that any soul will be saved, it will be saved; there is no doubt about that.

Still, our Saviour added, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." What does he mean by that? I believe he meant that in these very special cases ordinary preaching of the Word will not avail, and ordinary prayer will not suffice. There must be an unusual faith, and to get this there must be an unusual degree of prayer; and to get that prayer up to the right point, there must be, in many cases, fasting as well. No doubt there is something special about the admonition to prayer, from the association in which it stands. One sort of Christian will use formal supplications; and the petitions they ask are founded upon a sense of propriety, without any glow of feeling. Another sort will wait for the Spirit

to move them; and when certain impulses stimulate their minds, they rejoice in a sense of liberty. Yet I show you a more excellent way There be those who watch unto prayer, wait before the Lord, seek his face, and exercise patience till they get an audience. Such disciples continue in their retirement until they have an experience of access for which they crave.

And what is fasting for? That seems to be the difficult point. It is evidently accessory to the peculiar continuance in prayer, practised oftentimes by our Lord, and advised by him to his disciples. Not a kind of religious observance, in itself meritorious, but a habit, when associated with the exercise of prayer, unquestionably helpful. I am not sure whether we have lost a very great blessing in the Christian Church by giving up fasting. It was said there was superstition in it; but, as an old divine says, we had better have a spoonful of superstition than a porringer full of gluttony. Martin Luther, whose body, like some others, was of a gross tendency, felt as some of us do, that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing, in another sense than the apostle meant it; and he used to fast frequently. He says his flesh was wont to grumble dreadfully at abstinence, but fast he would, for he found that when he was fasting, it quickened his praying. There is a treatise by an old Puritan, called, "The soul fattening institution of fasting," and he gives us his own experience that during a fast he has felt more intense eagerness of soul in prayer than he had ever done at any other time. Some of you, dear friends, may get to the boiling point in prayer, without fasting. I do think that others cannot, and probably if we sometimes set apart a whole day for prayer for a special object, we should at first feel ourselves dull, and lumpish, and heavy. Then let us resolve, "Well, I shall not go down to my dinner. I shall stop here. I feel anxious for a praying frame of mind, and I will keep alone; and if when the time for evening meal came on, we should say, "I feel a little craving of hunger, but I will satisfy them with some very slender nutriment—a piece of bread, or something of the kind—and I will continue in prayer," I think that very likely towards evening our prayers would become more forcible and vehement than at any other part of the day. We do not exactly recommend this for those who are weak. There are some men with little or no encumbrance of flesh about them; but others of us of a heavy make, with sluggishness for a temptation, have to cry out

because we are rather like stones on the ground than birds in the air. To such, I think, we can venture to recommend it from the words of Christ. At any rate, I can suppose a father here setting apart a day of prayer, going on wrestling with God without any intermission; pleading with him till, as it was said of the famous martyr of Brussels, he would so pray that he forgot everything except his prayer; and when they came to call him to meat, he made no answer, for he had got out of all earthly things in his wrestling with the angel, that he could not think of anything besides. Such a man taking up the case of a gross sinner, I believe, would be the means of that sinner's conversion; and the reason why some are never brought to Christ, is, speaking after the manner of men, because we have not got the qualified to deal with them; for "this kind goeth not out save with prayer and fasting." When we have prayed, and have reached the point of true faith, then the sinner is saved by the mighty power of God, and Christ is glorified. Methinks I have some in this house who are ready to say, "Well, if such be the case, I will try it. I will take the Master at his word." Brother, brother, if half-a-dozen of us joined together, it might be better; nay, "If two agree as touching any one thin," it would be done. Let some of us put it to the test upon some big sinner, and see whether it does not come true. I think I may fairly ask you who are lovers of souls, who have eyes which do weep, and hearts which can feel, to try my Master's prescription, and see if the most unmanageable devil which ever took possession of a human heart, be not driven out, as the result of prayer and fasting, in the exercise of your faith. The Lord bless you in this thing, and may he bring us all to trust in Jesus by a saving faith. To him be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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The Destroyer Destroyed

That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil - Hebrews 2:14

In God's original empire everything was happiness, and joy, and peace. If there be any evil, any suffering and pain, that is not God's work. God may permit it, overrule it, and out of it educe much good; but the evil cometh not of God. He himself standeth pure and perfect, the clean fountain out of which gusheth forth ever more sweet and pure waters. The devil's reign, on the contrary, containeth nought of good, "the devil sinneth from the beginning," and his dominion has been one uniform course of temptation to evil and infliction of misery. Death is a part of Satan's dominion, he brought sin into the world when he tempted our mother Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, and with sin he brought also death into the world, with all its train of woes. There had been likely no death, if there had been no devil. If Satan had not tempted, mayhap man had not revolted, and if he had not revolted he would have lived for ever, without having to undergo the painful change which is caused by death. I think death is the devil's masterpiece. With the solitary exception of hell, death is certainly the most Satanic mischief that sin hath accomplished. Nothing ever delighted the heart of the devil so much as when he found that the threatening would be fulfilled, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," and never was his malicious heart so full of hellish joy as when he saw Abel stretched upon the earth, slain by the club of his brother. "Aha!" said Satan, "this is the first of all intelligent creatures that has died. Oh how I rejoice! This is the crowning hour of my dominion. It is true that I have marred the glory of this earth by my guileful temptation; it is true the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain by reason of the evil that I have brought into it; but this, this is my masterpiece; I have killed man; I have brought death into him, and here lieth the first—the first dead man." Since that time Satan hath ever gloated over the death of the human race, and he hath had some cause of glory, for that death has been universal. All have died. Though they had

been wise as Solomon, their wisdom could not spare their head; though they had been virtuous as Moses, yet their virtue could not avert the axe, All have died; and therefore the devil hath boasted in his triumph. But twice hath he been defeated; but two have entered heaven without dying, but the mass of mankind have had to feel the scythe of death; and he has rejoiced because this, his mightiest work, has had foundations broad as earth, and a summit that reached as high as the virtues of mankind could climb.

There is something fearful in death. It is frightful even to him that hath the most of faith. It is only the gildings of death, the afterwards, the heaven, the harp, the glory, that maketh death bearable even to the Christian. Death in itself must ever be an unutterably fearful thing to the sons of men. And oh! what ruin doth it work! It darkens the windows of the eyes; it pulls down the polished pillars of the divine architecture of the body; it turns the inhabitant the soul, out of its door, and bids it fly to worlds unknown; and it leaves in place of a living man a corpse whose appearance is so wretched that none can look upon it without emotions of horror. Now, this is Satan's delight. He conceives death to be his masterpiece, because of its terror, and because of the ruin which it works. The greater the evil, the better doth he delight in it. No doubt he gloats over our sicknesses; he rejoices himself in our sin; but death is to him a theme of as much delight as he can be capable of in his eternal misery. He, as far as he can, shouteth for joy when he witnesseth how, by one fell deed of his, one piece of treachery, he hath swept the world with the besom of destruction, and hurried all men to the tomb.

And death is very lovely to the devil for another reason—not only because it is his chief work on earth, but because it gives him the finest opportunity in the world for the display of his malice and his craft. The devil is a coward, the greatest of cowards, as most wicked beings are. A Christian in health he will seldom attack; a Christian who has been living near his Master, and is strong in grace, the devil will leave alone, because he knows he will meet his match then; but if he can find a Christian either weak in faith, or weak in body, then he thinks it a fair opportunity for attack.

Now when death comes with all its terrors, it is usual for Satan to make a fierce inroad into the soul. Usually with many of the saints, if not in the last article of death, yet some little time before it, there is a ferocious onslaught made by the great enemy of souls. And then he loves death, because death weakens the mind. The approach of death destroys some of the mental power, and takes away from us for a season some of those spirits by which we have been cheered in better days. It makes us lie there, languid, and faint, and weary. "Now is my opportunity," says the evil one; and he steals in upon us. Hence I believe for this reason he is said to have the power of death, for I cannot conceive that the devil hath the power of death in any other sense but this, that it was originated by him, and that he at such time generally displays the most of his malice and of his power. For it is certain my brethren the devil has not the power over death so as to cause death. All the devils in hell could not take away the life of the smallest infant in the world, and though we lie gasping and sick, so that the physician despairs of us, it is nothing but the fiat of the Almighty that can cause us to die, even in the extremity of our weakness. As far as the cause is concerned, the devil is not the cause of death. We rejoice to believe with Dr. Young, that an angel's arm cannot hurl us to the grave, even though it be the arm of that fallen archangel Lucifer; and we rejoice to know that afterwards a myriad angels cannot confine us there. So that neither for the unlocking of the door, nor for the securing of it afterwards, hath the devil any power whatever over the Christian in death.

Why, there are many persons here present who have such notion of religion that they conceive it to be a thing of happiness and pleasure, and delight, and living near the fountain of all bliss, that is their God, their path is filled with sunshine, and their eye sparkles with perpetual happiness. They bear the trials of this life manfully as Christians should; they take afflictions from the hand of God with all resignation and patience. Now the devil says, "It is of no use my meddling with that man with doubting thoughts; he is too mighty for me; he is powerful on his knees, and he is powerful with his God." "Hands off!" says the Christian to the devil then. But when we begin to be weak, when our mind through the influence of the body begins to be sad, when we have either been starving ourselves by some wicked religious asceticism, or when the rod

of God hath bruised us, then in our evil plight the foe will beset us. And for this reason the devil loves death, and hath the power over it, because it is the time of nature's extremity, and therefore is the time of the devil's opportunity.

The subject of our discourse this morning is this. Jesus Christ through his death, hath destroyed what power the devil hath over death. Ay, and to add a second truth which shall be our second head, he hath not only by his death destroyed the power which the devil had over death, but he hath destroyed the devil's power entirely in every respect by the death which he died.

I. Let us begin, then, at the beginning. BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST THE DEVIL'S POWER OVER DEATH IS TO THE CHRISTIAN UTTERLY DESTROYED. The devil's power over death lies in three places, and we must look at it in three aspects. sometimes the devil hath power in death over the Christian, by tempting him to doubt his resurrection, and leading him to look into the black future with the dread of annihilation. We will look at that first, and we will endeavor to show you that by the death of Christ that peculiar form of the devil's power in death is entirely removed. When the poor spirit lieth on the verge of eternity, if faith be weak, and if the eye-sight of hope be dim, the Christian will most likely look forward into what? Into a world unknown, and the language of even the infidel sometimes rush into the lips of the most faithful child of God.

"My soul looks down on what?
A dread eternity; a dreary gulf."

You may tell him of the promises; you may try to cheer him by reminding him of the certain revelations of the future; but apart from the death of Christ, I say, even the Christian himself would look forward to death as being a dreary goal, a dark cloudy end to a life of weariness and woe. Whither am I speeding? An arrow shot from the bow of God's creation! Whither am I speeding? And the answer cometh back from blank nothingness thou camest, and thou art speeding to the same; there is nought to thee; when thou diest thou art lost. Or if reason has been well tutored it may perhaps reply to him, "Yes, there is another world, but

reason can only tell him that it thinks so. It dreams of it. but what that other world shall be, what its tremendous mysteries, what its gorgeous splendors, or what its horrible terrors, reason cannot tell." And the sting of death would be to such a man, who had no view of immortality in Christ, the thought that he was to be annihilated—not to exist—or if to exist that he knew not how, or where. But, beloved, by the death of Christ all this is taken away. If I lie a-dying, and Satan comes to me and says, "Thou art to be annihilated, thou art now sinking beneath the waves of time, and thou shalt lie in the caverns of nothingness for ever; thy living, leaping spirit, is to cease for ever and be not." I reply to him, "No, not so: I have no fear of that; O Satan, thy power to tempt me here faileth utterly and entirely. See there my Saviour! He died—he died really and actually, for his heart was pierced, he was buried, he lay in his grave three days; but, O Devil, he was not annihilated, for he rose again from the tomb on the third day, and in the glories of the resurrection he appeared unto many witnesses, and gave infallible proofs that he was risen from the dead. And now, O Satan, I tell thee, thou canst not put an end to my existence, for thou couldst not put an end to the existence of my Lord. As the Lord the Saviour rose, so all his followers must. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' and therefore I know that though the 'worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' Thou tellest me, O Satan, that I am to be swallowed up, and be a thing of nought, and sink into the bottomless pit of nonentity. I reply to thee, thou liest. My Saviour was not swallowed up, and yet he died, he died, but could not long be held a prisoner in the tomb. Come, death, and bind me, but thou canst not destroy me. Come on, O grave; open thy ghastly mouth, and swallow me up; but I shall burst thy bonds another day. When that all-glorious morning shall dawn, I having a dew like the dew of herbs upon me, shall be raised up and shall live in his sight. Because he lives I shall live also." So, you see, Christ, by being a witness to the feet of the resurrection, has broken the power of the devil in death. In this respect he has prevented him from tempting us to fear annihilation, because, as Christians, we believe that because Christ rose again from the dead, even so they that sleep in Jesus will the Lord bring with him.

But now for a more common temptation—another phase of the devil's power in death. Full often the devil comes to us in our life-time, and he

tempts us by telling us that our guilt will certainly prevail against us, that the sins of our youth and our former transgressions are still in our bones, and that when we sleep in the grave our sins shall rise up against us "They have many of them," saith he, "gone before you unto judgment, and others shall follow after." When the Christian getteth weak, and his heart and his flesh do fail him, were it not, I say for the great doctrine of the death of Christ the devil would be able to tempt him thus "Thou art about to die. I dare not tell thee that there is no future state, for if I do thou replies to me, 'There is, for Christ rose from the dead and therefore I shall,' but I will tempt thee another way. Thou hast made a fine profession, but I charge upon thee that thou hast been a hypocrite. Thou pretendest that thou art one of the Lord's beloved: now look back upon thy sins: remember on such-a-day how thy rebellious lusts arose, and thou wast led if not quite to indulge in a transgression, yet to long after it. Recollect how often thou hast provoked him in the wilderness, how frequently thou hast made his anger wax hot against thee." The devil takes up our diary, and he turns over the page, and with black finger points to our sins; and he reads scornfully, with a leer upon his countenance. "See here saint" he says. "Saint! Aha! a fine saint you were. There! Sabbath breaking. There! evil thoughts of unbelief. There! departure from the living God." And he turns over page after page, and he stops over some very black page, and says, "See here!" And he twits the Christian with the thing. "Ah!" saith he, "David, remember Bathsheba. Lot, remember Sodom and the cave, Noah, remember the vineyard and the drunkenness." Ah! and it makes even the saint quiver, when sin stares him in the face—when the ghosts of his old sins rise up and stare upon him. He is a man that has got faith indeed that can look sin in the face, and still say, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth me from sin." But were it not for that blood, were it not for the death of Christ, you can easily conceive what power the devil would have over us in the hour of death, because he would fling all our sins in our teeth just when we came to die, But now see how through death Christ has taken away the devil's power to do that. We reply to the temptation to sin, "In truth O Satan thou art right; I have rebelled, I will not belie my conscience and my memory; I own I have transgressed. O Satan, turn to the blackest page of my history, I confess all,

'Should he send my soul to hell
His righteous law approves it well.'

But O fiend, let me tell thee my sins were numbered on the scape-goat's head of old. Go thou, O Satan, to Calvary's cross, and see my substitute bleeding there, Behold, my sins are not mine; they are laid on his eternal shoulders, and he has cast them from his own shoulders into the depths of the sea. Avaunt, hell-hound! Wouldst thou worry me? Go thou and satisfy thyself with a sight of that Man, who entered the gloomy dungeons of death, and slept awhile there, and then rent the bars away, and led captivity captive as a proof that he was justified of God the Father. and that I also am justified in him." Oh! yes, this is the way that Christ's death destroys the power of the devil. We can tell the devil that we care not for him, for all our sins are passed away, covered in the thick cloud, and shall not be brought against us any more for ever, "Ah!" said an aged saint once who had been much teased by Satan, "at last I got rid of my temptations, sir, and I enjoyed much peace," "How did you do it?" said a Christian friend who visited him, "I showed him blood, sir; I showed him the blood of Christ." That is a thing the devil cannot endure. You may tell the devil, "Oh! but I prayed so many times." He will sniff at your prayers. You may tell him, "Ah! but I was a preacher" He will laugh in your face, and tell you you preached your own damnation You may tell him you had some good works, and he will lift them up and say, "these are your good works—filthy rags: no one would have them at a gift." You may tell him, "Ah! but I have repented." He will sneer at your repentance. You may tell him what you like, he will sneer at you, till at last you say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling;"

And it is all over with the devil then; there is nothing now that he can do, for the death of Christ has destroyed the power that the devil hath over us to tempt us on account of our guilt. "The sting of death is sin:" our Jesus took the sting away, and now death is harmless to us, because it is not succeeded by damnation.

Once more, you may suppose a Christian who has firm confidence in a

future state. The evil one has another temptation for him.. "It. may be very true," saith he, "that you are to live for ever and that your sins have been pardoned; but you have hitherto found it very hard work to persevere, and now you are about to die you will be sure to fail. When you have had troubles you know you have been half inclined to go back again to Egypt. Why, the little hornets that you have met have worried you, and now this death is the prince of dragons; it will be all over with you now. You know that when you used to go through a cart-rut you were crying for fear of being drowned: what will you do now that you have got into the swellings of Jordan? "Ah!" says the devil, "you were afraid of the lions when they were chained: what will you do with this unchained lion? How will you come off now? When you were a strong man and had marrow in your bones, and your sinews were full of strength, even then you trembled at me: now I shall have at you, when I get you in your dying-time and your strength fails, and if I once get the grip of you

'That desperate tug your soul shall feel,
Through bars of brass and triple-steel.'

Ah! you will then be overcome." And sometimes the poor feint-hearted Christian thinks that is true; I shall surely fall one day by the hand of the enemy. Up gets the Arminian divine, and says, "that is a very proper sort of feeling, my friend; God often does desert his children and cast them away." To which we reply "Thou liest, Arminian; shut thy mouth, God never did desert his children, neither can he, nor will he."

And having answered the Arminian we turn to answer the devil, and we say to him, "O fiend, thou temptest us to think that thou wilt conquer us; remember Satan, that the strength that has preserved us against thee has not been our own; the arm that has delivered us has not been this arm of flesh and blood, else we had long since been overcome. Look thou there, fiend, at him that is Omnipotent: his Almightyness is the power that preserves us to the end; and, therefore, be we never so weak, when we are weak then we are strong, and in our last hour of peril we shall yet overcome thee."

But please to notice, that this answer springs and arises from Christ's

death. Let us just picture a scene. When the Lord Jesus came down to earth, Satan knew his errand. He knew that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God, and when he saw him an infant in the manger, he thought if he could kill him and get Him in the bonds of death what a fine thing it would be! So he stirred up the spirit of Herod to slay him; but Herod missed his mark. And many a time did Satan strive to put the personal existence of Christ in danger, so that he might get Christ to die. Poor fool as he was, he did not know that when Christ died he would bruise the devil's head. Once, you remember, when Christ was in the synagogue, the devil stirred up the people, and made them angry; and he thought, "Oh! what a glorious thing it would be if I could kill this man; then there would be an end of him, And I should reign supreme for ever." So he got the people to take him to the brow of the hill, and he gloated over the thought that now surely he would be cast down headlong. But Christ escaped. He tried to starve him, he tried to drown him; he was in the desert without food, and he was on the sea in a storm; but there was no starving or drowning him, and Satan no doubt panted for his blood and longed that he should die. At last the day arrived; it was telegraphed to the court of hell that at last Christ would die. They rung their bells with hellish mirth and joy. "He will die now," said he, "Judas has taken the thirty pieces of silver. Let those Scribes and Pharisees get him, they will no more let him go than the spider will a poor unfortunate fly. He is safe enough now." And the devil laughed for very glee, when he saw the Saviour stand before Pilate's bar. And when it was said, "Let him be crucified," then his joy scarce knew bounds, except that bound which his own misery must ever set to it. As far as he could he revelled in what was to him a delightful thought, that the Lord of glory was about to die. In death, as Christ was seen of angels, he was seen of devils too; and that dreary march from Pilate's palace to the cross was one which devils saw with extraordinary interest. And when they saw him on the cross, there stood the exulting fiend, smiling to himself. "Ah! I have the King of Glory now in my dominions, I have the power of death, and I have the power over the Lord Jesus." He exerted that power, till the Lord Jesus had to cry out in bitter anguish, "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" But ah! how short-lived was hellish victory! How brief was the Satanic triumph! He died, and "It is finished!" shook the gates of hell. Down from the cross the conqueror leaped, pursued the fiend with thunder-bolts of wrath; swift to

the shades of hell the fiend did fly, and swift descending went the conqueror after him; and we may conceive him exclaiming -

"Traitor! this bolt shall find and pierce thee through,
Though under hell's profoundest wave thou div'st,
To find a sheltering grave."

And seize him he did—chained him to his chariot wheel; dragged him up the steps of glory; angels shouting all the while, "He hath led captivity captive, and received gifts for men." Now, devil, thou saidst thou wouldst overcome me, when I came to die. Satan I defy thee, and laugh thee to scorn! My Master overcame thee, and I shall overcome thee yet. You say you will overcome the saint, do you? You could not overcome the saint's Master, and you will not overcome him. You once thought you had conquered Jesus: you were bitterly deceived. Ah! Satan, thou mayest think thou shalt overcome the little faith and the faint heart; but thou art wondrously mistaken—for we shall assuredly tread Satan under our feet shortly; and even in our last extremity, with fearful odds against us, we shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

You see that thus, my brethren, Christ's death has taken away from Satan the advantage which he has over the saint in the hour of death; so that we may joyfully descend the shelving banks of Jordan, or may even, if God calls us to a sudden death, glide from its abrupt cliffs, for Christ is with us, and to die is gain.

II. But now, I want just a moment or two, whilst I try to show you that not only has Christ by his death taken away the devil's power in death; but **HE HAS TAKEN AWAY THE DEVIL'S POWER EVERYWHERE ELSE OVER A CHRISTIAN.** "He hath destroyed," or overcome, "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Death was the devil's chief intrenchment: Christ bearded the lion in his den, and fought him in his own territory; and when he took death from him and dismantled that once impregnable fortress, he took away from him not only that, but every other advantage that he had over the saint. And now Satan is a conquered foe, not only in the hour of death, but in

every other hour and in every other place. He is an enemy, both cruel and mighty, but he is a foe who quakes and quails when a Christian gets into the lists with him; for he knows that though the fight may waver for a little while in the scale, the balance of victory must fall on the side of the saint, because Christ by his death destroyed the devil's power.

Satan, my brethren, may to-morrow get much power over you, by tempting you to indulge in the lusts of the flesh, or in the pride of life; he may come to you and say, "Do such-and-such a thing that would be dishonest, and I will make you rich; indulge in such-and-such a pleasure, and I will make you happy. come," saith Satan, "yield to my blandishments; I will give you wine to quaff that shall be richer than ever came from the wine-vats of Holy Scripture; I will give you bread to eat that you know not of. Eat thou the tempting fruit; it is sweet; it will make thee like a god." "Ah!" saith the Christian, "but Satan, my Master died when he had to do with thee, and therefore I will have nothing to do with thee. If thou didst kill my Lord, thou wilt kill me too if thou canst, and therefore away with thee! but inasmuch as thou layest down silver for me, and tellest me I can have it if I do wrong, lo, Satan, I can cover thy silver with gold, and have ten times as much to spare afterwards. Thou sayest I shall get gain if I sin. Nay, but the treasures of Christ are greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. Why, Satan, if thou wert to bring me a crown, and say, 'There! thou shalt have that if thou wilt sin.' I should say, 'Poor crown! Why, Satan, I have got a better one than that laid up in heaven, I could not sin for that, that is a bribe too paltry," In he brings his bags of gold. and he says, "Now, Christian, sin for them." The Christian says, "Why fiend, that stuff is not worth my looking at. I have an inheritance in a city where the streets are paved with solid gold; and, therefore, what are these poor chinking bits to me? Take them back!" He brings in loveliness, and he tempts us by it. but we say to him, "Why, devil, what art thou at? What is that loveliness to me? Mine eyes have seen the King in his beauty and the land that is very far oft; and by faith I know that I shall go where beauty's self, even in her perfection, is excelled—where I shall see my Saviour, who is 'the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.' That is no temptation to me! Christ has died, and I count all these things but dross, that I may win Christ and be found in him." So that you see, even in temptation, the death of Christ has

destroyed the devil's power

"You will not yield, will you?" says the devil "You cannot be tempted! Ah! well," says he, "if you cannot be drawn aside, I'll pull you aside. What are you, that you should stand against me? A poor puny man! Why, I have made angels fall, and I am not afraid of you. Come on!" And he puts his foot to our foot, and with his dragon yell he frights the echoes till they dare not reply. He lifts his blazing sword, and thinks to smite us to the ground. You know, my brethren, what the shield is that must catch the blow. It is the shield of faith in Christ that died for us. He hurls his darts, but his darts hurt not, for lo, we catch them also on this all-powerful shield, Christ and his cross. So that, let his insinuations be never so direful, the death of Christ has destroyed the devil's power either to tempt or to destroy. He may be allowed to attempt either the one or the other, but he can be successful in neither. The death of Christ has "destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Some people say they don't believe in a devil. Well, I have only to tell them I don't believe in them because if they knew themselves much they would very soon find a devil. But it is quite possible that they have very little evidence of there being any devil; for you know the devil never wastes his time. He comes up a street, and he sees a man engaged in business, hoarding, covetous, grasping. He has got a widow's house in his throat, he has just swallowed the last acre of a poor orphan's lands. "Oh," says the devil, "drive by, I shall not stop there; he does not need me; he will go to hell easily enough." He goes to the next house: there is a man there, a drunkard. spending his time in riotousness: he marches by, and says, "There's no need for me here; why should I trouble my own dear friends? Why should I meddle with those whom I am sure to have at last? There's no need to tease them." He finds a poor saint upon his knees, exercising but very little power in prayer. "Oh!" says the devil, "I shant have this creature at last; I'll howl at him now." There is a poor sinner just returning from his evil ways and crying, "I have sinned and done evil in thy sight; Lord, have mercy upon me " "Losing a subject," says Satan; "I'll have him; I'm not going to lose my subjects like this." So he worries him. The reason why you don't believe there is a devil, very likely is, that the devil very seldom comes to you because you are so safe that he does not

take any trouble to look after you, and you have not seen him, because you are too bad for him to care about, and he says, "Oh no, there's no need for me to waste time to tempt that man, it would be carrying coals to Newcastle to tempt him, for he is as bad as he can be, and therefore let him alone." But when a man lives near to God, or when a man's conscience begins to be aroused, then Satan cries, "To arms! to arms! to arms!" For two good reasons: first, because he wants to worry him, and secondly, because he wants to destroy him. Well, we bless God that though the devil may direct his utmost scorn and craft and malice against the Christian, the Christian is safe behind the rock Christ Jesus, and may rest secure.

And now, in conclusion, suffer a word or two of comfort to the people of God, and a warning to those that know him not.

O children of God! death hath lost its sting, because the devil's power over it is destroyed. Then cease to fear dying. Thou knowest what death is: look him in the face, and tell him thou art not afraid of him. Ask grace from God, that by an intimate knowledge and a firm belief of thy Master's death, thou mayest be strengthened for that dread hour. And mark me, if thou so livest, thou mayest be able to think of death with pleasure, and to welcome it when it comes with intense delight. It is sweet to die: to lie upon the breast of Christ, and have one's soul kissed out of one's body by the lips of divine affection. And you that have lost friends, or that may be bereaved, sorrow not as those that are without hope; for remember the power of the devil is taken away. What a sweet thought the death of Christ brings us concerning those who are departed! They are gone, my brethren; but do you know how far they have gone? The distance between the glorified spirits in heaven and the militant saints on earth seems great; but it is not so. We are not far from home.

"One gentle sigh the spirit breaks,
We scarce can say 'tis gone,
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its station near the throne."

We measure distance by time. We are apt to say that a certain place is so

many hours from us. If it is a hundred miles off and there is no railroad we think it a long way; if there is a railway, we think we can be there in no time, But how near must we say heaven is? For it is just one sigh and we get there. Why, my brethren, our departed friends are only in the upper room, as it were, of the same house; they have not gone far off; they are up stairs, and we are down below. Yea, more as the poet says,

"Ten thousands to their endless home,
This solemn moment fly,
And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die."

And then he describes them.

"Part of the host have crossed the flood."

There they are, on the other side the banks. Here is another part, deep in the stream. Here are we on the margin, just about to step down. They are all one army; there is not one gap, right down from Abel to the one that is now departing; and they never shall be but one, till the pearly gates are shut for ever, and they are all secure.

"E'en now by faith we clasp our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon the eternal shore."

And now I close by saying this word to the sinner O thou that knowest not God, thou that believest not in Christ, death is to thee a horrible thing. I need not tell thee that; for thine own conscience tells it to thee. Why, man, thou mayest laugh sometimes at religion; but in thine own solitary moments it is no laughing thing. The greatest brags in the world are always the greatest cowards. If I hear a man saying, "Oh, I am not afraid of dying, I don't care about your religion," he does not deceive me; I know all about that. He says that to cover up his fears, when he is alone of a night. You should see how white his cheek is if a leaf falls against the window When there is lightning in the air you should look at him. "Oh

that flash" he says. Or if he is a strong man perhaps he does not say a word, but he feels in such horror all the time the storm is on. Not like the Christian man: not like the man who has courage. Why, I love the lightnings; God's thunder is my delight. I never feel so well as when there is a tremendous thunder and lightning storm. Then I feel as if I could mount up, and my whole heart sings. I love then to sing -

"This awful God is mine
My Father and my love,
He shall send down his heavenly powers
To carry me above.

Yes, you are afraid of dying I know; and what I shall say to you is this _ You have good need to be afraid of dying, and you have good need to be afraid of dying now. Because you have escaped many times you think you shall never die. Suppose we should take a man and tie him to that pillar, and a good marksman should take bow and arrows and shoot at him. Well, one arrow might glance and strike some one that sits at the right, and another might glance and strike some one that is to the left; one might go above his head, and another beneath his feet, but you cannot suppose that man would laugh and mock, when the arrows were flying about his ears, and if he was quite certain that it only wanted the marksman to take an aim at him, and he would be shot, then, my friends, you cannot conceive how he would tell you what terror he would experience. But certainly there would be no laughter. He would not say, "Oh! I shall not die, see, the man has been shooting all these others." No, the risk of dying would be enough to steady him and the thought that that marksman had an eye so true and a hand so steady that he had but to pull the string, and the arrow would certainly reach his heart, would be enough at least to sober him, and keep him always watchful; for in a moment, when he thought not that arrow might fly. Now, that is you today, God puts the arrow to the string: your neighbor is dead on the right, and another on the left; the arrow will come to you soon, it might have come before, if God willed it. Oh, mock not at death, and despise not eternity, but begin to think whether you are prepared for death, lest death should come and find you wanting. And remember, death will make no delays for you. You have postponed the time of thought: death will not be

postponed to suit you, but when you die, there will be no hour allowed for you in which then to turn to God. Death comes with its first blow; damnation comes afterwards, without the hope of reprieve. "He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Thus do we preach the Gospel of God unto you as God would have us. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Go ye and teach all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Behold, I tell you, faith in Jesus is the soul's only escape; profession of that in immersion is God's own way of professing faith before men. The Lord help you to obey him in the two great gospel commandments, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Dilemma And Deliverance

Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. - Psalm 9:10

There are many men who are exceedingly well read in heathen mythologies; who can tell you the history of any one of the heathen gods, but who at the same time know very little of the history of Jehovah, and cannot rehearse his mighty acts. In our schools to this day there are books put into the hands of our youth that are by no means fit for them to read - books which contain all kinds of filth, and if not always filth, yet all kinds of fables and vanities, which are simply put into our hands when we are lads, because they happen to be written in Latin and Greek; and, therefore, I suppose it is imagined that we shall all the better recollect the wickedness that is contained in them, by having the trouble of translating them into our own mother tongue. I would that instead of this, all our youth were made acquainted with the history of the Lord our God. Would that we could give them for classics some books which record what he hath done, the victories of his glorious arm, and how he hath put to

nought the gods of the heathen and cast them down even into the depths. At any rate, the Christian will always find it to be useful to have at hand some history of what God did in the days of yore. The more you know of God's attributes, the more you understand of his acts; the more you treasure up of his promises, and the more you fully dive into the depths of his covenant, the more difficult will it become for Satan to tempt you to despondency and despair. Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace. Meditate on his law both day and night, and thou shalt be like a tree planted by the rivers of water; thy leaf shall not wither; thou shalt bring forth fruit in thy season, and whatsoever thou doest shall prosper. Ignorance of God is ignorance of bliss; but knowledge of God is a divine armor, by which we are able to ward off all the blows of the enemy. Know thyself, O man, and that will make thee miserable; know thy God, O Christian, and that will make thee rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now, this morning, in addressing you, I shall divide my text into three parts. First, I shall note a certain fiery dart of Satan; secondly, I shall point out to you heaven's divine buckler, as hinted at in the text - "Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee;" and then, in the third place, I shall notice man's precious privilege of seeking God, and so of arming himself against Satan.

I. First, then, I am to dwell for a little time upon A CERTAIN FIERY DART OF SATAN WHICH IS CONSTANTLY SHOT AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

There are many temptations, there are many suggestions and insinuations; and all these are arrows from the bow of the Evil one. But there is one temptation which exceeds all others, there is one suggestion which is more Satanic, more skilfully used in effecting the purposes of Satan than any other. That suggestion is the one referred to in these words of the Psalmist - viz., this, the suggestion to believe that God has forsaken us. If all the other arrows of hell could be put into one quiver, there would not be so much deadly poison in the whole as in this one. When Satan has used up every other weapon, he always betakes himself to this last, most sharp, most deadly instrument. He goes to the child of

God and pours into his ear this dark insinuation, "Thy God has forsaken thee quite; thy Lord will be gracious no more."

Now, I shall remark with regard to this arrow, that it is one that is very often shot from Satan's bow. Some of us have been wounded by it scores of times in our life. Whenever we have fallen into any sin, have been overtaken by some sudden wind of temptation, and have staggered and almost fallen, Conscience pricks us and tells us we have done wrong. Our heart, like David's heart, smites us. We fall upon our knees, and acknowledge our fault and confess our sin. Then it is that Satan lets fly this arrow, which comes whizzing up from hell and enters into the soul, and while we are making the confession, the dark thought crosses our soul, "God has forsaken thee; he will never accept thee again. Thou hast sinned so foully that he will blot thy name out of the covenant; thou hast stumbled so fearfully that thy feet shall never stand upon the rock again - thou hast stumbled to thy fall; thou hast fallen to thy fell destruction." Have you not known this, Christian? When for a season you have been led to backslide, when you have lost your first love and have become degenerate, when you have put out your hand to touch the unlawful thing through some sudden surprisal - has not this been thrown in your teeth?" Ah, wretch that you are, God will never forgive that sin: you have been so ungrateful, such a hypocrite, such a liar against the Lord your God, that now - now he will cast you away, throw you upon a dunghill like salt that has lost its savor, and as fit for nothing." Ah, friends, you and I know what this means. And I dare say David did too. He had to feel all the power of this poisoned arrow after his great sin, when he went up to his chamber and wept and bemoaned himself, and there cried out in agony, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." A select opportunity this for shooting this arrow. Just where the sin has been Satan marks, and then he sends a suggestion. Wherever there is a wound of sin, it is wonderful how this arrow will work, and what a burning it will give to our blood till every vein becomes a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on, and all our flesh is made to tingle with this evil thought, "I have sinned, and the reprove of man has reprov'd me to my face and cast me from his presence, and he will be gracious to me no more." Another season when Satan usually shoots this arrow is the time of great trouble. There is a broad river across your path, and you are

bidden to ford it. You go in and you find the water is up to your knees. Anon, as you wade on it becomes breast-high. But you comfort yourself with this thought, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." Cheered with this you go on; but you sink, and the water becomes deeper still. At last, it is almost gurgling in your throat! it is flowing over your very shoulders. Just then, when in the very deepest part of the stream, Satan appears on the bank, takes out his bow and shoots this fiery arrow. - "Thy God has forsaken thee." "Oh," saith the Christian, "I feared not as long as I heard the voice saying, 'Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.' But now," saith he, "my God hath forsaken me." And now the Christian begins to sink indeed, and if it be not for the mighty power of God, it will not be Satan's fault if he doth not drown thee in the midst of the flood. What a malicious devil is this, that must always send us a fresh trouble, and most grievous of all, send it when we are in our very worst distress. He is a coward, indeed; he always hits a man when he is down. When I am up and on my feet I am more than a match for Satan, but when I begin to stumble through great trouble, out comes the dragon from the pit, and begins to roar at me, and to draw his sword, and hurl his fiery darts; for now, says he, "man's extremity shall be my opportunity; now that his heart and flesh fails - now will I make a full end of him." You also know, some of you, what that means. You could bear the trouble well, but you could not bear the dreary thought that God has forsaken you in your trouble. Another season, too, in which Satan shoots this fiery dart is before some great labor. I am often vexed and perplexed with this dark thought when I have to appear before you on the Sabbath day; I frequently come here with that ringing in my ears: - "God will forsake thee; thou shalt fall before the congregation; the word shall not go home with power; thou shalt labor in vain, and spend thy strength for nought." Thousands of times have I preached the gospel, yet to this day does that same arrow come flying up, and still does it vex and perplex my heart. If there be anything greater for a Christian to do, than he has been accustomed to do in former times, it is generally then that Satan levels this battle, when there is a deep soil to be ploughed, and the plough it heavy, and the oxen are faint, and the ploughman thinks he shall not accomplish his weary work, then it is that up comes this dark thought - "The Lord hath forsaken thee, and where art thou now?" The like doth he

do at another season, namely, times of unanswered prayer. You have been up to God's throne asking for a blessing; you have been five, six, twelve times, and you have had no answer; you go again; and you are just wrestling with God and the blessing seems as if it must come; but no, it does not come, and you bring your burden away on your back once more. You have been wont to cast all your cares upon God, and come away rejoicing; but now you find that prayer hath no return of blessing; it seems to be a waste of words. Then up comes Satan, just at the moment, and he says, "God hath forsaken you, if you were a child of God, he would answer your prayer; he would not leave you crying so long in the dark as this, if you were one of his beloved children. Why, he hears his people! Look at Elijah how he heard him. Remember Jacob; how he wrestled with the angel and prevailed. Oh," says Satan, "God has forsaken thee." Ah, Satan we have heard that aforetime. "Yes, but," says he, "his mercy is clean gone for ever. The heavens have become like brass, the Shekinah is gone up from between the wings of the cherubim, his house is left empty and void; Ichabod is written on thy closet; thou shalt never have an answer again. Go speak to the winds, spread your griefs to the pitiless sea, for God's ear is shut, and he will never move his arm to work deliverance for thee."

Now, am I not justified in saying that this arrow is very often shot. I may not have mentioned all the instances in which it has been shot at you, but I am certain that if you are a child of God, there have been times and seasons when this desperate insinuation has come up from hell - "God hath forgotten thee: he hath cast thee off: thou art left to thyself, and thou shalt perish." At any rate, if you have never said it, remember it is written in God's word that Zion saith "My God hath forgotten me;" and call to your recollection that gracious answer "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." The arrow; then, is often shot.

Then let me remark with regard to this arrow, again that it is most grievous. Other troubles only wound the Christian's' flesh; they do but pierce with skin deep wounds; but this is a shot that goes right deep into his heart. When Satan is shooting other arrows we can laugh at him, for they rattle against our buckler; but this one finds out the joints of the

harness, and it goes right through from one side to the other, till we are compelled to say, "As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach one; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" This is hitting the target in the very center. This is skillful riflery, indeed, when Satan is able to send this arrow right into the eve of the soul. Other troubles are like surface storms. They toss the ocean into an apparent storm, and there are big waves on the top, but all is still and calm down in the caverns beneath. But this dark thought makes the ocean boil to its very bottom; it stirs the soul up until there is not one place in which there is rest; neither a cavern of the heart, nor a corner of the conscience in which the spirit has peace. This arrow, I say, is one of hell's masterpieces, there is more craft and skill in it than aught else Satan has ever done. It is the worst of his arrows because it grieves the Spirit exceedingly. And there is another thought I must throw out. Not only is this arrow grievous, but it is very dangerous. For if, my brethren, we believe this accusation against God, it is not long before we begin to sin. Let the Christian know that his God is with him, and temptation will have little power, but when God has forsaken us, as we think that he has, ah! then, when Satan offers us some back door by which to escape from our troubles, how very easily shall we be tempted to adopt his expedients. A merchant who knows that his God is with him, may see trade going from him, and his house verging to bankruptcy, but he will not do a dishonest thing. But let him imagine that God is against him, then Satan will say, "See, merchant, one of God's children, you have been deceived, he will never help you;" and then, he is tempted to do something which in his conscience he knows to be wrong. "God will not deliver me," he says; "then I will try to deliver myself." There is great danger in this. Take heed to yourself then that ye "take unto you the whole armor of God," and "above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." I will make but one other observation upon this fiery dart; and that is, it bears the full impression of its Satanic maker. None but the devil could be the author of such a thought as this - that God has forsaken his people. Look it in the face, Christian, and see if it has not got the horns of the Evil One stamped on its brow? Does not the cloven foot peep out? Look at it; why, it is the devil's own child. Why, bethink thee, Christian, this Evil One is making thee doubt thy own Father. He is bidding thee distrust a faithful God. He is calling in question the promise which says, "I will

never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He is making you accuse God of perjury. As if he could break his oath, and run back from the covenant which he has made with Christ on thy behalf. Why, none but the devil could have the impudence to suggest such a thought as that. Cast it from thee, believer; fling it away to the very depths of the sea; it is unworthy of thee to harbor it for a moment. Thy God forsake thee? Impossible! He is too good. Thy God forsake thee? It is utterly impossible! He is too true. Could he forsake his children, he would have forsaken his integrity; he would have ceased to be God, when he ceased to succor and help his own. Rest thou, then, in that, and ward the fiery dart off; for hellish, indeed, it is, and the name of its maker is stamped upon it legibly.

II. In the second place, let me notice THE DIVINE BUCKLER WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR HIS CHURCH AGAINST THIS FIERY DART. Here it is; it is the fact that God never has forsaken them that fear him, and that, moreover, he never will do so.

Ah, my brethren, if we could but once believe the doctrine that the child of God might fall from grace and perish everlastingly, we might, indeed, shut up our Bible in despair. To what purpose would my preaching be - the preaching of a rickety gospel like that? To what purpose your faith - a faith in a God that cannot and would not carry on to the end? To what use the blood of Christ, if it were shed in vain, and did not bring the blood-bought ones securely home? To what purpose the Spirit, if he were not omnipotent enough to overcome our wandering, to arrest our sins and make us perfect, and present us faultless before the throng of God at last? That doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is, I believe, as thoroughly bound up with the standing or falling of the gospel, as is the article of justification by faith. Give that up and I see no gospel left. I see no beauty in religion that is worthy of my acceptance, or that deserves my admiration. An unchanging God, an everlasting covenant, a sure mercy, these are the things that my soul delights in, and I know your hearts love to feed upon them. But take these away, and what have we? We have a foundation of wood, hay, straw, and stubble. We have nothing solid. We have a fort of earth-works, a mud hovel through which the thief may break and steal away our treasures. Nay, this foundation stands sure - "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" and he doth so know them that he

will certainly bring them every one to his right hand at last in glory everlasting.

But to return to our text, and to offer you some few words of comfort which may tend to quench the fiery dart of the wicked one. The psalmist says, "Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." I call up before you now, one by one as witnesses, the saints of God in the olden time. You are in great trouble to-day and Satan suggests that now God has forsaken you. Come hither, Jacob! we read thy testimony. Wast thou a man of trouble? "Ah," saith he, "few and evil were my days." Evil, man? - what meanest thou? "I mean that they were full of sorrow, full of perplexity, full of fear and trouble." And what is thy testimony, Jacob? We have heard that thou didst seek God in prayer. Didst thou not wrestle with the angel at the brook Jabbok, and prevail? Speak, man, and tell these doubting hearts, did God forsake thee? Methinks I see that hoary patriarch lifting up his hands, and he cries, "I trembled to meet my brother, Esau. I stayed at the brook Jabbok, and I said, 'Lord, give deliverance from him whom I think bloodthirsty.' I crossed the brook full of fear and trembling, but tell it, O let it be known for the comfort of others in like trouble with me, I met my brother Esau, and he fell upon my neck and kissed me. He would not take the tribute which I offered him. He became my friend and we loved each other. God had turned his heart, and he took no vengeance upon me. But," continued the patriarch, "I was always a doubting man, I was always a careful man; I had so much cunning and craft about me that I could not trust anything in the hands of my Covenant God, and this always brought me into care and trouble. but," says he, "I bear my witness that I never had need to have troubled myself at all; if I had but left it all in the hand of God, all would have been well. I remember," saith he, "and I tell it to you now, when my son Joseph was sold into Egypt what sorrow I had in my heart, for I said, 'My grey hairs shall be brought with sorrow to the grave, for Joseph my son is, without a doubt, rent in pieces.' And then it happened on a day that Simeon was taken away from me; and there came a message out of Egypt that Benjamin must go down. And I remember well what I said 'Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now they will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me.' But they were not against me," says the old man, "they were for me, every one of them. Joseph, that I said was not, was; he

was sitting upon the throne; he had prepared for me a habitation in Egypt. As for Simeon, he was a hostage there; and that was not against me, for perhaps I should scarce have sent my sons down at all if it had not been for the hope that they would bring Simeon back. And now," says Jacob, "I retract every word I have said against the Lord my God, and I stand before you to bear my testimony that not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised. My shoes were iron and brass, and as my days so was my strength."

I hear a mourner say, "Mine is not a case of trouble and sorrow; mine is a case of duty. I have a duty to perform that is too heavy for me, and I am afraid I shall never accomplish it." Here comes another of the ancients to bear his witness. It is Moses; let him speak. "I thought," said he, "when God called me from keeping the flocks of my father in the desert by the mount of Horeb, I thought I never could be strong enough for the office to which I had been ordained. I said unto my Lord, who am I, that I should go unto Pharoah? And I said unto him again, Lord, thou knowest I am not eloquent; the children of Israel will not believe me, for I shall not have skill enough in oratory to persuade them to follow my words. But the Lord said, Certainly I will be with thee. And lo," says Moses, "as my days so was my strength. I had strength enough to stand before Pharoah, strength enough to shake the whole land of Egypt, and strength enough to divide the Red Sea and drown all Pharoah's hosts. I had strength enough to endure with an evil generation forty years in the wilderness, strength enough to take their idol god and grind it in pieces, and make them drink the water upon which I had strewn the atoms. I had strength enough to lead them on from day to day, to command the rock and it gushed with water, to speak to the heavens and they sent down the manna. And when I went up at last to my grave, and looked from the top of Nebo, I, who had once been fearful, saw with transport the land to which the Lord's people had been brought, and my soul was taken away with a kiss, and I departed in peace." Hear that, then, O laboring one; the God that helped Moses will help thee. Moses sought God, and God did not forsake him; nor will he forsake thee.

But saith another, "I am exposed to slander, men speak evil of me; no lie is too bad for them to utter against me." Ah, my friend, permit me to refer

you to another ancient saint; it is the saint who wrote this psalm - David. Let him stand up and speak. "Ah!" saith he "from the first day when I went forth to fight Goliath even to the end of my life I was the subject of shame and slander. Doeg the Edomite, Saul, and multitudes of men, the men of Belial, like Shimei, all accused me. I was the song of the drunkard; I was the harlot's jest. Nothing was too bad for David. All mine enemies went round about the city like dogs, that bay all night and rest not even at morning." And what didst thou do, David? "Oh," said he, "I said, 'My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.'" And didst thou prove that God was thy deliverer? "Ah, yes - yes," saith he, "I have pursued my enemies, and I have overtaken them.' 'Thou hast smitten all my enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.'" And so shall you find it, my hearers, God has not forsaken you, even though you be slandered. Remember it is the lot of God's greatest servants to bear the worst character amongst worldlings. Whose character is safe in these days? What man among us may not be accused of any indecency? Who among us can hope to stand immaculate when liars are so rife, and charges are so abundant? Be content and bear the slander. Remember, the higher the tower the longer will be the shadow; and often, the higher a man's character the fouler will be the slander that comes out against him. But remember, "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

If ye need any other witnesses I could bring them. Let Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego come forth. Ye Hebrew children, ye stood in the midst of coals when the furnace was white with heat; did God forsake you? "No," they say, "our hair was not singed, nor had the smell of fire passed on our garments." Speak, O Daniel! Thou didst stand a night in the midst of the furious lions, who had been starved for days that they might devour thee in their hunger; what sayest thou? "My God," saith he, "hath sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths; my God, whom I serve, hath not forsaken me." But time would fail me if I should tell you of those who have "shut the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, obtained promises, wrought victories, put to flight the armies of aliens; "yet we might enlarge for a moment upon the history of great martyrs.

Has God left one of them? They have suffered at the stake; their limbs have been stretched on the rack; every nerve has been strained; every bone has been dislocated. They have had their eyes plucked out; they have had their flesh rent away piecemeal to the bone with hot pincers, they have been dragged at the heels of horses, burnt on gridirons, hung up before slow fires. They have seen their infants cut in pieces before their eyes, their wives and daughters ravished, their houses burned, their country laid desolate. But has God forsaken them? Has the world triumphed? Has God left his children? "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Another question is suggested, however, for your comfort, Christian; I have brought many witnesses to prove that Christ does not forsake his children; let me ask you to step into the witness box. You say that God has forsaken you - I will put a question or two to you. When your wife lay sick, and there were three little ones in the house and she approached to death, and you cried in agony to God and said, "God, thou hast forsaken me. My business fails me, and now my wife is to be taken from me! what shall I do with these little ones?" Answer this question; did God forsake you then? "Nay," you say, "my wife still lives, she was restored to me." But when one of your children lay a-dying and the others were seized with fever, you then said, "My wife again is sick; what shall I do with this house of sickness? Now, God has forsaken me. I shall never bear this trial." Did you bear it? "Oh, yes," say you, "I passed through it and I can say, 'Blessed be the name of God, the affliction was sanctified to me.'" Do you recollect the heavy loss you sustained in business? Not one but many; loss came after loss; every speculation in which you had been engaged broke down under you. You had many bills coming in, and you said, "Now, I shall not be able to meet them; and as a Christian man you shuddered to think of bankruptcy. You even went up with your wife into your chamber - and you two went on your knees and poured out your case before God, and asked him to help you. Did God leave you? "No," say you, "as by a miracle I was delivered I cannot tell how it was, but I came

out of it clean." And yet again, another question to another one of you. Do you remember when you were in sin, before you had received pardon, your guilt was heavy upon you, and you sought God and cried to him. Did God deny you? "No," you say, "blessed be his name, I can remember the happy day when he said 'your sins which are many are all forgiven.'" Well, you have often sinned since then. But let me ask you, when you have made confession of sin, have you not been restored? has he not lifted up upon you once more the light of his countenance? "Well," you say, "I must say he has." Then, I ask you in the name of everything that is true and holy, nay, in the name of everything that is reasonable, how dare you say that God has forsaken you now? Retract the word! Slay the thought! It cannot, must not be -

"Each sweet Ebenezer you have in review,
Confirms his good pleasure to help you quite through."

He would not have done this much for you, if he meant to leave you. Thus, it cannot be, that he who has been with you in six troubles will leave you in the seventh. He has not brought you through so many fires to let you be burned at last. Nay, take heart -

"His grace shall to the end
Stronger and brighter shine,
Not present things, nor things to come,
Shall quench the spark divine "

within thy heart; much less quench the fire even which still burns in his infinite breast. God hath not forsaken thee as yet.

Still further to drive the thought away, I will very rapidly run through a few precious things. Were you not cold on your way hither this morning. Did you not see the snow upon the ground, and do you dare to doubt God? He hath said, "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat shall never cease;" and he keeps his word. And yet you think, though he keeps that word he will forget the word that he has spoken concerning you. You come here in trouble this morning. Do you not see that God is true? that your very trouble is a proof that he has not forsaken you? If you never had any trouble, then God would have broken his promise, for did not Jesus Christ leave you it

as a legacy? "In the world ye shall have tribulation." There, you have got it. That proves that God is true. Now, you have a part of the legacy, you shall have the rest: - "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." So that the very weather without, and your troubles within, ought to forbid your doubting the faithfulness of your God. But look here. Has not God made you a promise, saying, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?" Would you like to be called a promise-breaker? Shall I point my finger at you, and say, "There's a man whose word is not to be relied on?" Will you point that same finger to God, and say, "His word is not to be taken, he is not to be trusted?" What! do you think your God is dishonorable? that he will give a promise and break it? not keep it? forget it? fail to remember it? What! God, the God of glory, prove dishonorable? It must not, cannot be. Recollect, again, he has given you his oath. Can you think that he will break that? Because he could swear by no greater he sware by himself. Shall God be perjured? You would not think that of your meanest fellow-creature; will you think that of your greatest and best friend? Again, would you leave your child? would you forsake it utterly? You might hide your face from it for awhile to do it good, because it had been disobedient. but will you chasten your child always? never kiss it, never caress it, never call it your loved one? It is not in a father's heart to be always angry with his child. And will God forsake you? Will he cast you out into this wide, desolate world and let you die and become the prey of his great enemy? Oh, think not so hardly of your Father. If any man should come to me, and tell me that my father had said such-and-such things about me unkind and disrespectful, I would show him the door, and say, "Get thee gone! my father would never do that: he loves me too much to do that." And when the devil comes and says, "Your Father has forgotten you," tell him to begone - you know too much of your Father ever to believe that. Say to him, "Get thee gone! it cannot be; get thee gone, Satan! Tell it to thy own companions, but tell it not to the heir of heaven." Then again, Christian, Thou believest that God has loved thee from before the foundation of the world; and yet after having loved you so long he has left off loving you now. Strange thing! Love without a beginning, yet such love to have an end. Singular thing! Eternal at one end and temporal at the other. Strange supposition! Put it away from thee. Besides, again, can Christ forget thee! Art thou not a member of his body, of his flesh and his

bones? Has the Head forgotten a finger? Has he, who did hang upon the tree and who wrote thy name in wounds upon his hand and on his side, has he forgotten? What! Jesus thy own brother, thy husband, thy head, thy all, what! he forget? he forsake? Down blaspheming thought! Back to the hell from which thou dost spring! Down! down! down! My soul lifts up her head triumphantly, and cries, "Thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee," nor wilt thou do so, world without end.

III. I now come to the third and last point, and on this I shall dwell very briefly - MAN'S PRECIOUS PRIVILEGE TO SEEK GOD IN HIS DAY OF TROUBLE.

To what use, to what purpose is the buckler if we wear it not? Of what service the shield if it be permitted to rust in the house? We must take hold upon the promise of a faithful God; we must seize the comfort which he offers; but how is it to be done? Why, in prayer. Seek ye the Lord ye tried and troubled ones, and ye shall soon find your troubles stayed, your trials sweetly alleviated. We go rambling round, and round, and round, to find peace. Would that we could stay at home in our closets with our God; we should find peace much better there. We go to our neighbors, we call our friends, we tell them our woes and ask their sympathy

"Were half the breath that's vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
Hear what the Lord hath done for me."

Go Christian brother in your troubles and seek God. It is not possible that you can perish praying. If you could perish singing, you could not perish praying on your knees. Think ye that while you can plead a Father's love, and cry with the Spirit of adoption to him, that you can be forsaken? If you forsake the throne, then may you indeed have a fear that you are forsaken. But when the Spirit draws you to the mercy-seat, such a fear must vanish, for if thou art at the mercy-seat, God is there too. God loves the mercy-seat better than thou dost. He dwelleth between the cherubim; thou only goest there sometimes. But that is his abiding-place, his mercy-seat, where he always sits. Go thou, then, I tell thee, and thou canst not be destroyed; thy ruin is impossible, whilst thou dost cry, "Let us pray!"

And have I here this morning some that are oppressed with guilt? Dear hearer, however great your sins may have been, if thou dost seek God, thou canst not perish, for "thou Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." Methinks, I hear some one say, "Oh, that just suits me. I fear I have no faith; I am afraid I don't repent as I ought. But I know I seek Christ; I am sure I am seeking him." Ah! so then this promise is thine. Take it home with thee. Suck it; get at its juice. Here, indeed, is a cluster full of new wine for thee. Take it home with thee: - "Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." Seek, and ye shall find, knock, and the door shall surely be opened to you.

May God now grant his blessing, for Jesu's sake. Amen.

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Distinguishing Grace

For who maketh thee to differ from another? - 1 Corinthians 4:7

Or, as it is in the Greek: "For who distinguisheth thee?" "Who giveth thee distinguishing and discriminating mercy?" "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" Pride is the inherent sin of man, and yet it is of all sins the most foolish. A thousand arguments might be used to show its absurdity; but none of these would be sufficient to quench its vitality. Alive it is in the heart, and there it will be, till we die to this world and rise again without spot or blemish. Yet many are the arrows which may be shot at the heart of our boasting. Take for instance the argument of creation; how strongly that thrusts at our pride. There is a vessel upon the potter's wheel, would it not be preposterous for that clay which the potter fashioneth to boast itself and say, "How well am I fashioned! how beautifully am I proportioned; I deserve much praise!" Why, O lump of clay, whatever thou art, the potter made thee; however elegant thy proportions, however matchless thy symmetry, the glory is due to him

that made thee, not to thyself; thou art but the work of his hands. And so let us speak unto ourselves. We are the thing formed; shall we say of ourselves that we deserve honor because God hath formed us excellently and wondrously? No, the fact of our creation should extinguish the sparks of our pride. What are we, after all, but as grasshoppers in his sight, as drops of the bucket, as lumps of animated dust; we are but the infants of a day when we are most old; we are but the insects of an hour when we are most strong; we are but the wild ass's colt when we are most wise, we are but as folly and vanity when we are most excellent - let that tend to humble us. But surely if these prevail not to clip the pinions of our high soaring pride, the Christian man may at least bind its wings with arguments derived from the distinguishing love and peculiar mercies of God. "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" - This question should be like a dagger put to the throat of our boasting; - "and what trust thou that thou didst not receive;" - it would be like a sword thrust through the heart of our self-exaltation and pride.

We shall now for a moment or two endeavor to put down our pride by observing wherein God hath distinguished us and made us to differ, and then by noticing that all this cometh of him, and should be a reason for humiliation, and not for boasting.

1. Many of us differ from others in God's providential dealings towards us. Let us think a moment how many there are of God's precious and dearly beloved children, who at this moment are in the depths of poverty. They are not walking about in sheepskins and goatskins, persecuted, afflicted, and tormented; but still they are hungry, and no man gives them to eat; they are thirsty, and no man furnishes them with drink, their fires are wasted in poverty and their years in distress. Some there are of God's children who were once in affluence but have been suddenly plunged into the lowest depths of penury; they knew what it was to be respected among the sons of men, but now they are among the dogs of the flock, and no man careth for them. There are some of us who are here present who have all that heart can wish: God hath given us food and raiment, the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage. Let us gratefully ask - "Who maketh us to differ?" "Let us recollect that all we have is the gift of his providence. Not to you, O my

hands, do I sacrifice because ye have toiled for bread; not to you, O ye brains, will I offer incense, because ye have thought for my daily livelihood; not to you, O my lips, will I offer my adulation, because ye have been the means of furnishing me with words. No; unto God, who giveth power to get, and to have, and to enjoy; unto him be all the praise for what he hath done for us. Never let our songs cease, for his goodness is an ever flowing stream. Perhaps none of us can ever know, until the great day shall reveal it, how much some of God's servants are tried. To this day they have "perils by land, and perils by sea, and perils by false brethren;" to this hour they are pinched by want, they are deserted by friends, they know what despondency means, and all the ill which dejection and disappointment can bring to them; they have dived into the lowest depths of the sea of trouble, and have walked for many a league over the hot sand of the desert of affliction. And if God hath delivered us from these things, and hath made our path more pleasant, and hath led us beside the still waters, and into the green pastures, - if he hath distinguished us by the common gifts of his providence above many others of his children who are far better and far more holy than we, what shall we say? It is owing only to his grace towards us, and we will not exalt ourselves above our fellows, we will not be high-minded, but condescend to men of low estate; we will not lift our necks with the proud, but we will bow down our brows with the humble; every man shall be called our brother, not merely those who are arrayed in goodly raiment, but those who are clothed in the habiliments of toil, they shall be confessed to be our kindred, sprung from the same stock; for what have we that we have not received, and what maketh us to differ from another? I wish that some of the stiff-necked gentry of our churches would at times recollect this. Their condition is smooth as oil, and as soft as young down, but their hearts are as high as poplars, and their manners as stiff as hedge-stakes. There have been many who would do well if they would learn that they have nothing beyond what God has given them. And the more God has given them, the more they are in debt. Why should a man boast because he is deeper in debt than another? Do the debtors in the Queen's Bench say to one another, "You are only a hundred pounds in debt, and I a thousand, therefore I am a greater gentleman than you?" I think not. But, nevertheless, if they did so, they would be as wise as men who boast beyond their fellow-creatures because they happen to have

more of rank, wealth, honor, and position, in this world. "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

But the best way for you to feel this part of the discourse is, to go tomorrow into the hospital, and walk along the wards, and see how poor men's bodies suffer, and then go into the operating-room and see what flesh and blood may have to endure. Then when you have done, go round the neighborhood to see the sick who have lain for ten, or twelve, or fifteen years upon the same bed, and after that go and visit some of God's poverty-stricken children who just exist in this world, and it is but a bare existence, maintained on bread and butter and a little tea, and but too little of even such things as those. Go and see their poor, miserable, unfurnished rooms, their cellars and their attics, and that will be a better sermon to you than anything I can utter. You will come home and say, "Oh my God, I bless thee for thy kindness towards me. These temporal mercies which I once thought so little of, I must heartily blest thee for. I must thank thee for what thou hast given to me, and I will ascribe it all to thy love, for thou makest me to differ. I have nothing that I have not received."

2. But this is not the most important point for us to observe. We are now going to look at, not matters of providence, but the things of God's grace. Here it is that we who are now assembled as a church have most reason to bless God, and to say, "Who maketh us to differ from others?" Take, my dear friends, in your mind's eye the cases of the careless, the hardened, and the thoughtless, of even this present congregation. Side-by-side with you, my brother, there may sit a man, a woman, who is dead in trespasses and sins. To such the music of the gospel is like singing to a dead ear, and the dropping of the word is as dew upon a rock. There are many in this congregation whose position in society, and whose moral character are extremely excellent, and yet before God their state is awful. They attend the house of God as regularly as we do. They sing as we sing, sit as we sit, and come and go as we do, and yet are they without God and without hope in the world - strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens from the covenant of promise. Yet what maketh us to differ? Why is it that I this day am not sitting down a callous hearer, hardened

under the gospel? Why am I not at this very hour hearing the Word with my outward ear but rejecting it in my inward heart? Why is it that I have not been suffered to reject the invitation of Christ to despise his grace - to go on, Sunday after Sunday, hearing the Word and yet being like the deaf adder to it. Oh, have I made myself to differ? God forbid that such a proud, blaspheming thought should defile our hearts. No, beloved;

"'Twas the same love which spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

The only reason, my brother, why thou art at this time an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, a partaker of sweet fellowship with Jesus, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, is because HE hath made thee to differ. Thou wast an heir of wrath, even as others, born in sin and shapen in iniquity. Therefore must thou give all the glory to his holy name, and cry - "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise." Even this one thought when fully masticated and digested might feed up our gratitude and make us humbly bow before the footstool of God's throne with joyful thanksgiving.

3. Will you please, however, to think of other cases? Who maketh thee to differ from others of this assembly who are more hardened than those to whom we have alluded? There are some men and women of whose salvation, if it were to be wrought by man, we must indeed utterly despair; for their hearts are harder than the most stubborn steel. The hammer of the Word makes no impression on such souls. The thunders of the law roll over their heads, but they can sleep in the midst of the tumult - the lightnings of Sinai flash against their hearts, but even those mighty flames seem as if they recoiled from the attack, Do you not know such? they are your own children, your husband, your wife, some of your own family, and as you look upon them, though you have longed, prayed, and wept, and sighed for their souls, you are compelled to say in your heart, "I half fear that I shall never see them converted." You say with sorrow, "Oh, if they are saved it will be a wonder of divine grace indeed. Surely they will never yield their souls to God. They seem as callous as if

their conscience were seared with a hot iron; they appear to have the stamp of condemnation upon their brow, as if they were marked and sealed, and had the earnest of the pit upon their hearts before they came there. Ay, but stop - "Who maketh thee to differ?" Why am I not at this day among the most hardened of men? How is it that my heart is melted so that I can weep at the recollection of the Redeemer's suffering? Why is it that my conscience is tender, and that I am led to self-examination by a searching sermon? How is it that I know how to pray and to groan before God on account of sin? What has brought the water from these eyes, but the selfsame power which brought the water from the rock? And what hath put life into my heart but the self-same Omnipotence which scattered manna in a hungry desert? Our hearts had still been like the wild beasts of the forest, if it had not been for Divine grace. Oh! I beseech you, my dear friend, every time you see a hardened sinner, just say within yourself, "There is the picture of what I should have been, what I must have been, if all-subduing, all-conquering love had not melted and sanctified my heart." Take these two cases then, and you have, heaven knows, reason enough to sing to the praise of sovereign grace.

4. But now another, the lowest class of sinners do not mingle with our congregations, but are to be seen in our back streets and lanes, and sometimes in our highways. How frightful is the sin of drunkenness, which degrades a man into a beast, which sinks him lower than the brutes themselves! How shameful is the iniquity of blasphemy, which without any object or any chance of profit brings a curse upon its own head! How awful are the ways of the lascivious wretch who ruins both body and soul at once, and not content with his own destruction ruins others with him. Cases that come under our observation in the daily newspapers, and that assail us in our daily observation and hearing are too vile to be told. How often is our blood chilled with the sound of an imprecation, and how frequently our heart is made to palpitate with the daring impieties of the blasphemous. Now let us stop; "Who maketh thee to differ?" Let us recollect that if we live very near to Christ, we should have lived quite as near to hell if it had not been for saving grace. Some of you here present are special witnesses of this grace, for you have yourself experienced redemption from these iniquities. Look back some four years with some of you and recollect how different were your surroundings then to what

they are now. Mayhap four years ago you were in the tap-room singing the song of the drunkard as readily as any; but a little while ago you cursed that Saviour whom now you love. Only a few months have flitted over your head since you ran with the multitude to do evil; but now, "Who maketh thee to differ?" "Who hath brought this miracle of grace. Who has led you to the stool of the penitent and the table of communion, who hath done it? Beloved, you are not slow to answer, for the verdict of your heart is undivided; you do not give the glory in part to man and in part to God. No, you cry loudly in your hearts, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, and ye have been washed in the Redeemer's blood, and sanctified with the Spirit. Ye have been made to differ, and ye will confess it; ye have been made to differ by distinguishing grace, and distinguishing grace alone. And what upholds the rest of us from being what these my reclaimed brethren once were, and what they will become again unless saving grace keeps them? What preserves the preacher this day from being a lecturer to Infidels, dishonoring the grace of God which now he glories to magnify? What prevents the deacon from being an assistant in the courts of Satan? What forbids those who open the doors at the house of our God, and who serve him on the Sabbath-day, from being door-keepers in the tents of the sons of Belial? Why nothing; they had been there unless grace had prevented them. Grace hath done it, and nothing else. When we pass a prostitute in the street, we say, "O poor creature! I can pity you. I have not a harsh word for you, for I had been as you are had not God preserved me." And when you see the reeling drunkard, be not too hasty to condemn, recollect you had been as a beast before God unless the Lord had kept you, and when ye hear the oath and shudder at it, imagine not that you are superior in yourself to the man who curses God, for perhaps you once cursed him too; and certainly you would have done had not the Holy Spirit sanctified you and implanted in you a hatred of that which the wicked so greedily follow. Have you seen a man hanged for murder? Have you seen another transported for the most infamous of crimes? If you hear of one who sins against society so foully that mankind excommunicate him, pause, and say, "Oh! but I should have gone as low as that, I should have been as black as he, unless restraining grace had

kept me back in my unregeneracy, and unless constraining grace had pushed me forward in the heavenly race, ever since I have known the will of Jesus."

5. And now we will pause again, and think over another evil which stares us in the face in connection with every church. There are most melancholy cases of backsliding in so large a church as this. We are compelled often to discover the character of men and women who once seemed fair for heaven, but who manifested that they never had the root of the matter in them. Oh! well did the poet say, -

"When any turn from Zion's way,
Alas! what numbers do!"

No trial is greater to the true minister than the apostacy of his flock. All the rage of men is quite unable to bring tears to our eyes, but this has done it. Alas! when those whom I have loved have turned aside from the way of God, when those who have sat with us at the same table, and have joined with us in church communion, have gone out from us, and have brought dishonor upon the Church, and upon the name of Christ, there has been woe in my inmost spirit. Sometimes there are cases as glaring as they are painful, and as vile as they are grievous. Some of those, who were once in the midst of God's sanctuary, have become drunkards and whoremongers - and God in heaven only knows what. They have sinned against everything that is seemly, as well as everything that is holy. At the recollection of these our eyes are filled with tears. "Oh that our head were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of our people." No mischief-makers are so powerful as deserters. None cause so much agony as those who have nestled beneath our wings, and then have flown away to feed with carrion vultures on the putrid carcasses of lust and sin.

But now let us pause. How is it that the minister has not forsaken his profession, and gone back like a dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire? How is it that the deacons of this church have not turned aside unto crooked ways, and denied the faith, and become worse than infidels? How is it that so many members

of this church have been kept so that the wicked one toucheth them not?
O beloved! I can say for myself, I am a continual miracle of divine grace.
If thou leave me, Lord, for a moment, I am utterly undone.

"Leave, O leave me not alone!
Still support and comfort me"

Let Abraham be deserted by his God, he equivocates and denies his wife.
Let Noah be deserted, he becomes a drunkard, and is naked to his shame.
Let Lot be left awhile, and, filled with wine, he revels in incestuous
embraces, and the fruit of his body becomes a testimony to his disgrace.
Nay, let David, the man after God's own heart, be left, and Uriah's wife
shall soon show the world that the man after God's own heart hath still an
evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Oh! well doth the
poet put it -

"Methinks I hear the Saviour say,
Wilt thou forsake me too?"

And now let our conscience answer: -

"Ah, Lord! with such a heart as mine,
Unless thou hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline
And prove like them at last."

Oh be not rashly self-confident, Christian man. Be as confident as you can
in your God, but be distrustful of yourself. Ye may yet become all that is
vile and vicious, unless sovereign grace prevent and keep you to the end.
But remember if you have been preserved, the crown of your keeping
belongs to the Shepherd of Israel, and ye know who that is. For he hath
said "I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I
will keep it night and day." "Ye know who is able to keep you from falling,
and to present you faultless before his presence with exceeding great joy."
Then give all glory to the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God your
Saviour, who has kept you thus.

6. Allow me one more contrast; once again let your gratitude go with me since you and I have joined the church how many who were once our companions have been damned whilst we have been saved, how many who were no worse than we were by nature have sunk into the lowest pit of hell. Conceive their unutterable torments; imagine their inconceivable woes; depict before the eye of your fancy their indescribable agonies. Descend in spirit for a moment to the gates of fire; enter into the abode of despair where justice reigns supreme on her iron throne; pass by the dreary cell of those who are everlastingly damned. Behold the twisting of that worm that never dies, and the bleeding hearts that are crushed within its coils. Look ye at that flame unquenchable and behold the souls that are sweltering there in torments to us unknown, and look if ye can look, but ye cannot look, for your eyes would be stricken with blindness if ye could see their torments. Your hair should be blanched withbut a moment of that horrible exhibition. Ah! while you stand then and think on that region of death, despair, and damnation, recollect that you would have been there if it had not been for sovereign grace. You have a harp prepared for you in heaven, a crown laid up for you when you have finished your course. You have a mansion, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Oh, why is it you are not already a fiend; who is it that has given you a good hope through grace that you shall never come into that place of torment. Oh! tell it the wide world over. Tell it in time and in eternity, free grace hath done it. Free grace hath done it from the first to the last. I was a brand in the fire, but he plucked me from the burning, quenched me in his blood, and now he declares I shall be with him for ever in heaven. But oh! pause brethren and think that some of your former pot-companions, some of the companions of your reverend and debaucheries are now in hell, and you are not there, and by the grace of God never will be there. Oh! why this, why this? Blessed be the Lord my God from this time forth and for ever. Praise ye his name. Grace has done it. Grace has done it all.

No, I never shall wear the chain, I ne'er shall be stretched upon that rack,
nor feel that fire -

"But I shall see his face,
And never, never sin,

But from the rivers of his grace
Drink endless pleasures in."

But I most confidently proclaim that the reason why I shall escape and shall be glorified, is not to be found in me, but in him. He hath made me to differ. I have nothing but what I have received.

Now what shall we say to these things. If God has made you to differ, the first prayer we should now utter should be, "Lord, humble us. Take away pride out of us. O God forgive us, that such beasts as we are should ever be proud." We might have been with our father the devil at this very hour, if it had not been for Divine love. And if we are now in the house of our Father which is in heaven shall we be proud? Avaunt thou monster! Go and dwell with the Pharisee. Pride agreeth well enough with the man who has in his own esteem been always virtuous. Go thou away and live with him who has had good works from the first day until now; but away from me.

"I the chief of sinners am,"

and saved by sovereign grace shall I be proud. It is not fit that thou shouldest live in my heart, thou monster! Begone! Begone! Find a fitter habitation than my soul. Should I be proud after such mercy, after such ill-deserving, but such God-receiving. Begone, pride! Begone!

Another lesson: if God alone hath made us to differ, why may he not make others to differ too? "After the Lord saved me," said one, "I never despaired of anybody;" and let us each say so too. If you were brought in why not another? Will you ever give up praying for anybody now that you are saved? I once heard one say concerning his child, "I think I must give her up, I can scarcely think she ever will be converted." Why you have been pardoned yourself; and if the Lord can do that, he can do anything. I am sure if the Lord has brought me to his feet there does not remain in the world a case that can ever equal mine; if he has brought me to receive his free grace, his sovereign love, his precious blood, and hath made me to love him, then there can be nothing too hard for him. O Lord, if thou hast melted this metal heart, and dissolved this stony soul, thou canst

break anything. If thou hast broken the northern iron and the steel, then what remains beyond thy power? Go back then, Christian, armed with this fact, that God who hath made thee to differ can make anybody to differ. There can be no case beyond his strength; if he brought you in he can bring all in. If he doth but stretch out his hand, no man need despair. Therefore, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whither shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

Again, who hath made me to differ? Hath my Lord done it? - then let me serve him more than others. There was a question asked once by our Saviour, "What do ye more than others?" That question might well be put to each child of God here present. My dear friends, we must not be content with doing as much as other people do; in fact, we must never be contented with our doings at all, but always be trying to do more for him who hath done so much for us. Should I give my body to be burned, my flesh piecemeal to the knife, my nerves to the rack, and my heart to the spear, yet should I not give him all that he deserveth. No, if I should pass through the horrors of martyrdom, it were but a poor tribute to love so amazing, so divine. What are you doing my friends, what are you doing my brothers and sisters for Christ? But I will not name you, I censure myself if I censure you; but I will confess my own iniquities and leave you to confess yours. I do try to serve my Master, but I do not serve him as I would. Each act that I perform is marred, either by want of prayer for a blessing upon it, by want of faith in my Lord, or by pride in looking back upon it. I find too continually a tendency to serve myself instead of serving Christ, a constant longing rather to get through the work than to do it acceptably. And oh! when I think upon all, I must say I am an unprofitable servant. Have mercy O gracious Lord on my good works as well as on my bad ones, for my good works are but bad in the best and cannot be acceptable in themselves. I am certain some of you have a little more need to say that than I have. Let us cease boasting any more. I know there are some here who are not serving Christ; some members in this church are doing nothing. You have not thought of doing anything for Christ, have you? You pay your regular subscriptions, you do what you are told to do, but do you give to Christ secretly? do you devote your substance unto him when no one knows it? do you spend your time for

him? have you chosen a sphere, and have you said, "This is my work, and by the grace of God I will do it." Oh! ye cannot tell how much there is to do, and how few, there are to do it. I would I could have a church all alive, all active, so that there never could be a want but those who have would be ready to supply, and never a work but those who are qualified would be ready to fulfill. Never fear but we should find too many rather than too few to aid its accomplishment. Oh that we had the good spirit of the ancient church, the spirit to propagate our Christianity everywhere. There needs to be in many of the suburbs of London fresh gospel churches springing up. I can point to many places in my own vicinity, seven or eight, nine or ten in a row, where there is a chapel needed. In each place there are believers living, who do not think about uniting to establish a fresh cause; but as long as their peculiar wants are satisfied, by journeying a long way off perhaps, they forget the hundreds and thousands who are pressing around them. Oh! there is much to be done, and very little time to do it in. A very few weeks, and those of us who have been loved more than others, those of us who have thought we could wash Christ's feet with our tears, and wipe them with the hair of our heads, will have no more opportunities for spreading the name and fame of our glorious Redeemer. Let us give of our substance to his cause, give of our time to his service and have our hearts in his love, and so shall we be blessed, for in returning Christ's love we shall feel that his love is shed abroad more fully in our hearts and more fully in our understandings.

May the Holy Spirit add his blessing upon these broken words - they have been broken because they have broken my heart, and therefore I could not help their coming out in a broken way. God accept them; and dear brothers and sisters, may he bless them to you by helping you to love him more, who is my hope, my joy, my consolation, and my all.

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A Distinction With A Difference

And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? - Luke 1:18

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be? - Luke 1:34

Zacharias and the Virgin Mary were both very dear to God, and therefore highly honored and greatly favored. The points of likeness between them are many. They were both persons of eminent character, for Zacharias walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless, and Mary was equally gracious and devout. They were both visited by an angel, and were both favored with the prediction of a marvellous birth. Their answers to the angel are our two texts, and at first sight they seem to be alike. One does not see much less of faith or of unbelief in the one than in the other at first reading them, and yet Zacharias was blamed and chastened by being made dumb for a season, while the Virgin was indulged with an explanation, and was afterwards praised by the Holy Spirit, who spake through her cousin Elizabeth, and said, "Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." It appears very clear then that God can see differences where we see none; and though two persons may act very much alike, and from their lips may fall similar expressions, yet their temper and spirit may be widely different. Where you and I would put them together and say, "They are alike," God sees a difference; for while we judge sights and sounds the Lord weigheth the spirits. You must have noticed this in other parts of God's word. I will give you two instances in the life of Abraham. Lot was commanded not to look towards Sodom, and his wife after looking to Sodom was turned into a pillar of salt; and yet that morning Abraham got up early to the place where he was wont to meet with the Lord and it is specially recorded that he looked toward Sodom. The very thing which Lot must not do Abraham may do. It is the same action; but then, if you think a moment, you can clearly see that the looking back of Lot would mean a lingering desire to return, but the look of Abraham had nothing of that kind in it, and could have no evil significance. He was simply looking to the burning cities and admiring with solemn awe the justice of the Most High as he saw the heavens ruddy with flame and afterwards dark with dense clouds, while the smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace. The action was the same externally, but widely different in reality; and the Lord God does not so much regard

our outward acts as the motives which direct them and the spirit in which they are performed.

Perhaps a more remarkable instance is that of Abraham and his wife Sarah. When they each received a distinct promise of the birth of Isaac it is said that Abraham fell upon his face and laughed, and then we read a little farther on, "Sarah laughed within herself." We never find that Abraham was censured for laughing. He laughed rightly. It was the natural expression of a wondering and amazed delight. It was holy laughter, and he was not censured nor called to account for it; but the Lord said unto him, "Wherefore did Sarah laugh?" Sarah was censured for doing the very thing which in Abraham was quite right, and did not need to be corrected. They both laughed: the one was right, but the other was wrong. Wherefore? Because there was a vital difference between them. Sarah's was the laugh of unbelief: she thought it could not be that at her age she should bear a child, her lord being old also. She laughed at the very idea; it seemed altogether too absurd; the mere notion struck her as being perfectly ridiculous, and though a devout woman she somewhat forgot the reverence due to him who gave the promise, and she laughed, though in a subdued and quiet way, "within herself." Abraham believed that the divine promise would be performed, and his was the laugh of joy to think that he should see a son born to his beloved Sarah, who should be his heir and the inheritor of the covenant. His soul danced within him with delight, because he believed what the Lord had spoken. Yet the two actions outwardly are so exactly similar that if you condemn one you think you must condemn the other, but God does not, since he sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

We may apply this great truth to ourselves. We all sang the same hymn just now to the same tune, and yet from one it may have been to God's ear music and from another mockery. We closed our eyes just now and bowed our heads in prayer, and anyone looking upon us might have supposed us to be all equally accepted, but the Lord knows in whose case the heart was wandering upon the mountains of vanity and in whose case the soul with all its powers was crying out unto the living God. Judge yourselves, beloved, but never judge yourselves according to the sight of

the eyes, and never be satisfied with yourselves because externally everything is correct-because you have passed through the routine of religion and attended to the machinery of the outward form. Do not be contented with postures, sounds, and looks-the soul is the soul of the matter. Look at the heart and cry to God also that he would search you, and make you clean in the secret parts, and in the hidden parts make you to know wisdom; else may you stand as God's people do, and go in and out of the house of prayer even as the brightest of the saints do, and never be separated from them until the trumpet rings out the great tremendous day and you are sent to the left with the goats to be withered by a curse, while his people on his right hand shall receive the blessing for ever. Let us all remember that there may be an external similarity in apparent right or wrong, and yet there may be an inward and a real dissimilarity; for it is the inward that is the real, and not the outward, and the great Judge will search and try and separate between the precious and the vile, though the vile may seem to be more beautiful than the precious genuine diamond.

But now, leaving the general principle, I invite you, dear friends, to come back to my texts, and accompany me in looking at these two persons to see whether there is not a difference perceptible by ourselves; and I think we shall find a great deal more diversity than we had expected. I cannot work out the whole matter in one sermon, but some prominent points will I hope interest and profit you.

I. First let us take the case of ZACHARIAS, who said, "WHEREBY SHALL I KNOW THIS?"

And notice, to begin with, that supposing the two expressions of Zacharias and Mary had been identical, and supposing that they had conveyed the same thoughts, yet if they had both been wrong, Zacharias would have been the more faulty of the two, for he was a priest-a man set apart by office to study the word of God and to draw peculiarly near to God on his own account and for the people; while Mary was simply a humble village maid. Mary, it is true, was of royal descent, but her family had fallen into obscurity. She was a person of superior mind, but she held no office that could distinguish her from others. Zacharias being a priest was bound to act with a higher degree of faith than Mary, the lowly

maiden. The priest's lips should keep knowledge and teach many. Were not the priests set apart to be instructors of the people, helpers of those that are weak, and guides of those who are ignorant and out of the way? They should therefore in all things set an example. If Mary had been unbelieving and Zacharias unbelieving, and both unbelieving to the same extent, yet in Zacharias it would have been much worse, because his very office called upon him to display greater grace than the humble maiden. Brethren and sisters, may I not apply this to myself and to you? Brother ministers, if we are unbelieving, we in our unbelief do not sin so cheaply as our people: we have more time to study the word, and therefore we have, or ought to have, more acquaintance with it. We are more familiar with divine things, and ought to be more richly filled with their faith-creating spirit. If the Lord has been pleased to make us under-shepherds over his people, we are bound to be ensamples to the flock. Our high position demands of us the exhibition of a greater degree of grace than we can expect from common believers, who are God's dear people, but are not set apart to be leaders. The same line of argument will apply in due proportion to each servant of our Lord Jesus: according to their measure of grace more is expected of some than of others. You, dear sisters, who teach young people should remember that they watch you, and they expect to see in you a bright example; and, what is more, God, who has placed you in the position of teachers, or of mothers, intends that there should be in you, by his grace, something that others may look up to, that the young beginners may learn from you. Take heed that they never learn unbelief from your doubtings. Let them never see in you that worry, that anxiety, that fretfulness, which denotes the absence of a calm reliance upon God, but let them, whatever they gather from you, learn that which is worth knowing. And what can be a better lesson than that of faith in God? You who are in the church, dear friends, preachers, elders, deacons, and instructors of others, do see to it, that your lives and words do not breed unbelief. Especially do I speak to myself upon this point, for, being much exercised in spirit, I tremble lest I should suggest to any of you doubts and fears, or encourage you in them. Let those of us who are guides of others see to it that we do not dishonor God by mistrust and questioning, for unbelief in us is a glaring fault, and God will surely visit it upon us, even if he winks at it in the weak ones of the flock.

Again, in Zacharias' case it was not merely his office that distinguished him, but he was a man of years. We read that both himself and his wife were "well stricken in years." Now, a man who has had a long experience of the things of God—a man of prayer who has had many answers—a man of trouble who has had many deliverances—a man who has seen the hand of God with him in a long journey through the wilderness of life—is expected by God to exhibit a far stronger faith than the young people who have but lately learned his name. I speak to many here who are by far my seniors, of whom I may say that they were in Christ before me, and they must pardon my saying that they should have more faith than I by reason of their years of constant experience of the Lord's faithfulness and truth; and I, too, who have known the Lord for now a considerable number of years, must never put myself down with those who were converted during the last few months and say that I am to have no more faith than they. Shame upon every one of us if every day does not bring us fresh motives for believing in our Lord. Every hour, indeed, should be fraught with arguments for a more complete childlike trust in him. What, dear sister, did the Lord help you in such and such a strait? And do you not remember that you said, "I shall never doubt him any more"? And yet you have done so. Ah, how grievous must those doubts be to your gracious Lord! I know you thought you would never be delivered at one time, but you were mercifully lifted up from the depths; out of six troubles you have been rescued, and in seven no evil has touched you; and now that a fresh trial is come will you not believe your God? Well, if you do not, you will certainly incur very grievous sin and vex the Holy Spirit of God much more than your poor little sister Mary would do if, having only lately known the Savior, she should distrust him in her first conflicts. Babes in grace should not doubt, but if they do their unbelief is not so wilful as that of fathers in Israel. If standard-bearers faint it is a sad calamity, and the faintness of poor wounded common soldiers is far less to be deplored. When aged Zacharias errs in this matter he is more to be blamed than youthful Mary.

Those two points are pretty clear, are they not?

Furthermore, let us observe that Zacharias had made the birth of a child a subject of prayer, which, I suppose, had not so much as been thought of

by Mary. Beyond the fact that it was the usual desire of all Hebrew women that they might be the mother of the Messiah, the Virgin had probably never cast a single thought in the direction in which the angel's salutation conducted her; assuredly she had never made it a subject of prayer, but Zacharias had rightly done so. Read the thirteenth verse, "The angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son." And yet, though the promise came as a distinct and manifest answer to his prayers, Zacharias asked, "Whereby shall I know this?" Now, this was wrong: it was very wrong. He had been praying for it, and when it came he did not believe in it. Ah, Zacharias, you are verily guilty here. If it had come as a surprise altogether, as it did to Mary, there would be some excuse for your doubt; but when it is a reply to your own entreaties, a gracious yielding to intense requests, your unbelieving question is a grievous fault. If, when taken by surprise, Mary had doubted, it would have appeared natural, but for you, Zacharias,-for you to whom the angel said, "Thy prayer is heard"-how dost thou doubt about it now? Astonishment at answered prayers is amazement at divine truthfulness, and what is that but a low idea of the Lord unintentionally discovering itself. Yet I have sometimes thought that, if the Lord wished to surprise his own servants, all he would have to do would be to answer their prayers. He does so answer them continually, and in consequence you hear one and another say, "Is it not surprising? You see, we met and had a prayer meeting for a certain blessing, and the Lord has answered our supplications. How marvellous!" And yet if you sit down in a friend's house, do his children try to astonish you by mentioning cases in which their father kept his word? Do they dwell with amazement upon his having spoken the truth? Yet I could wish that the Lord's children would even get as far as that. Alas, they even overlook the majority of the facts which prove his veracity, and treat his faithfulness slightly. When his people are in a better frame than usual they admit his faithfulness, and mention as a great wonder that he heard prayer and fulfilled his word. Should this be so? Has it come to pass that it is a wonder for God to hear prayer? Have we fallen into such a low state of heart that we think his truthfulness to be a surprising thing? It were far better if we were of the same mind as a good old lady who, when some one said, "Is it not wonderful?" replied, "Well, it is one way, but it is not another, for it is just like him-just like him." We may well be surprised at

the tenderness of his great mercy, but not as though it were a novelty for God to do good and to keep his promise by regarding his people's cries. Dear brothers and sisters, we ought to be surprised if the Lord did not hear us, seeing that he is the true and faithful, prayer-hearing God. When you and I have had a matter heavily laid upon our hearts, and have been before God with it again and again, as doubtless Zacharias had, we should be looking out for our Lord's gracious reply. Do we not expect answers to letters which we write to our friends? Why do we not in like fashion expect replies to prayer? If God answers us are we to be so doubtful in mind as even to question the truthfulness of the blessing? If so we shall be manifestly guilty. If the Lord sends us a mercy in reply to our requests, and we do not believe it, but say, "Whereby shall I know this?" then our unbelief has a peculiar degree of provocation in it, and we may expect to be chastened for it. This was the case with Zacharias.

The next point about Zacharias is that he doubted the fact which was announced by the angel in the name of the Lord. He said, "Whereby shall I know this?" Mary did not doubt the fact: she wished to know how it could be, but she believed it would be. She believed, for it was said of her, "Blessed is she that believed." But this good man did not believe, for the angel said to him, "Thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." Now, beloved, when it comes to this, that we dare to doubt the promise of God, is it not a very grievous crime? If your child-your own child-whom you have loved so long and treated so tenderly should fall into a state of mind in which he did not believe you, his own father, would you not feel it to be peculiarly grievous? If you were conscious of nothing but love to him, if you were sure that throughout his life you had never broken a promise to him, but had always been as good as your word, if you had repeated your promise again and again, and he still said, "Father, I wish I could believe you," would you not be cut to the heart by such a declaration? The more earnestly he expressed regret at his inability to believe you, the more intense would be your pain. What an awful speech for a son to address to a father- "I wish I could believe you"! You would grieve in spirit and say inwardly, "What does my boy think of me? What has come over my child that he cannot believe me? It was not an enemy, then I could have borne it; but it is my child whom I love who says, not only that he does not believe me, but that he would do so if he

could, and finds himself unable to think me true. He speaks in deep earnest, and thus I see how thoroughly the cruel feeling possesses him, and how desperate is the evil which leads him to mistrust my love." Ah, beloved, I leave your own thoughts, as I must just now leave mine, to peer into the depths of sin which must lie in what we sometimes talk of so flippantly, namely, doubts and fears. They are not the trifles which some men dream them to be: they are hideous profanities of sacred truth, revolting libels upon immaculate goodness, horrid blasphemies of infinite love! Shall the good God be thus assailed? Shall his own children thus abuse him? Your child might doubt you, and it might be a trifle to him, but it would be death to you, his father or mother. You would feel it keenly; and so you may think that doubts and fears are trifles, but your heavenly Father does not think so; unbelief wounds him and grieves his Spirit. Hear what the Lord says: "How long will it be ere they believe me?" Forget not the apostle's warning in the third chapter of the Hebrews. "With whom was he grieved forty years? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" Zacharias did not believe, and he had to smart for it, as you and I shall if we, when we see a promise written clearly in God's word, and evidently quite adapted to our case, nevertheless say, "Whereby shall I know this?"

Yet further. The good man Zacharias - for, remember, I am not doubting his grace, but on the contrary I began by saying that he was a very gracious and eminently godly man, probably much better than any of us, and possibly in some respects even more gracious than Mary herself, having a deeper experience, a fuller knowledge, greater courage, and many other superior gifts and graces, although in this point he failed: he doubted his Lord; and showed his unbelief by asking for a sign, "Whereby shall I know this?" He wanted a sign or a token that what the angel spake was true. This was not the case with Mary, who sought an explanation but not a token. Is it wrong, then, to ask for a token? Assuredly not in all cases, for it may even be sinful not to ask for one, as in the case of Ahaz, of whom we read, "Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?" In the case of Ahaz it was sinful to

refuse, and in that of Zacharias sinful to request. Here again I must come back to the remark I started with, and remind you that the same thing may be right in one man and wrong in another, according to the motive. It is very curious that Abraham used almost identical words with Zacharias, when he said, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit this land?" He distinctly asked the Lord for a sign, nor was the request at all grievous to the Lord, for he knew that his servant Abraham asked that sign in all humility and childlike faith. Let me show you at once the difference between Abraham and Zacharias. Zacharias will not believe without a sign: Abraham has already believed, and waited long for the fulfillment of the promise, and feels that a sign would be comforting to him. It could in no sense have been said to the great father of the faithful, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe," but some such rebuke might have been directed towards Zacharias. There was conspicuous faith in Abraham, and the desire for a token was natural rather than sinful. So was it with Gideon, who asked for many signs. You see at the very first that Gideon believes, and he acts upon his faith; but he trembles because his faith is weak, and he asks for signs to strengthen his confidence; indeed, he did not distrust the Lord at all, but only questioned whether it was the Lord who spoke. Gideon said, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me." The question, you see, was not the truthfulness of God, but whether indeed the Lord had spoken. Zacharias, however, asks an altogether unbelieving question, "Whereby shall I know this?" He wants a sign as the condition of his believing.

You may very rightly pray, "Lord, show me a token for good;" but you must believe before you get the token, and you must not let your believing depend upon that token. There is a difference, and a wide difference, between believing first and then asking for some cheering evidence, and that unbelieving obstinacy which demands signs and wonders, and declares, "I will not believe unless I see a token." Thomas is an instance of this error when he says, "Except I see in his hand the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe." His Master bent to his weakness, but he said, and very significant are the words, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." The chief blessing

belongs to you who, whether you have evidences or not, are content to believe your God, taking this word of God as quite sufficient ground for your confidence without any delights of heart or ecstasies or spiritual visitations. Our God is true even if no wonder be wrought and no sign be given: let us settle this in our hearts, and never allow a doubt to intervene. O Holy Spirit, help us in this thing.

All this together shows that the error of Zacharias was unbelief, and his chastisement which he received for it is worthy of our earnest attention. He was chastened for his unbelief because the Lord loved him; his affliction was sent not so much in anger as in love.

He had asked for a sign, and by a sign was he chastened. God often makes us gather the twigs from which he makes the rod with which he scourges us. Our own sins are the thorns which cause us to smart. Zacharias asked for a sign, and he has this sign: "Thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." For months he shall not be able to speak a single word; but while his mouth is closed to others it shall be open to himself: that dumb mouth of his shall be preaching to him and saying, "You did not believe what was spoken to you of the Lord, and now you are unable to repeat it to others, for the Lord will not employ an unbelieving messenger. If you will not believe when God's angel speaks, you shall not speak yourself." Many a dumb Christian, I am afraid, has had his mouth sealed through unbelief. The Lord saves him and gives him much enjoyment, but he denies him utterance because he has such slender faith. I have no doubt Zacharias was very happy in the prospect of the birth of his child, and looked earnestly onward to the day when John, the prophet of the highest, should be born, and he himself should recover speech; but still it must have been very painful to remain for so long a time in utter silence. How he must have longed to speak or sing. But I have no doubt that many a man is put aside from bearing his testimony through unbelief, which he calls diffidence and delicacy. The Lord says, "I shall never use you as a preacher. I shall not make use of you in addressing your fellow men. I shall not help you to bring men to Christ in private conversation, because you have so little faith. You have doubted me, and now you must be dumb

for a season." I hope that, if this be the case with any, your silence will soon end. Lord, open thou their lips, and their mouths shall show forth thy praise. Dear friend, I hope the Lord will unloose your tongue by-and-by, for if you are in a right state of heart it will be a very painful thing to you not to be able to declare what the Lord has done for your soul; but it is so with some, they are dumb because they believe not.

Moreover, Zacharias had the further affliction of being deaf at the same time. How do I know that he was deaf? That is pretty clear, because when his child was born it is recorded in the sixty-second verse that "they made signs to his father how he would have him called;" and, of course, if he had been able to hear there would have been no need to use signs: but he could not hear any more than he could speak, he suffered the double affliction of being deaf and dumb,-no small cross to one who had such gifts of utterance as he showed in his song of praise. It is remarkable that he could not hear anything, but it is also instructive; for I have known Christians who, when they would not believe the promise, have become very deaf spiritually. You say, "What do you mean? How are they deaf?" Listen, and you will hear them say, "I cannot hear Mr. So-and-So." It is the same minister whom they used to hear with pleasure-the same man-and God blesses him to others as much as before. How is this? Others are drinking in the word, but these poor deaf people say, "We do not know how it is, but we cannot hear our pastor." No, you did not believe, and therefore you cannot hear. You did not receive his message; you did not rejoice in it, and now you cannot hear it. That is a dreadful sort of deafness. If you suffer from a physical deafness you can buy a horn, or you can go to some skillful aurist who, perhaps, may help you. Moreover, you can read if you cannot hear; but if you get a spiritual deafness, I do not know a worse chastisement that can come upon you, nor one that will make you more mischievous to others. O Beloved, do believe the good word of the Lord. With meekness receive the engrafted word, and do not question it and provoke the Lord, lest, haply, because you did not accept the word as the word of God, the time shall come when you will not be able to hear it, and your profiting will utterly depart, and the very voice that once was music to you will have no charms at all, and the blessed truth which once made your heart leap for joy will cease to have the slightest influence upon you. Mary was not sentenced either to be silent

or to be deaf, for she believed the word of the Lord which was spoken to her by the angel. O that we also by a full obedience of faith may escape the penalties which surely attach themselves to unbelief. We must needs sorrow, but there can be no reason for increasing it by our own fault; and we may readily do so, while on the other hand faith brings rest and peace. So much concerning Zacharias.

II. Now let us turn our eyes to MARY. Mary used much the same language, and yet she spake not after the same fashion. She asked of the angel, "How SHALL THIS BE?"

In looking at her, first, it is to be noticed that she believed what the angel said. It was not "Whereby shall I know this?" but in effect her language was, "I believe it. How shall it be?" There is no unbelief in the question. Of that we are sure, because not long after she is praised by her intelligent cousin, Elizabeth, who declares that "blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." She was notably a believer.

She asked no sign. She sought no token whatever. The angel's voice sufficed her. The still small voice of divine love within her soul was enough. She believed, and only asked to be instructed in the matter, sign and seal she needed none.

She was willing also to accept all hazards. I would speak with great delicacy, but to the virgin, remember, it was a very serious thing to be the mother of our Lord. To this very day the base tongues of infidels have dared to insinuate gross criminality against her who was blessed among women; and she must have well known that it was not likely that all would believe what she should aver, and many a hard speech would be uttered concerning her. Indeed, she might have had fear concerning her espoused husband himself, who would have put her away had not the Lord shielded her. Joseph behaved nobly, like a believer of the first order, and he deserves to be ranked amongst the truest of the saints; as does the virgin herself, who well deserves to be exceedingly commended by all who can appreciate pure, delicate, and yet heroic faith. Whatever there might be of hazard, so great was the honor that was put upon the virgin that she

does not appear to have felt the slightest hesitation, but said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word." I think her question may be attributed, in part, to surprise-to inevitable amazement; and what we say to the Lord when we are naturally surprised under the greatness of his mercy will not be weighed by him letter by letter, nor shall we be judged for it, though if very closely examined it might appear like unbelief. The Lord knows his children's frame and remembers that we are dust. I hope that many a word which drops from the child of God when he is in pain, when he is distressed as Job was on the dunghill, is allowed to blow away with the breath which utters it. How very little did the Lord say to Job about the naughty words which in his petulance he had allowed to escape, for after all he was grandly patient; and so even if there had been something of unbelief in these words of Mary, which there was not, yet they would have been viewed by the Lord as the fruit of surprise at the marvellous and unexpected mercy for which she had not even prayed. There was no unbelief in her language, but there was great wonder, surprise, and admiration, at so great a boon. How should this come to her? How should she be so highly favored? Her soul seemed to say, "Whence is this to me? that I, so humble and obscure, a maiden whose rank and race have been altogether forgotten, should be the mother of the Savior after the flesh, the mother of his humanity by whom humanity is to be redeemed."

She was full of wonder, and then she began to enquire. There is the point. She wanted to know how it would be; there was no wrong in that desire; there was no unbelief worthy of rebuke; she believed the surpassing promise, and only wished to know how it could be performed. There might readily enough be unbelief in such an enquiry, but not necessarily so. You and I may say, as the Israelites did in the wilderness when God had promised to give them flesh to eat, "Shall the flocks and herds be slain?" That was unbelievably asking how it should be; but yet you may ask how a promise shall be fulfilled without any mistrust at all; nay, your very faith may raise the enquiry. I know my soul asks again and again many questions of my Lord which he answers to my soul. He would not have answered had they been sinful questions. We ought to enquire about a great many things: we should be sacredly inquisitive. We should say, How is it he has chosen us? For our Lord replies, "Even so Father, for so

it seemed good in thy sight." But, still, why me? Why me? You may ask that question, for holy gratitude dictates it. And how is it that he could redeem us with the blood of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord? And how is it that he renews us? And how will it be that he will perfect us? And how can it be that we shall have a mansion in heaven, and shall become like our Lord? And how is it that we shall be raised up? With what body shall we come? Many a question we may ask, which if not asked in unbelief, will have an answer, or will serve to increase our reverent gratitude.

But now notice concerning Mary that, while Zacharias was the doubter and was treated as such, Mary was the enquirer, and was so dealt with of the Lord. See the difference of the treatment of the two.

For, first, Mary did not ask a sign, but she had one; and it was one of the most pleasant that could possibly come to her, for it was her cousin Elizabeth. She was to be her sign. Behold, she that had been barren shall come to meet her and comfort her. Brethren, the Lord knows how to give you signs if you do not wish for them; and I do believe that those have the most tokens for good who do not ask for them, but are content to take their Father's word without any confirmatory sign.

And, then, there was another thing with regard to her. She was graciously instructed. Zacharias asked a sign, and he had it; she asked for instruction, and she had it. The angel paused awhile and said to her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." If you will meekly, and believingly, ask of your Lord to be taught concerning divine things, he will give you of his Spirit, who shall lead you into all truth, and instruct you, and make you wise unto salvation.

Now, the conclusion is this: first of all, let us not do as Zacharias did. Dear friend, art thou at this moment questioning any promise? Art thou saying, "Whereby shall I know this?" Cease from doubting the infallible word and rest in the Lord, his Holy Spirit enabling thee to believe.

On the other hand, are you a seeking sinner, and does Christ declare that whosoever looks to him shall be saved, and that whosoever believeth in him is not condemned? Do not ask any token, but believe him. He himself is token enough. He is God, and yet man; the bleeding Lamb, the sacrifice for sin. Believe him; believe him; believe him; and you shall have the blessing.

And you, dear child of God, if you have a text of Scripture, a promise which evidently suits your case, which meets your trouble, do not say, "Whereby shall I know this?" When the Spirit says it, it is enough that it is in the word. Whatever the Scripture states, be sure of it; for if all the wise men in the world were to prove it, it would not be proven one bit more; and if they were all to disprove it, it would be none the less sure. If I were to see a thing to be true which God had declared in his word, I would not believe my eyes so well as I would believe his word: at least, I ought not to do so. This is where we ought to stand: all the world may deceive, but God cannot; let God be true, and every man a liar. If you will come and trust him in this way you shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, your leaf shall not wither, and you shall not know when drought cometh. If your walk through life is the walk of faith, as Abraham's and Enoch's were, you shall have a grand life-grandly full, and eternal, and Christly; but if you doubt him you shall not be established. The unbeliever shall be as the rolling thing before the whirlwind, as the sear leaf that falleth from the tree, and as the heath of the desert that knoweth not when good cometh. May the Holy Ghost save us, brothers and sisters, from unbelief, and give us rest in the promise of God.

And now, secondly, let us with all our hearts imitate Mary in being enquirers-often asking, desiring to know, and looking deep and searching; for into the promise of God we cannot look too closely, since "these things the angels desire to look into." You ought so to realize the promise as to be sure that it means what it says, and then you will naturally begin to ask how it will come to pass. Only strive to keep out all unbelief from your enquiry and say, "I know in my heart how it can be, for nothing is impossible with God." There is our answer to all questionings- "With God all things are possible." If I enquire, "How can he deliver me?" Nothing is impossible with God. "How can he keep me to

the end?" Nothing is impossible with God. "How can he preserve me amid persecution? How can he keep me from temptation, and preserve me from the world, the flesh and the devil?" Nothing is impossible with God. Fling yourself upon omnipotence, and you shall be strong. May the Holy Spirit help you to do this for Christ's sake. Amen.

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A Divided Heart

Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty. - Hosea 10:2

THIS passage may be taken as referring to the people of Israel as a nation, and it is not less applicable to the church of God. It is one grand and grievous fault with the church of Christ at the present day, that it is not merely divided somewhat in its creed, and somewhat also in its practice of the ordinances, but alas, it is also somewhat divided in heart. When the differences are of such a character, that as people of God we can still love each other, and still unite in the common battle against the cause of evil and in the common end of building up the church, then there is but little that is faulty. But when our doctrinal divisions grow to so great a head that we cease to co-operate; when our opinions upon mere ordinances become so acid towards each other, that we can no longer extend the right hand of fellowship to those who differ from us, then indeed is the church of God found faulty. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Even Beelzebub with all his craft cannot stand when once his hosts are divided. If Beelzebub be divided against himself, even he must fall, and assuredly this must be the case with those who lack that craft which might tend to overcome disunion. Oh, my brethren, nothing can so soon cast down the church from its high place, mar its glories, and diminish its opportunities of success, as divisions among the hearts of God's people. If we would grieve the Holy Spirit and cause him to begone; if we would provoke the anger of the Most High and bring down trying providences on the churches, we have nothing to do but to be divided in

our hearts and all will be accomplished. If we wish that every vial may empty out its ill, and that every vessel may withhold its oil, we have but to cherish our bickerings till they become animosities; we have but to nurse our animosities till they become hatreds, and all the work will be fully completed. And if this be the case in the church at large, it is peculiarly true in those various sections of it which we now call Apostolic Churches. Oh, my brethren, the smallest church in the world is potent for good when it hath but one heart and one soul; when pastor, elders, deacons, and members, are bound together by a threefold cord that cannot be broken. Then are they mighty against every attack. But however great their numbers, however enormous their wealth, however splendid may be the talents with which they are gifted, they are powerless for good the moment that they become divided amongst themselves. Union is strength. Blessed is the army of the living God, in that day when it goeth forth to battle with one mind, and its soldiers as with the tramp of one man, in undivided march, go onwards towards the attack. But a curse awaiteth that church which runneth hither and thither and which, divided in itself, hath lost the main stay of its strength with which it should batter against the enemy. Division cuts our bowstrings, snaps our spears, hoofs our horses, and burns our chariots in the fire. We are undone the moment the link of love is snapped. Let this perfect bond be once cut in twain and we fall down, and our strength is departed. By union we live, and by disunion we expire.

I intend, however, to take the text this morning specially with reference to our individual condition. We shall look at the separate individual heart of each man. If divisions in the great main body - if separation among the distinct classes of that body should each promote disasters, how much more disastrous must be a division in that better kingdom - the heart of man. If there be civil tumult in the town of Mansoul, even when no enemy attacks its walls, it will be in a sufficiently dangerous position. If the isle of Man be governed by two kings, then is it disorganised, and it will soon be destroyed. I address myself this morning to some of whom it can be said, "their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty." And thus shall I address you, first of all noticing a fearful disease; secondly, its usual symptoms; thirdly, its sad effects; and fourthly, its future consequences.

I. Observe, then, that our text describes a FEARFUL DISEASE. Their heart is divided. I have called it a fearful disease, and this will very readily appear if you observe, first of all, the seat of it. It affects a vital part, it is not merely a disease of the hand, that reformation might cure; it is not merely a disease of the foot, that restraint might sometimes mollify; it is not merely a disease of the eye which hath but to be couched to let the light stream in upon it. It is a disease of a vital region - of the heart; a disease in a part so vital that it affects the whole man. The utmost extremity of the frame suffers when once the heart becomes affected, and especially so affected as to be divided. There is no power, no passion, there is no motive, no principle, which does not become vitiated, when once the heart is diseased. Hence it is that Satan, who is always crafty, endeavors to strike at the heart. He will give you the hand if you please; you may be honest. He will give you the eye if you please; you shall be outwardly chaste. He will give you the foot, if you please; you shall appear to run in the way of righteousness. Only let him keep the heart, only let him rule in the citadel, and he will be well content to give up all the rest. John Bunyan describes this as being one of the terms which old Diabolus was said to make with King Shaddai, - "Oh!" said he, "I will give up all the city of Mansoul, if thou wilt but permit me to live in the citadel of the heart." Surely there was but little in his terms and conditions. Ay but give up everything else; if thou retainest the heart, thou retainest all, O, fiend! for out of the heart are the issues of life.

Thus the disease of our text is one that toucheth a vital part, a part which if once affected, tends to vitiate the whole frame. But you will observe, the disease here described, not only deals with a vital part, but toucheth it after a most serious fashion. It does not simply say the heart palpitates; it doth not declare that the life-floods that issue from it have become more shallow and less rapid, but it declares something worse than all these, namely, that the heart was cleft in twain and utterly divided. A stony heart may be turned to flesh but turn a divided heart into whatsoever you please, so long as it is divided, all is ill. Nothing can go right when that which should be one organ becomes two; when the one motive power begins to send forth its life-floods into two diverse channels, and so creates intestine strife and war. A united heart is life to a man, but if the

heart be cut in twain, in the highest, deepest, and most spiritual sense, he dies. It is a disease which is not only affecting a vital part, but affecting it after the most deadly fashion.

But we must observe again of this divided heart, that it is a division in itself peculiarly loathsome. Men who are possessed of it do not feel themselves to be unclean; in fact they will visit all society, they will venture into the church, they will propose to receive her communion, and to be numbered with her members, and they will afterwards go and mingle with the world; and they do not feel that they have become dishonest. They think themselves fit to mingle with honest worldlings, and with sincere Christians too. If a man had spots upon his countenance or some disease that stared everyone else in the face as often as he was beheld surely he would retire from society and endeavor to keep himself a recluse. But not so the man with a divided heart. He goes everywhere, utterly unconscious that his disease is of the most loathsome character. Shall I show you how it is so? Take the glass and look at the man's heart, and you will discern that it is loathsome, because Satan and sin reigns there. Although the man goes about and has sufficient of what is right and what is wrong, to be uneasy in his sin, yet has he such an intense love of all manner of iniquity, that he allows the loathsome demons to come and dwell in his heart. But his loathsomeness is worse than this, because all the while that he is really living in sin, he is a loathsome hypocrite, pretending that he is a child of God. Of all the things in the world that stink in the nostrils of a honest man, hypocrisy is the worst. If thou be a worldling, be a worldling. If thou serve Satan, serve him. If Baal be god, serve him, but mask not thy service of self and sin by a pretended service of God. Appear to be what thou art, tear off thy masks. The church was never meant to be a masquerade. Stand out in thy true colors. If thou preferest Satan's shrine say so, and let men know it, but if thou wilt serve God, serve him, and do it heartily, as knowing him who is a jealous God and searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. It is a terribly loathsome disease this of a divided heart. If the man were but known, his disease is so loathsome, that the most wicked men in the world would have nothing to do with him. I have known sometimes instances of this. A man who pretended to be religious and regularly attended his place of worship is seen on one occasion entering into a ball-

room of the very lowest class. He begins at once to plunge into its gaieties, with the most evil intentions. He is at once observed. The right senses even of the wicked themselves are awakened. "Kick that man down stairs," is the unanimous verdict, and he receives it and he deserved it right well. When a man has a divided heart - tries to do right and to do wrong, to serve God and to serve Satan at the same time; I say his disease is of so loathsome and degraded a character, that the very worldling, whose leprosy is on his brow, despises, hates him, and avoids him.

And yet again, not merely is the disease loathsome, but I must observe it is one always difficult to cure, because it is chronic. It is not an acute disease, which brings pain, and suffering, and sorrow with it, but it is chronic, it has got into the very nature of the man. A divided heart, how are you to get at that? If it were a disease in any other part, the lancet might find it out, or some medicine might heal it. But what physician can join together a divided heart? What skillful surgeon can set together the disrupted members of a soul that has been divided between God and mammon? This is a disease which enters into the very nature, and will lie in the blood, though the most powerful medicines search it out. This is a disease, in fact, which nothing but Omnipotent grace can ever overcome. But he has no grace whose heart is divided between God and mammon. He is an enemy to God, he is an injury to the church, he is a despiser of God's Word, he is a sheaf ripening for the harvest of eternal fire. His disease is deeply rooted within him, and if left alone it will come to a most dreadful end - its end is sure destruction.

I must observe once more, and then I will leave this point of the disease, that, according to the Hebrew of my text, this disease is a very difficult one to deal with, from the fact that it is a flattering disease. The text might be rendered - "Their heart flatters them; now are they found faulty." There are many cunning flatterers in the world, but the most cunning is man's own heart. A man's own heart will flatter him even about his sins. A man is a grasping miser - his heart flatters him that he is only exercising proper business habits. A man on the other hand is extravagant and spends the good gifts of God upon his own evil passions; then his heart tells him that he is a liberal soul. The heart turns "sweet into bitter and bitter into sweet." It is so "deceitful above all things," and

so "desperately wicked," that it has the impudence to "put darkness for light and light for darkness." Now when a man has a divided heart, he generally flatters himself. "Well," says he, "it is true I drink too much, but then there is never a time that I refuse a guinea towards a charity. It is true," says he "I am not certainly what I should be in my moral character, but still, see how regularly I keep to my church or chapel. It is true," says he, "I don't now and then mind a trick or two in my trade, but I am always ready to help the poor." And so he imagines that he blots out an evil trait in his character with a good one and thus flatters his heart. And see how self-contented and satisfied he is. The poor child of God is trying his own heart with the deepest possible anxiety; this man knows of no such thing. He is always fully assured that he is right. The true believer is sitting down and turning over his accounts day by day to see whether he be really on the road to heaven or whether he has mistaken his evidence and has been deceived. But this man, self-satisfied, bandages his own eyes and walks deliberately on, singing at every step, straight to his own destruction. I know of some such now. It will not suffice for me simply to state what their character is unless God the Holy Spirit open their eyes. They will be sure not to know their own likeness, even though I should paint it to the very life, and put in every touch and stroke, yet they will say, "Ah he could not refer to me. I am so good and so godly, there could have been no reference to me in anything that he said." Do you know a class of people that pull the most tremendously long faces, that always look so serious, that talk the English language with a kind of unctuous twang, that give a savoury pronunciation to every word they utter? Beware of them. When a man wears all his religion in his face, he has generally but a very small stock in his heart. Those tradesmen that put such a great display in their windows, frequently have very little behind. So with these professors; no one would know they were religious, so they label themselves that you may not make a mistake. You would think they were worldlings, if it were not for their sanctimonious appearance. But by putting that on, they think to glide through the world with credit. I hope they are not imagining that they shall stand accepted before the bar of God and deceive the Omniscient. Alas for them! Their heart is divided. This is no uncommon disease, despite its loathsomeness and its terrible fatality. Rife is it in this day; tens of thousands of Englishmen who are reckoned good and honorable are afflicted with it. Their whole head is

sick, and their whole heart faint from the fact that their heart is divided. They lack the courage to be thorough-going sinners, and they have not sincerity enough to be truly-devoted people of God.

II. Having thus described the disease, I proceed to notice its USUAL SYMPTOMS. When a man's heart is divided, one of the most frequent symptoms is formality in his religious worship. You know some men, perhaps, who are very stringent believers of a certain form of doctrine, and very great admirers of a certain shape of church rule and government. You will observe them utterly despising, and abhorring, and hating all who differ from their predilections. Albeit the difference be but as a jot or a tittle, they will stand up and fight for every rubric, defend every old rusty nail in the church door, and think every syllable of their peculiar creed should be accepted without challenge. "As it was in the beginning, so must it be now, and so must it ever be even unto the end." Now it is an observation which your experience will probably warrant, as certainly mine does, that mostly these people stand up so fiercely for the form, because lacking the power, that is all they have to boast of. They have no faith, though they have a creed. They have no life within, and they supply its place with outward ceremony. What wonder therefore that they fiercely defend that? The man who knows how precious the life of godliness is, the man who understands its vitality, its deep-seated, deeply-rooted heart power, he also loves the form, but not as he loves the Spirit. He approves the letter, but he likes the pith and marrow better. He is apt, perhaps to think less of forms than he should do, for he will mingle first with one body of sincere Christians and then with another, and he will say, "If I can enjoy my Master's presence it is but little matter to me where I am found. If I can but find the name of Christ extolled, and his simple gospel preached, this is all I desire." Not so, the man whose heart is divided who has no soul in godliness. He is bigoted to the extreme, and well - I repeat it - he may be, poor man; all he has is the empty shell. What wonder therefore that he should be ready to fight for it? You will notice many persons punctilious with regard even to the form of our own simple worship. They will have it that there must always be observed, not simply reverent behavior in the house of God, but something more than mere reverence, there must be an abject slavish, tyrannical fear upon the hearts of all who are gathered. They will have it that every jot and tittle of

our worship must always be conducted with a certain traditional decorum. Now these people, as frequently as not, know nothing whatever of the power of godliness, and only contend for these little shells because they have not the kernel. They fight for the surface albeit they have never discovered "the deep that coucheth beneath." They know not the precious ores that lie in the rich mines of the gospel, and therefore the surface, covered though it be with weeds, and thistles, is quite enough for them. Formality in religion is very often a trait in the character of a man who has a divided heart.

But this, perhaps, is not the most prominent symptom. Another mark in such a man's character is his inconsistency. You must not see him always, if you would have a good opinion of him. You must be guarded as to the days on which you call upon him. Call upon him on a Sunday and you will find him like a saint; don't call upon him on the Saturday night - you might, perhaps, find him very much like the worst of sinners. Oh! of all the men in the world whom I fear most for, because I know their dangerous and deceitful position, they are those among you who try with all your might to follow the church and yet follow the world. You can come up and sing the sacred hymns of Zion one evening, and another time you can go to your haunts and sing a profane and lascivious song. You can drink one day at the table of the Lord and another day at the table of devils. You appear to run first of all with God's people in his service, and then afterwards run with the multitude to do evil. Ah, men and brethren, this, indeed, is a terrible fact - a terrible index of a frightful disease, You must have a divided heart if you lead an inconsistent life. It is a happy circumstance when a minister can believe of his church that he has no hypocrite in the whole number, but I am bold to say, though with the deepest sorrow, this is more than I could believe of so large a church as that over which I am called to preside. Ah, friends, there may be some of you who practice sins unseen by your pastor's eye. Neither elder or deacon has yet tracked you out. You have been cunning in your iniquity. Perhaps your sin is of such an order that church discipline would altogether fail to touch it. You know, however, and your conscience tells you, that your life is not consistent with your profession. I adjure you, by the living God, as you and I must stand at the last great day face to face at his tremendous bar, either give up your profession, or be true to it. Cease

to be called a Christian, or else be a Christian in truth. Seek more grace, that you may live up to the example of your Master, or else I entreat of you - and do it honestly, and if you would take me at my word, I should rejoice that you had done so - renounce your membership, and no longer make a profession of godliness. An inconsistent life, I say, is a sure token of a divided heart.

And again I must observe there is another token of a divided heart, namely - variableness in object. I might depict a character which you have met with often in your life. A man who attends a public meeting upon some religious matter is seized with a sudden enthusiasm to do good. If he will not be a missionary to the heathen himself, yet he will undertake to devote of his substance to the cause, and for the next week there is nothing on his tongue but the missionary enterprise. A little while after he attends some political meeting, and now there is nothing before him but the reformation of politics. Another week, and he is called to attend some sanitary commission, and now there is nothing wanted but proper drainage. Religion, politics, social economy, each in its turn, and everything else must give place to the last topic which has engrossed his attention. These men run first in one direction - then in another. Their religion is all spasmodic. They are taken with it as men are taken with an ague. They shake by fits, and anon they are calm. They are sometimes hot and feverish, and anon they are chilly and cold. They take up their religion, and then they lay it down again. What does this prove concerning them, but that they have a divided heart, and they are in the sight of God diseased, loathsome persons, who shall never see his face with joy.

To conclude the list of symptoms. Once more, frivolity in religion is often a token of a divided heart; and here I address myself more immediately to those of my own age. It is perhaps too common a sin with young persons to treat religion with a light and frivolous air. There is a seriousness which is well becoming, especially in youthful Christians. Cheerfulness should be the constant aim of the aged. Their tendency is towards sadness. Perhaps a proper seriousness and solemnity should be the aim of the youthful believer, whose tendency will rather be to levity than to despondency. Oh, my brethren, when we can talk about religious things

with flippancy; when we can quote texts of Scripture in order to make jests upon them, when we come up to the Lord's table as if it were but a common repast; when we come to baptism as though it were but an ordinary observance, about which no solemnity is to be found - then I fear we prove that our heart is divided. And I know that any soul conscious of its guilt, if it has really been brought to know the love of Christ, will always come to sacred things in a altered manner. We do not come to the Lord's table with lightness of heart. There have been times when it has seemed too solemn a matter for us to come at all; and as for baptism, he that comes to baptism without having searched his heart, without having looked well to his motives, and without true devotion of spirit, comes altogether in vain. As the wrong communicant may eat and drink damnation to himself, so may he who would be thus wrongly baptized receive condemnation instead of a blessing. Frivolity of spirit is often a sign of a divided heart.

III. This brings us to the third point, the sad effects of a divided heart. When a man's heart is divided, he is at once everything that is bad. With regard to himself he is an unhappy man. Who can be happy while he has rival powers within his own breast. The soul must find a nest for itself, or else it cannot find rest. The bird that would seek to rest upon two twigs would never have peace, and the soul that endeavors to find two resting places, first, the world, and then the Saviour, will never have any joy or comfort. A united heart is a happy heart; hence David says, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." They that give themselves wholly to God are a blessed people, for they find that the ways of religion are "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Men who are neither this nor that, neither one thing nor another, are always uneasy and miserable. The fear of discovery, and the consciousness of being wrong, conspire together to agitate the soul and make it full of unease, disease, and restlessness of spirit. Such a man is unhappy in himself.

He is in the next place useless in the church. Of what good is such a man to us? We cannot put him in the pulpit to propound that gospel he does not practice. We cannot put him in the deaconship to serve the church which his life would ruin. We cannot commit to his charge the spiritual matters of the church in the eldership, because we discern that not being

spiritual himself, he is not to be entrusted with them. In no respect is he of any good to us. "Reprobate silver shall men call them." His name may be in the church-book, but it had better be taken away. He may sit among us and give us his contribution, we should be better without it and without him than with either, though he should double his talent and treble his contribution. We know that no man who is not united in his heart vitally and entirely to Christ, can ever be of the slightest service to the church of God.

But not only this; he is a man dangerous to the world. Such a man is like a leper going abroad in the midst of healthy people; he spreads the disease. The drunkard is a leper set apart by himself; he doth but little harm comparatively, for he in his drunkenness is like the leper when he is driven from society. His very drunkenness cries out, "Unclean, unclean, unclean!" But this man is a professor of religion and therefore tolerated. He says he is a Christian, and therefore he is admitted into all society, and yet he is inwardly full of rottenness and deception. Though outwardly whitewashed like a sepulcher, he is more dangerous to the world, I say, than the most vicious of men. Tie him up - let him not go loose; build a prison for him. But what am I saying? If you would build a prison for hypocrites, all London would not suffice for ground for the prisons. Oh my brethren, notwithstanding the impossibility of binding them, I do say that the maddest dog in the hottest weather is not one-half so dangerous to men as a man who hath a divided heart, one who runs about with the rabid poison of his hypocrisy upon his lips, and destroys the souls of men by contamination.

Not only unhappy himself, useless to the church, and dangerous to the world but he is contemptible to everybody. When he is found out nobody receives him. Scarcely will the world own him, and the church will have nothing to administer to him but its censure.

The most solemn consideration, however, is that this man is reprobate in the sight of God. To the eye of infinite purity he is one of the most obnoxious and detestable of beings. His heart is divided. A pure and holy God hates, first, his sin, and secondly, the lies with which he endeavors to cover it. Oh, if there be a place where sinners are more loathsome to God

than anywhere else, it is in his church. A dog in its kennel is well enough; but a dog in the throne-room is quite out of place. A sinner in the world is bad enough, but in the church he is hideous. A madman in an asylum is a creature to be pitied, but a madman who protests he is not mad, and will thrust himself among us that he may obtain means of doing mischief, is not merely to be pitied, he is to be avoided, and needs to be restrained. God hateth sin anywhere, but when sin puts its fingers upon his divine altar; when it comes and lays its insolent hand upon the sacrifice that is burning there, then God spurns it from him with disgust. Of all men, who stand in the most likely place to receive the mightiest thunderbolt, and the most terrible lightning's flash, those are the men who have a divided heart, and profess to serve God while with their souls they are serving sin. Take heed, sinner, take heed, running on in thy sin thou wilt meet with punishment; but after all, O hypocrite, look well to thy ways, for thy sin and thy lie together shall bring down a dread and swift destruction upon thy devoted head.

IV. In conclusion I have to address some remarks to you with regard to the FUTURE PUNISHMENT of the man whose heart is divided, unless he be rescued by a great salvation.

I have endeavored to preach faithfully this morning, as faithfully as I could, but I am conscious that many of the children of God do not find food under such a sermon as this, nor is it my intention that they should do so. It is not rightly possible to blend the sieve of sifting, with the bushel of the gospel. We cannot well bring you the wheat and the sieve too. This morning I have sought to take the fan ministerially into my hand, and thoroughly purge this floor, in the name of him who shall be the great "Purger" at the last day. We all need it whether we know it or not. The best Christian needs sometimes to question himself as to his motives. And when God's children are not fed, it is often more profitable to them to be led to examine themselves, than it would be if they had some rich promise to feed upon. My hearers, out of so vast a number this morning, are there none among you with divided hearts? Is it possible that this whole congregation is made up of sincere Christians, truly enlightened, called, and saved? Is there not one man, who, mistaking his place, has put himself among the sheep when he should have been among

the goats? Is there not one man here who without making a mistake has dared impudently to thrust himself into the number of God's priests, when he is really a worshipper of Baal? Let me then, in the last place, that I may with faithfulness discharge my mission, describe the terrible condition of the hypocrite when God shall come to judge the world.

He comes with brazen face, he comes in the midst of the congregation of the righteous. The mandate has gone from the throne, "Gather out first the tares!" He hears the mandate, and his cheek pales not. His impudence continues with him even now. He would still knock at the door, and say, "Lord! Lord! open to me." The dividing angel flies. Terror is on the face of the wicked, as on the left the tares are bound in bundles to burn. Imagine, however the still greater consternation of this individual, who, standing in the midst of ministers, saints and apostles, suddenly finds himself about to be gleaned from them. With a tremendous swoop, like an eagle descending from its lofty height, the death angel bears upon him, snatches him away, and claims him as his own. "Thou art," says the black angel, "Thou art a tare. Thou hast grown side by side with the wheat, but that has not changed thy nature. The dew that falls upon the wheat has fallen upon thee; the sun which shone upon it thou hast enjoyed also, but thou art still a tare, and thy doom remaineth the same. Thou shalt be bound up with the rest in bundles to be burned." O hearer, what must be his consternation when with mighty hand that angel plucks him up by the roots, carries him away, and he that thought himself a saint is bound up with sinners for destruction!

And now imagine the reception that he meets. He is brought into the midst of the wicked - the wicked who once with Pharaonic tongue he had reproved. "Here he comes," say they, "the man who instructed us, the good man who taught us to do better, here he comes himself, found out at last to be no better than those whom he despised." And then imagine, if you dare, the inner dungeon, the reserved seats of that fiery abode, and the heaviest chain of despair - imagine, I say, if you can, the terrible destruction, terrible beyond every other, which shall overwhelm the man who in this world deceived the church and dishonored God, but who is now detected to his shame. Common sinners have the common prison, but this man shall be thrust into the inner prison, and made fast in the

stocks of despair. Tremble, professors, tremble, you who are half and half religious men, tremble, you who pretend to fear God, but like the Samaritans, worship your idols also. O, tremble now lest your trembling should come upon you in a day when you are not aware of it, when you shall long for the rocks to hide, and for the mountains to cover you, but shall be without a shelter in the day of the fierce anger of the God of the whole earth.

And now, I cannot send you away without preaching the gospel for a moment or two. I have, perhaps, one here who is saying, "Sir, my heart is not only divided, but it is broken." Ah, there is a great deal of difference between a divided heart and a broken heart. The divided heart is cut in twain, the broken heart is broken in pieces, all asunder, and yet it is not divided. It is all in pieces, in one sense, as to its proud hope, and it is melted, in another sense, as to its earnest longing that it may be saved. Poor broken heart, I was not rebuking thee. Art thou desirous thy morning to have thy sins put away. Then from the bottom of thy poor broken heart cry to day, Lord, save me from hypocrisy. Whatever I may be, do not permit me to think I am one of thine if I am not." Are you breathing out this prayer to God, "Lord, make me truly thine. Put me among thy children. Let me call thee 'my Father,' and not turn away from thee. Give me a new heart and a right spirit; O wash me in the blood of Christ, and make me clean. Make me what thou wouldst have me be, and I will praise thee for ever." Remember, my dear hearer if that is the desire of thy heart, thou art this day bidden to believe that Christ is able to save thee, and willing to save thee, and waiting to be gracious unto thee, and more ready to bestow mercy than thou art to receive it. Therefore thou art commanded to trust him, for all thy sins have been punished on him as thy surety, and for the sake of Christ, God is willing now to receive thee, now to bless thee. Come close with him this morning. Lift thine eye to him that did die upon the tree. Put thy trust in him who is my Redeemer, and thy Redeemer too; let the blood which flows from his side be received into thy heart. Open thy poor wounds, and say, "My Master, heal these wounds for me. O Jesus! I know no other trust. If thou wilt save me I will know no other love. My heart is undivided in its love, it looks alone to thee; it shall be soon undivided in its gratitude; I will praise thee and thee alone. Poor heart-broken penitent, I said not ill when I contradicted

myself by saying, "Though thy heart is broken, it is not divided." Bring it just as it is, and say, "Lord, receive me through the blood of Christ, and let me be thine now, and thine for ever, through Jesus." Amen.

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Divine Destruction And Protection

And all the trees of the field shall know that I, Jehovah, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish. I, Jehovah, have spoken and have done it. - Ezekiel 17:24

Can your minds fly back to the time when there was no time, to the day when there was no day but the Ancient of Days? Can you speed back to that period when God dwelt alone, when this round world and all the things that be upon it, had not come from his hand; when the sun flamed not in his strength, and the stars flashed not in their brightness? Can you go back to the period when there were no angels, when cherubim and seraphim had not been born; and, if there be creatures elder than they, when none of them had as yet been formed? Is it possible, I say, for you to fly so far back as to contemplate God alone—no creature no breath of song, no motion of wing—God himself alone, without another? Then, indeed, he had no rival; none then could contest with him, for none existed. All power, and glory, and honour and majesty were gathered up into Himself. And we have no reason to believe that he was less glorious than He is now, when his ministers delight to do his pleasure; nor less great than now, when he has crested worlds on worlds, and thrown them into space, scattering over the sky stars with both his hands. He sat on no precarious throne; he needed none to add to his power; he needed none to bring him a revenue of praise; his all-sufficiency could spirit of no lack. Consider next, if ye can, the eternal purpose of God that he would create. He determines it in his mind. Could any but a divine motive actuate the Divine Architect? What must that motive have been? He creates that he

may display his own perfections. He does beget, as it were, creatures after his own image that he may live in them; that he may manifest to others the joy, the pleasure, the satisfaction, which he so intensely feels in himself. Certain 1 am his own glory must have been the end he had in view; he would reveal his glory to the sons of men, to angels, and to such creatures as he had formed, in order that they might reflect his honour and sing his praise. You are not ignorant, my brethren, of the fact that sin entered into the world. You know that the creation, which had been harmonious as a psalm in God's praise, voluminous and exhaustive as a book in which he revealed his own character—this creation, once exceedingly fair, became foully marred. Rival instincts were produced, and rival Interests were set up. Man's will stood up against God's will; man's profit against God's honour; man's device against God's counsel. Eve took of the accursed fruit, and Adam partook of the same, and henceforth man became a rival to God, just as Satan, aforetime, had rebelled against the blessed and only Potentate, and usurped authority. From the time when Satan fell, God's purpose was to break down everything which set itself up in opposition to him. From that day till now, no matter how great, how lofty, how apparently excellent a thing might be, it has been the rule with God to pull it down if it did not stand in him, and for him; yea, and wherever he has looked, no matter how mean a thing may have been, how low, how degraded to outward appearance, it has been God's constant rule to lift it up, if it stood in him, and for him. Or if, by the lifting up of the humble, he might throw scorn upon the haughty, he would thereby magnify his own absolute right to exercise sovereign control, and to do with men as he willed.

Oh! that I could command the words of some of the mighty masters of song, or that I had an angel's voice, so much rather would I hymn this high majestic theme than speak of it in listless prose. But I cannot rise to the awful heights of this incomparable design. I contemplate it with awe not unmingled with admiration—the Eternal God withstanding everything that opposes itself against him—thrusting down the mighty from their seats, plucking off crowns from the heads of princes, degrading the escutcheons of nobles, trampling in the mire the fine linen and the scarlet of the rich, setting at nought the wisdom of the wise, divesting the philosopher of his toga, rending in pieces the robes of the priest, end

pouring contempt upon everything that vaunts pretension or arrogates prestige in defiance of his sacred prescriptive, irrevocable lordship. There is no power or permanence, no warrant or worth, in any claim to greatness or goodness independent of God, or antagonistic to him. My conceptions are too dwarfish, my language is too feeble, to compass the grandeur of this theme. It's truth commends it, and its usefulness enhances it: since it bows the heart before God. and convinces us that then only are we in a fit state to be filled with his fulness, to live in his life, to be wise with his wisdom, and to be glorious in his glory, when we are emptied of our own conceits. Mine, however, will be a more practical lesson at this time; and I shall use more homely words than that nobler subject might have demanded.

METHINKS I see a great forest which reaches for many a league. The trees are of divers growths, and of various ages. Some of them are very lofty. Here a towering cedar and yonder the storks have made their nests among the tall fir trees. Stout oaks there are that laugh at storms, and elms that will not be twisted with the tempest. See how they rival each other! And there are lowlier trees; some bearing fruit, though scarcely seen; others, like the vine, creeping upon the ground—so obscure they can hardly be observed. It is a strange forest in which trees of every clime are to be found; some green, verdant, lader with blossoms and with fruit; others dead, dry, withered, with scarce here and there a leaf. It is the evening, the cool of the day. The Lord God that visited the fair garden of Eden is come to walk in this forest. Along those deep glades, amidst that thick shade, the Almighty appears. He comes. How see I him? Bears he in his hand an awful axe, and cloth he pass his finger along its edge to see that it be keen? Strong is the arm that wields it. Howl, cedars, if once he life that axe against you. What means that Woodman to do? Wait, and let us hear him speak. Oh! ye trees of the field be silent before the Lord. Clap not your hands until we have heard him speak. "The trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree—beware, ye towering cedars!—"that I have exalted the low tree"—take courage, ye lowly vines!—"have dried up the green tree"—wail, ye verdant elms—"and have made the dry tree to flourish";—hope, ye withered boughs!—"I the Lord have spoken, and have done it." Let the trees be silent before the Lord, for he cometh to judge them, and he judgeth them with much

jealousy. That forest I have before my eyes; men like trees appear to me in the vision. While I gaze on this dense mass of people listening to my voice, let me interpret the Mighty Woodman's words to you. There are four notes of which we shall speak one after the other. May God sanctify the emblems to our profit, touching our ears, and teaching our hearts, that we may rightly understand what the Lord saith to the trees of the forest.

I. "THUS SAITH THE LORD, THE TREES OF THE FIELD SHALL KNOW THAT I THE LORD HAVE BROUGHT DOWN THE HIGH TREE."

Look over history, and you will see that everything gigantic in stature and colossal in dimensions, whatsoever has been great to human apprehension, grasping at earthly fame, has become an object for God's penetrating arrows, and a subject for his withering blight. A grand idea of universal monarchy flashed upon the mind of man. He would build a tower, the top whereof should reach to heaven. What did the Lord do with this fine scheme? "I will come down," said "to Babel, and see if it be altogether as they have said." Then he touched their tongues, and confounded their language, and scattered the imaginations of their hearts: so he laughed them to scorn, and left them to be a laughingstock to all generations. Then came the great power of Egypt. Pharaoh said, "Am I not lord of Thebes, with its hundred gates, and with its myriads of brazen chariots? Have I not a mighty host of cavalry? Who is equal to me? I speak, and the nations tremble." When the king hardened his heart, how did Jehovah—the King of kings—get himself honour from Pharaoh and his hosts? "Thou didst blow with thy wind; the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider bath he cast into the sea!" In after years Babylon set herself up as a queen. "I shall be a lady for ever," said the gay metropolis of; the earth, the mighty city of Euphrates. "I sit alone; I shall see no sorrow." Behold, she decketh herself out with scarlet, she arrayeth herself with silk; all the nations of the earth are quiet when she ariseth nor is the sound of a whisper heard when the voice of her command goes forth. But where art thou, daughter of Assyria, where art thou now, O daughter of Chaldea, where is the crown which once

circled thy brow and adorned thy heady Go, mark a leap of rubbish, and of desolate stones; hear the hooting of the owls and the howling of the dragons, as each one calleth to his fellow in the midst of a desolation which cannot be repaired! How art thou fallen from heaven, Lucifer, son of the morning! Thus God breaketh in pieces with his right hand everything arrogant and supercilious, that dares to assert greatness apart from his endowment, or to presume on authority other than he delegates. I might prolong the strain. I might tell you of Rome, and all the boastings of that Imperial mistress, point to her faded charms, and tell of her decay and her decadence. I might lead you back to Sennacherib and all his hosts overthrown, or recite the story of Nebuchadnezzar, driven out from the abodes of men, and feeding the beasts. I might show you lesser kings, kings of Israel, brought exceeding low, until they who had sat on the throne as princes pined in the dungeon among slaves. To multiply instances would be only to confirm the general current of history, and illustrate the fact that the Lord, even the Lord of hosts, always cuts down the high tree, humiliates the creature that exalts itself, and suffers no flesh to glory in his presence. That is the law of his government.

The question arises, how does it concern us? Doubtless it opens a sad prospect to those who are lifted up with pride, or inflated with self-opinion. Are there any among you who boast in heraldry a long succession of illustrious names which has ennobled your pedigree? Some people seem to think that the world is hardly good enough for them to tread upon, as if they were made of china, while other men are moulded but of common clay; they look down upon the public as an ignoble herd, and speak of the masses as the "many-headed" and the "great unwashed." Such a man will play the parasite to his own dear self, passionately cherish his own conceits and petulantly hold that whatever belongs to him is better than anyone else can procure for love or money, be it his house, or his horse, the water from his well, or the wine from his cellar. At his wit let all inferiors laugh; to his greed let all who, would receive his patronizing nod do obeisance. In stately isolation he will acknowledge no rival. Knowest thou, man, that in one respect thou hast a veritable pre-eminence?—thou mayest fairly challenge all thy fellows for one whose disposition the Lord hates more than he abhors shine. Among the seven abominations, your order ranks highest. No liar or murderer can claim a

preeminence over you in vice so long as the Proverbs stand. Ere long, the heel of the Almighty shall be lifted higher than thy haughty head. He will cast thee down, be thy look never so proud; for the Lord hath purposed it to stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the excellency of the earth.

There is, again, an arrogance of mind, of judgement, of opinion, just as ignorant—if not quite so grotesque—as his who dreams that his birth is of higher caste, and his blood of richer hue than other men. Humanity in the bulk is the idol of some people; and yonder I see the man who quotes himself as an illustrious specimen. He does not believe in the total depravity of human nature. Judging by himself, the statement that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, is a myth; or if it were ever true of a recreant Jew, it never was a fair indictment against such an orthodox Christian as he is. No, no; he has kept the law; he feels that in all things he is blameless; he has not erred, neither will he humble himself before the word that God speaks to us. In the opinion of such, the gospel that we preach is very good for harlots, thieves, and drunkards, but it is of no use to the righteous, for they have put down their own names among those who need no repentance. Admirable in their conduct, their temper amiable, and their disposition generous, a salvation by free grace would be wasted on them. The Lord will abase thee, be thou man or woman, whosoever thou mayest be; he will shame thee; the axe is ready to be laid at thy root even now. Thy goodness is not God's goodness, and thy righteousness is not Christ's righteousness; therefore, shall the moth consume it, and it shall be eaten away. Or it is my friend yonder, a working man, who says, "Well, I work as hard as anybody; I bring up my children as well as I can; I have nothing from the parish; and if I see a poor mate out of work, I always subscribe my mite, though I have not much to give away; can it be right to tell me that I am not in a fair way of going to heaven?" Ah! the Lord will deprive you of such boasting, for he will bring down all these high trees. You that have any righteousness of your own, whether you be rich or poor, the same word will apply to you all. What mattereth it whether you are born of princes, or the offspring of beggars, pride will nestle in any heart, and presumption will take advantage of any circumstances? Perhaps I may address some person who says, "Well, I am a member of the orthodox and true church; I have

been baptized, and I have been confirmed after the most proper manner; I receive the Lord's supper on all fit and proper occasions. The clergyman from whom I take the sacrament has received apostolical ordination. How tasteful the architecture of our church! How decorous; the congregation! How enchanting the music! There are none of your rough wild notes that give vent to the feelings. Our organ is the perfection of mechanism, and it is played with the utmost skill. Our sacred singers perform their parts with reverent taste. Our litanies are wailed out in plaintive tones. We do the thing in the right style; and as I am a member of a branch of a catholic church, I hold myself to be an heir of eternal life." From thy towering imaginations, O man, thou shalt speedily totter. God will cast thee down, as surely as thou livest. No boasting, even of our orthodoxy, or of our attention to religious formalities, shall ever be allowed to abide his judgment. The Lord hath set his face against all boastings, and all confidences, other than a trust in the cross, and a holy reliance on the finished work and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Or shall it fare better with another class? There is our friend who says, "Well, well, I do not believe in forms and ceremonies; but, mark you, I always judge and weigh everything." He estimates himself as an independent thinker; he is bound by no precedents, fostered by no creeds, and considers that he is amenable to no judgment but his own. He owns no lord but his own conscience, no duty but such as he prescribes himself, and as for wisdom, he looks with indifference on all things whatsoever that his private judgment has not endorsed. Moreover, he doubts the inspiration of the Bible, and has his misgivings as to the authenticity of some parts of it. He indulges a little suspicion as to the deity of Christ, and as to the doctrines of grace; he professes much intelligence, but he exhibits gross negligence. Strong in his self-assertion, he makes light of the Word of God, and the will of God, while he holds prophets and apostles in little esteem. Ah! well, brother! God is against you; he will make a fool of you one of these days, if you are so wise as to exalt yourself above his revelation. The world shall see your folly. I tell thee, captious questioner, that the Lord will bring thee down. "Tut, tut, tut, I do not believe in any of these things," exclaims the successful merchant; "I say the best thing is to push ahead on one's own account; I mean to save money, to get rich, to rise in the world, as others have done

who have made capital of their own wits, and taken care of their own interest." This is the religion of many people; their creed being that God will help those who help themselves; in their account, the highest wisdom is to attend to this world, and as for the world to come, the best policy is to ignore it. To the statutes of the Lord they give no heed; Evidently you see no need to depend on God. With a stout pair of arms and a good clear brain, you are confident you can make your own way in the world. Will you prosper, sir? I tell you no; for God is against you. The Lord will you down. Whether it be strength of limbs and lungs, force off brain and intellect, cunning works or scheming plans you rely upon, he will lay you level with the dust ere long. You shall know that he who exalteth himself against his maker maketh a sorry adventure. Disaster and everlasting confusion are your inevitable fate. II. FURTHERMORE THE LORD SAYS, "I WILL EXALT THE LOW TREE."

Here is a word of comfort to some who specially need it. You remember Joseph in the dungeon, Israel in Egypt, Hannah in the family of Elkanah, David when Samuel would have passed him by, Hezekiah when Sennacherib rebuked him. Are not all these instances of God exalting the low tree? We have no time to expatiate on them, though they are well worthy of attentive study. But rather now let us ask, Where are the low trees here among ourselves? Who are they? The low trees are those poor in spirit, who think others better than they are themselves; who, instead of carving their names high, are willing to have them written low, because they feel they have nothing whereof to glory, nought wherein to boast. The low trees are the penitents, those who take their stand afar off with the publican, and say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner"; you that feel your own weakness to do anything aright; you who are conscious of your own worthlessness, and afraid that God will never hear your prayers; you that are bowed down low with a sense of guilt, and hardly dare to look up to the place where his honour dwelleth; you are the low trees, you are such as God exalteth. You, too, who tremble at his word; when, you see the threatening, fear lest it should be executed upon you; when you hear the promise, hardly think it possible that it can belong to you—you are low trees—God shall exalt you. You that feel your ignorance, and are willing to be instructed; you that are modest as children, and ready to sit at the feet of Jesus; you that have been broken in pieces until you feel that

a crumb of mercy would be more than you deserve, and are willing to take any dole he is pleased to give—you are the low tree. And you that are despised, who walk in darkness and see no light; slandered for Christ's sake; reproached with crimes you never committed; you of whom the world is not worthy, though the world accounts you to be unworthy of its esteem—you are the low trees, and God shall exalt you. God grant us grace to humble ourselves under his mighty hand. The Lord exalteth the low trees. Is there a soul among you that is ready to despair—a low tree, so low that it can only compare itself to a bramble-bush? Well, God dwelt in a bush. You may think that if he should have enemy upon all other men, yet he must make an exception of you, so aggravated are your offenses, so depraved your disposition, and so alien to anything good your natural temperament. Oh! bless the Lord! He exalteth the low tree. If voice can reach now any humble, fearful, broken-hearted soul, even though that soul should say it is too good to be true, yet, in God's name, Let me assure you it is God's message to you. Rejoice, yea, sing unto your God, for he will lift up the poor from the dunghill, while he casteth down the mighty from the seats of their pomp and their places of power.

III. THE LORD HAS ALSO DECLARED THAT "HE WILL DRY UP THE GREEN TREE."

Whether that green tree be high or low, it does not matter; if it be green in itself, he will cut it down. Mark you, a man may be as high as heaven; if it is God that makes him high, he will stand; but if he be high in creature-strength, land creature-merits, and creature-glory, he shall be brought down; and a man may be low without merit, if he is merely mean and mire, paltry and pitiable, not worth a straw. That is not the spirit of lowliness that God blesses. In like manner, a man may be garden because he is planted by the rivers of God's living waters, that is healthy enough; but those that are like the green bay tree of the Psalmist, trees growing in their own soil, never transplanted by grace, green in the verdure of worldly prosperity, and taking all their delight in earthly things—those are the trees God will dry up. Many I know of this kind! They profess to be God's people, and they say, "Well, I never have any anxiety about my eternal state; I do not see why I should ever have any doubts or fears. I have no prickings of conscience." This green tree boasts "that its leaves

never fade, that its evidences are always bright." "They have no changes; therefore, they fear not God." "They have not been emptied from vessel to vessel. They have no cares; they walk confidently, they talk arrogantly; they smile disdainfully at some of God's people who groan over their infirmities and bemoan their sins. Perhaps they go the length of protesting that they have no vices, and do no wrong; or they will say, "Why, as for me, I have overcome my bad habits and made amends for my youthful follies and indiscretions; and if I have any faults, they are only such as are natural to men, and they do not cause me any trouble." He will even turn round and rail on this wise, "I cannot think how some of God's people can do as they do. " No; he is such a blessed, heavenly-minded hypocrite, that after he has condoned his own crimes, he condemns other people's customs; hence he holds up the severity of his judgment as a proof of the integrity of his character. He makes broad fringes to his own garment, and he cannot think how good men can wear such narrow fringes to theirs; he has a wide phylactery, and he cannot imagine how a godly man can wear a smaller one; he prays an hour and a half at the corner of the street; he cannot think that any man is godly who prays for ten minutes in his closet; he sounds a trumpet, and gives away three halfpence to the poor; he cannot understand people when they give away ten pounds, or a hundred pounds, in the cause of religion; he thinks they must have mercenary motives. He might stand up and say, "Look at me if you want to see what a man should be, how a Christian should live, and what his manner, and conduct, and conversation should be." Behold the man who counts himself the paragon of perfection. Have you never met with such green trees? I have. These people feed without fear, and mock without motive. They laugh at the idea of Paul's apprehension, when he said, "I keep under my body, lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." They think such fears inconsistent with the doctrine of final perseverance, though in this they are mistaken. A man may know that a true believer will persevere and yet be very much afraid that he shall not himself hold out, because he may suspect himself whether he is a true believer at all. This green tree is never troubled about the future; it is all right with him; he has launched upon a smooth, deceitful sea, and he believes it will be calm until he gets to the other side, as for human weakness, he knows nothing at all about that. He hears God's children crying, "Who shall deliver us from the body

of this death?" and he looks shocked.

The professor, too, who boasts his deep experience, is like this green tree. Young Christians he frowns at—he does not like young people. No; he would not have many young people in the church, because they might adulterate it, and bring down its spiritual tone. As to doctrine, he is profoundly learned; "he can a hair divide, betwixt the west and south-west side," and he censures at once the man who does not understand all the points. He understands more than the Bible reveals; he has improved upon the Scriptures; and those who cannot get up to his standard he despises. As for the poor, and meek, and sickly among the people of God, he, one of the strong ones, pushes them on either side, and will give them no rest. Never a man yet had anything to boast of as his own, but God was sure to dry him up. Let your life be green as emerald, it shall be brown as March dust before long. You seek sap and nourishment from yourselves. The spider's web—how soon it is blown away! Well it may, because it cometh out of the spider's own bowels. Everything that comes out of self, and lives on self, and hands on self, and fattens on self, no matter how green it may be, verily, verily, it shall be dried up. Lastly:—

IV. THE LORD MAKES "THE DRY TREE TO FLOURISH."

There are some dry trees to be pitied in their present condition, yet to be congratulated on their prospects. I would not say a word to encourage doubting, but I would say a great many words to encourage doubters. How many of God's people may be fitly compared to a dry tree! They have little joy; they have not got to full assurance. They are afraid to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." Every night, before they go to bed, they feel such consciousness of sin that they can hardly sleep. They feel themselves so weak that where others go and think nothing of it, they dare not trust themselves. They are afraid to risk temptation; sometimes they are so conscious of their own weakness, that they do not exert themselves as they ought, and hence their low spirits, their melancholy, and their mourning. They think they are of no use to the church, they are half inclined to suspect it was a mistake for them to be baptized, and that they were to blame for uniting themselves with the people of God. "Oh!" say they, "if I be a lamb, I am the sickliest of the whole flock." Were I an

heir of promise, should I feel the assaults of sin as I do? or should I be so much the prey of indwelling corruption, and become so dry and withered? Do they retire to the closet to pray, hardly a word can they utter. They come to, the assembly of believers, and though they do sing with their lips, the heart cannot sing as it would. There are times, too, when walking home they say, "I go where others go, but I get no comfort; if I were really the Lord's, should I be thus; if I did trust Christ, should I ever be so languid?" Brethren, if it is of your own bringing about that you are thus dry, I do not offer you any comfort; but if the Holy Spirit has led you to see your weakness, your nothingness, your deadness, then I am glad you have been brought to this pass, for God will cause the dry tree to flourish. When we are weak, then are we strong. The death warrant is gone out from God against everything that is of the creature. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled; not your bad nature only, but your good nature; not your vices only, but your virtues; not your sins alone, but your graces; all these must be contemned and despised so far as you venture to put them in the place at Christ. You must cry "Away with them; away with them," as if they were so much dung and dross. Christ's blood only for our hope, the Spirit's work only for our life. Here let us stand, and we shall be safe. The dry tree by divine grace shall flourish; the green tree, deserted by the dew of heaven, shall dry up. The low tree, fostered by the husbandman, shall mount even to the stars; the high tree, cut down by the axe of judgment, shall lay outstretched along the plains of ruin for ever.

I think I see the last great day. There is a greater forest than this; this is but one corner of it. I see that forest stretched over sea and land, over mountain and valley. It is a forest of men. There stand the Pharisees, the self-righteous, the tyrants, the autocrats of haughty mien, the men of profound intellect with lofty brows, the men that questioned God's government; the infidels who said "Atheos," and denied his being. I see the high trees, that towered to such an elevation, and attracted so much admiration; and there, too, are the low trees contented to be low, for Christ of Nazareth was lowly. He, whose disciples they are, came riding on an ass even in the day of his highest earthly triumph. And now I hear the trumpet ring exceeding loud and long. Through the glades of that vast human forest the sound comes ringing broad and clear, "Smite! smite!

smite! and let all the high trees fall!" O God, what a crash!

He smote great kings and slew famous kings; for his mercy endureth for ever. He smites. What! another crash? The orthodox who rested in their orthodoxy, and the self-righteous men and women fall there; yonder the philosophic atheist, and here the scoffing sceptic; there the haughty persecutor, and there, again, the pompous priest and pretentious ceremonialist. Gather them; in Tophet, ordained of old, pile them together, cedar upon oak, and elm upon fir, gather them together. pile them on, pile them up; let the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, come upon the mighty pile. It is the funeral pyre of the giants. There lies the dead body of sin, and here comes the living spouse of sin, to be immolated upon that same pile. Her name is Pride. She comes; they clasp. The great transgression and the evil imagination, together they lie down, and the flames arise. Now the cedars, full of resin, give forth their flame, the sparks go up to heaven, and the flames even unto the throne of God, whilst I hear the voices of multitudes singing, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for thou hast judged the great temptress, even Pride, and thou hast given her up to be burned with fire!" But what of you, what of you, that will be faggots to that great burning? What of you, proud sons of men, that will be fuel to that flame? Turn ye, turn ye! Fly ye to Christ, and then you shall stand in the judgment, and join in the anthem, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Oh! that we all may be found among the humble—not the haughty—in our present life, and that we may be gathered among the blessed, not destroyed among those whom the Lord abhorreth, in our future destiny!

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Divine Interpositions

He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. - Psalm 18:16

I do not know how you feel, my brethren, at this time, but as for myself, a heavy cloud seems to hang over me all the day. The overwhelming calamity of last Tuesday, so crushing and so far reaching, of which we must have spoken to each other, I suppose, every hour during the past week, cannot be removed from the thoughts of our minds or from the affections of our hearts. The whole of London may well be likened to that ancient city of which we read—"The city Shushan was perplexed." Every man has been asking his fellow, "Have you lost a friend?" and no man wonders when the answer is, "Alas, I have been sorely bereaved." In our own immediate circle we have borne a special share of the grief, for five, at least, of those who are in church membership with us have been removed from our midst, and we can scarcely speak with any of our brethren without discovering that they have lost some connection or friend. Alas, that unhappy vessel has sunk with a more precious freight than ever loaded Spanish galleon, and her wreck has brought a greater loss to our city than if she had carried untold gold. We cannot help thinking of this dire affliction, and, therefore, we had better think of it with some practical purpose.

I believe that this sudden grief comes, like every other event, from God, and comes as a voice from God to this our city—a voice which, we trust, will be heard and regarded. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." We are of the mind of that old prophet who said, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6.) Cometh there anything in the form of calamity upon the sons of men without the permission, control, and overruling of the Lord? Assuredly not. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." I know that many minds are so stunned by this

tremendous blow, that they can hardly think of God in connection with it, and half wish to believe that the Omnipresent was not there. The problem staggers their reason, and they are unable to leave it among the mysteries of faith. As yet they have not gained the confidence of Job, who denied that affliction cometh out of the dust, but attributed it to the Lord, saying, "He taketh away: who can hinder him?" Even some who love the Lord, and trust him, are somewhat of the mind of Mary and Martha when they said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"; while others who should know better would timidly conceal their belief in an overruling providence, lest the ribald world should scoff at them. Let them scoff, I say; for our God is none the less glorious because his ways are far above and out of our sight. It is an atheistical thought which would put God out of any place; if he be not everywhere, he is nowhere; omnipresence is an essential of Godhead. If his hand ruleth not over evil it is not omnipotent, and thus again it lacks another essential attribute of deity. It would be dreadful to suppose him to have a limited dominion: "His kingdom ruleth over all."

We are not as those who believe in two co-existent forces, each supreme, one of whom shall create disasters, and the other shall distribute blessings. The prince of evil is, according to our faith, subordinate to the great Lord of all. Thus saith Jehovah, by the mouth of his servant Isaiah, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and I create evil: I the Lord do all these things." He reigneth in the calm summer's day, and gives us the precious fruits of harvest, but he is equally present and regnant in the hurricane which destroys, or the blight which desolates. His providence speeds the ship to its desired haven, but it is equally his providence which sinks the barque and its mariners to the bottom of the sea. It is his power which looses the bands of Orion and binds the sweet influence of the Pleiades; his are the lightnings as well as the sunbeams, the thunderbolts as well as the raindrops. He is able to make the heaven as iron and the earth as brass, so that our land shall not yield her increase; he can call for a famine and break the whole staff of bread; for famine, pestilence, and war are as rods in his hand. Everywhere is God, and in all things his hand is present: in the things which seem to us to be evil as well as in the events which appear to us to be good, God is at work. He doeth no wrong, for God is not tempted of evil, neither tempteth he

any man, but we speak of physical evil, which causeth sorrow, pain, and death among men, and we say that certainly God is there. If not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father, we are sure that no great calamity can befall us apart from him. He is not far from us in our deepest sorrow, and however we may trace a calamity to the carelessness or the mistake of men, these are but the second causes, and we see behind all mere detail the permit of the Lord. If it were not so, mourners would be deprived of the greatest reason for submission, and the surest source of consolation.

Even where a terrible event is the result of crime God is not excluded. He shares not the guilt, but he overrules the act. Think of the crucifixion of our Lord, and remember that though the sin of it lay heavy upon those who perpetrated it, yet the grand design of it was God's. Read Peter's words in the Acts: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Who shall deny that God was at Calvary, though sin there reached its culminating point?

We freely admit that we do not understand this, and therefore we do not attempt to explain it; but we believe and adore. Happily, we need not attempt to justify the ways of God to man, for he asks no defense at our hands, and deigns not to give any account of his matters: this only is our resolve, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him."

Now, the question which has very naturally suggested itself to many is this,—If there be a providence, why does it permit these terrible evils? It is dreadful that human life should be lost on such a scale: God is omnipotent, nobody doubts that; why, then, does he not interfere to save? That shall suggest to us the first point of our discourse this morning, that miraculous interpositions in the affairs of this life are not to be expected, and we may not hope literally to use the words of our text and say, "He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters." Still, secondly, we shall note that, according to our text, providential interpositions of another kind are vouchsafed; and thirdly, and best of all, gracious interpositions are given for the salvation of men. What though the Lord doth not nowadays send from above, and take his

servants, and draw them by miracle out of the waters of the river, yet doth he uplift us from the depths of trouble, and especially doth he upbear us from the deeps of sin to our eternal salvation, for thus saith the Lord, "I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people from the depths of the sea."

I. First, then, MIRACULOUS INTERPOSITIONS IN THE CALAMITIES OF THIS LIFE ARE NOT TO BE EXPECTED. I am not standing here as an advocate for God to defend his character because he does not thus interpose, for to objecters his sole answer is, "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" If you will accuse your Maker he will not care to answer you. You who have forged the accusation may fashion an answer, if it seem good unto you. Yet there is a difficulty which none can deny, and that difficulty lies in a fact. Why is there any evil at all, seeing that the good God is almighty, and sits upon the throne? This is the old puzzle which none can answer. The negro put it in a very natural form when he asked the missionary, if God be so much stronger than the devil, why does he not kill the devil and make an end of his mischief? Just so: that is the top and bottom of the matter. There is the question, but who can answer it? A fool may raise in an hour more objections than the wisest man could remove in a century. Now, the cleverest theory will not alter facts. What you and I may think is a very small matter compared with what really is, and it is quite certain that there is moral evil in the world, and that there is also a God; that there is physical evil in the world, and yet love is supreme; and that the Almighty permits fire and water to destroy his creatures, and does not interpose to rescue them, and yet he is full of tenderness and pity. There be some of course who will dare to condemn their Maker, and call him by I know not what horrible names. I have even heard such a word as "monster" hissed from between proud lips. Again I say it is not worth our while to answer such objectors, because such persons are not pervious to explanation, nor willing to receive it; and then again, it is a small matter to the Most High what such persons may think of him. He doeth as he pleases and asks no leave from his creatures.

But now just for a minute let us consider the question which we trust is modestly proposed. Suppose that every time a great danger threatened

we might expect a miraculous interposition from heaven, what then? The supposition is not absurd, for there might be such an interposition: we must admit the possibility since God is almighty. The train is thundering along the iron way, it will dash into another, and many lives will be destroyed, but if the Lord willed it he could put his hand upon the engine and stay it in its full career. The vessel freighted with eight hundred lives is about to sink: but if the Lord willed it he could buoy it up in the hollow of his hand. Yet he does not move; the iron road is strewn with the dead, the river is gorged with corpses. We do not know all the reasons for this non-interference, but yet we think we can see a little, which little we will think upon. For, first, such interpositions would change the whole arrangement of the world: it would not be the same place at all. The Lord has made this world, and he governs it by certain fixed laws. If those laws were variable, and were continually being altered, it would be another form of creation altogether, and man had need to be another creature. His physical, moral, and even spiritual condition would be changed from top to bottom. It was the Lord's arrangement that he should put forth his power in certain ways which we call the laws of nature, and by that arrangement he abides. There is no such independent force as "nature," as some are always dreaming; nor is there any energy in mere laws of nature apart from God's own power. You may write all the laws you like, but there is no power in laws, there must be a power in the king to carry out the laws. All power emanates from God, be it what it may; he is the source and fountain of all the forces which operate throughout creation; but he has been pleased from the beginning to determine that his power shall usually go forth in certain ways, and under fixed laws and regulations. He can suspend those laws when he pleases; he can quench the violence of fire, stop the mouths of lions, and make water to stand upright as a heap; but he has not often done so, and in these days he never does so. I think we can in a measure see why; for if such were the case continually, the whole plan and purpose with which he made the present world would have been abandoned, and another mode of power would have taken its place.

Recollect, too, that whatever the plan of God is, it is now being carried out under the shadow of the Fall. There had been, I suppose, neither pain, nor sickness, nor sighing, nor death, had there been no sin. If had been

possible for a race to have multiplied from the glades of Eden, and to have gone forth into a wider Paradise as pure and holy as Adam first came from his Maker's hands, I can believe that there would have been no famine, no war, no catastrophe of shipwreck by sea, nor of accident by land; but however multitudinous the human race might have become its records would have been all unstained with agonizing details such as those which blacken the broad-sheets of to-day. But, alas, man has fallen, and to a race in such a condition it would not be consistent that everything should be of sunlight and summer; there must now be heard the roar of the storm and the cry of death, as the fruit of sin. Render calamity impossible and what mark would there be of the divine displeasure for man's revolt? Wherein indeed would sin differ as to its consequences from obedience and holiness? Think for a little, and you will see reason for God's staying his hand from rescue.

Furthermore, if interpositions were given to save the lives of godly men alone, as some would have it, then this world would become the place of judgment, which it is not intended to be. It still remains among many persons as a superstition that if there is an accident, and people suffer, there must have been some special sin in the victims of the disaster; and yet our Lord has told us that the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were not sinners above others, and the Galileans who were slain by Pilate were not sinners above other Galileans. I pray you dismiss from your minds the idea that a sudden death is necessarily a judgment. Never draw any inference from the destruction of a building, or the wreck of a ship, or an explosion, or aught of that nature, as to the character of the persons who perish, for if you do you will be guilty of cruel injustice. What if some gracious man be spared, ascribe the deliverance to providence, but do not suppose that those who perished were less gracious than he. You shall find that men of bad character sometimes escape where saints are left to die. Because I said the other day that providence had saved a certain godly woman, foolish persons drew the inference that I condemned those who perished. No sentiment could have been further from my mind. I ascribe to providence death as well as life, and draw no inference as to the character of the person. What if a man has found a watery grave in the Princess Alice, do not therefore imagine that God was angry with him, for he may now be in Paradise, and at any rate the same wreck carried down

with it many of the Lord's beloved. Now, if God were to interpose and save his own people whenever they were in danger, this world would become the place of judicial separation, which it is not and is not meant to be: judgment is reserved for the world to come. When Christ shall descend from heaven with a shout, and sit upon his great white throne—then will he separate the tares from the wheat, but now they are to grow together. Then will he put the goats on the left and the sheep on the right, but for the time present they feed in the same pastures. One event happeneth to them all; as it happeneth to the fool so happeneth it to the wise. This is not the land of judgment, but of longsuffering; not the place wherein God giveth sentence, but waiteth patiently awhile. There is a judgment of nations in this world, but that of individuals, with rare exceptions, is reserved for the final account.

Beloved, note once again that if God were to interpose in the case of all calamities it would involve many evils. For, observe, if next year the mass of farmers should refuse to sow the fields, if over whole nations the land should be left to produce only weeds, there would be great scarcity of corn. Suppose that in such cases God should interpose and cause harvests suddenly to grow by miracle, that our teeming millions might escape starvation, what would be the consequence? Why, it would encourage idleness everywhere; men would say, "The Lord is too good to let us starve, and therefore we may allow the plough to rust, and dance away the hours." Would that be well? Suppose again that when a contagious disease comes into a district the Lord miraculously prevented it from being fatal, although the carelessness of men may have left feverlairs in rotting, overcrowded houses enough to pollute the very air. Suppose, I say, that we all neglected sanitary laws, and then knew that a merciful God would not let the poor people die of fever, or of cholera, then the filthiness of our cities would increase till they became huge dunghills, and man who is great enough now at polluting rivers and defiling God's earth in every imaginable way, would go on to turn the whole earth into one monstrous globe of rottenness. But now even pests and plagues and fevers have their good side, they are watchmen to sound an alarm, prophets to give us warning. They arouse man to discover the laws of his being, and thus they benefit the race. Suppose again that whenever there is a likelihood of there being an accident God were to send an angel at

once to interpose, and avert the collision or the wreck, what would happen? Why then, of course, every railway and steamboat company might go in for accidents in any quantity, seeing they would be harmless, and might even become attractive. There would be no reason for keeping a watch at the ship's bow, and no necessity for breaks or signals. There would be no longer any need to be careful about human life, but we might each one be as reckless as he pleased, and gratify himself with experiments which could not end fatally. Such a state of things would destroy many of the virtues, and render many vices harmless. I cannot suppose a world regulated upon such a system; I can imagine God divinely interposing and suspending his own laws now and then, as pleaseth him, for some great purpose of instruction; but it appears wise and good for all concerned that, having made man what he is, the Creator should rather leave him to take the consequence of violating the fixed laws of matter than make those laws variable and uncertain.

Again, dear friends, divine interpositions of a miraculous sort would not be attended with the advantage to the ungodly which we might suppose, because if there were miracles of mercy on the behalf of God's people to snatch them from a watery grave, or from the devouring element of fire, or from the deadly consequences of a collision, then we might expect to have, and naturally should have, miracles of judgment, too. If you get into the wilderness, and manna falls from heaven, and water leaps from the rock, remember you have also entered a land where the earth opens to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and where the very sand breeds fiery serpents to sting to death the rebels against God. You cannot have the mercy—wonder interposing without having the judgment—wonder side by side with it: and on the whole it is a more lenient mode of dealing on God's part to let sinners alone, and to let one event happen to all men for a while, because the longsuffering of God leadeth the sinner to repentance, and the sorrow that falleth upon the child of God is blessed to him. If all accidental deaths were punishments it would be a far more terrible state of things than that which is now before us; and therefore the matter is best as it is.

If we had wonders of miraculous deliverance often before us they would not impress mankind as we imagine. If God were always suffering the

wicked to drown or burn, and always snatching the righteous from the midst of every danger, men would not think much of it after all; they might be slightly impressed at first, but by-and-by they would harden their hearts. In Egypt there was light in the houses of the Israelites when all was dark with the Egyptians, and God smote Egypt heavily while he was blessing Israel; but this fact did not affect Pharaoh, for he only hardened his heart the more. When in the wilderness the Israelites, murmuring against God, saw some of their companions swallowed up and destroyed, it very little affected them; for soon after they began murmuring against Moses, and charged him with destroying the people of God. All things considered, the arrangement is best as it is, and the Lord knows it is so, and, therefore, continues the method of letting physical law take its course, although occasionally it may destroy hundreds of lives.

Neither would it be so great a gain to the godly, as some imagine, always to have their lives spared in times of danger. We have to die some day, brothers and sisters, and we have nothing here below which might make us anxious to postpone the hour of our departure. It is as well to die one way as another: at least, there is small choice in the modes of death. If one were asked by what death he should glorify God, he might be long in the choosing, and probably would then choose that which would be most painful. Some are afraid to go to sea lest they should be drowned, and yet there is little reason for the fear. When a captain was asked whether he was not afraid to go to sea he said, "Not at all." "But your father was drowned, captain?" "Yes." "Your grandfather was drowned?" "Yes." "Your brothers have been drowned?" "Yes." "Are you not afraid to go to sea?" "No," said he, "not at all; for I may ask you the same question. Your father is dead?" "Yes." "Where did he die?" "In his bed." "And his father, where did he die?" "In his bed." "And his father?" "In his bed." "And your brothers, where have they died?" "In their beds." "Are you not, then, afraid to go to bed?" Certainly we must die somewhere or other, and we shall not die one single minute before the ordained period. I am a sufficient believer in predestination to feel sure that every bullet has its billet, and that no death can befall the man whom God ordains to live, God hath appointed all things, and his people are safe everywhere, whether they live or die. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob,

nor divination against Israel;" the powers of darkness cannot harm us though they put forth all their craft and power. The Lord has declared that he who hath made God his refuge shall abide beneath his shadow, and therefore we may go where duty calls us without trembling, and we may die when God bids our spirit return without the slightest fear. We ask no immunity from death. Why should we be absolved from it? It is better to die than to live full often, inasmuch as it is better to be in heaven than to remain in banishment below. So there I leave that matter of the non-interposition of God to think very briefly of interpositions which do occur.

II. PROVIDENTIAL INTERPOSITIONS ARE FREQUENT AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE: they can often say, "He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters." Divine interpositions come in the way of deliverance from floods of trouble. Have you not experienced them? How strikingly has God delivered some of us! What remarkable preservations of life have we enjoyed; not miraculous, certainly, but full of wonder for all that. We have as much reason to praise God for our deliverances as if the laws of nature had been suspended, for we have been quite as completely preserved. What helps we have had in the hour of sorrow, when one after another our beloved have been taken from us, or when they have gone to the very edge of the grave, and yet have been spared to us. How often have we been helped in business troubles and saved from impending failure or serious loss! In times of slander, when our character has been belied, how graciously has God brought to light our innocence! I say again, not by miracle, but yet very marvellously has our God delivered us. In answer to prayer God worketh in his own way for the good of his people without stopping one single wheel of providence: without violating one single law of nature, God is able to work the same end as we sometimes wish he would work by a miracle. He will not quench the violence of the flame, but yet a precious life shall be snatched from a burning house. He will not prevent the water from drowning, and yet in how many cases in answer to prayer have vessels been saved and the lives of men preserved by unexpected incidents! He will not stop the ordinary run of business, nor alter the way in which the world goes on, and yet he knows how to help the poor, and to bless the struggling tradesman, and to bring up the righteous from deep distress. A miracle is a rough

procedure after all, if I may dare say so, compared with the Lord's present methods. The grandest achievement of all is for the Lord God to work miraculous results without miracles, to produce by common means, in answer to the cry of his servants, that which appears to be impossible without a suspension of natural laws. See how the Lord allows all the forces of nature to drive on in their ordinary course, and yet the outcome of it all is that his servant is delivered and his prayers answered.

God doth this by very varied ways. We have known some who have been brought out of deep waters by having health suddenly restored to them, or by having the health of those upon whom their maintenance depended renewed. This is God's mercy, and let him be praised for it. Sometimes circumstances have greatly changed; a man has been going down hill for years as to his business, but something quite unexpected has happened, and he has just as gradually risen to a position of comfort. My friends, believe in the unexpected. I was about to utter a paradox, and say expect the unexpected. Believe that God will do for you something which you know nothing about. The Lord always has a plan in reserve. You think he has reached his last, and you will be left to perish; but it is not so. At the right moment he will bring forth some new and surprising stroke of wisdom, which he did but postpone to the particular moment, so that when he performs it, and draws his servant out of deep waters, the praise and the glory will the more fully redound to his name. We have known the Lord save his servants in the hour of trouble by touching the hearts of their enemies; those that were most unkind and cruel have suddenly become the most generous and thoughtful. At other times enemies have died or have been put to confusion, like the wicked Haman when he plotted the destruction of the Jews. The Lord has hanged up Haman that his chosen might be delivered. Mordecai has gone from the king's gate to the king's house, and Haman has ascended from the king's table to the king's gallows. I cannot instance all the ways in which the Lord makes clear the pathway of his people, but this I know that often in our lives some of us have had to pause and sing, "He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters."

Some will not see the hand of God, but I warrant you, brethren, those who have been delivered out of the deep waters will see it. Their

experience teaches them that God is yet among us. Others may talk about "laws of nature," as if God were gone to sleep and had left the world wound up like a watch to go without him; but those who have been in sore affliction and tribulation, and have been brought out therefrom, will for ever bless and extol him who is a very present help in trouble. Yes, my brethren, the way by which we have come hitherto is as full of God as this city is full of men. There are deserts which the foot of man hath never trodden, but there is no wilderness where the foot of God hath not been. What say you, my beloved friends, you are not fanatics, neither has the enthusiasm of devotion carried you out of your minds; but are you not conscious of distinct providential deliverances? "Conscious of them," say you, "indeed, if we did not speak of them with joy and thankfulness, the very stones of the street would cry out against us for our wicked silence. Many and many a time hath he sent from above, and rescued us. We are, like Moses, drawn out of the waters, and like him we would be servants of the Lord."

III. Now, thirdly, INTERPOSITIONS IN MATTERS OF GRACE ARE THE CHIEF OF ALL. As best I can I should like to conclude with a few words upon this subject. God does not, even to save the souls of his chosen, violate any of his laws. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Every transgression shall have its just punishment and reward." Yet the Lord would save his people. How should he make these two things agree,—how should he be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly? It is in the person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ that we see how one law has been made to counteract and yet to honor another, to remove its direful consequence and yet to make it honorable. You recollect that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered; and there was a law made by Ahasuerus that on a certain day the people of all countries might gather themselves together and kill the Jews. Haman had promulgated this royal edict far and wide, and the king could not alter it. Mark the wise method by which the cruel law was met; they made another law, which was—that the Jews might defend themselves, might slay those who tried to kill them, and take all their property for a spoil. This met the case, though no edict was revoked. Now, God does not and never will alter his law that sin must be punished; but forth comes another law that, inasmuch as the first sin was committed by a representative man, a representative man should be

permitted to come in and bear the penalty which was consequent thereon. This has been done; no law has been broken, and yet God's mercy has had free course.

Now let us think a minute or two upon this great salvation and how it is described in the text. "He sent from above." Oh, blessed Lord, the whole race of man was sinking in the old vessel of the covenant of works which had been cut in pieces by the first sin; they were all going down en masse to destruction. Then thou didst send from above. But who was he that was sent? Not the brightest of the cherubim nor the chief of the angelic band, but HE came, the messenger of the covenant, whom we delight in, the Son of God, the only begotten of the Most High, the brightness of his Father's glory. He was the Messiah, the sent one, and he descended from above that he might work out our redemption. Brethren, let your hearts leap for joy as you behold the messenger of the covenant of grace, even Jesus Christ, the adorable and ever blessed Son of the Highest.

Now, note the next word, "He took me." When we had lost all hold on God then did this blessed messenger take hold on us. He accepted us as the Father's gift to him, and accepted a charge as the great Shepherd of the sheep, that he would keep and preserve those whom his Father gave him, though they were ready to perish. Then what a hold he took on us. He took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham, by becoming a man. Babe in Bethlehem, laborer at Nazareth, suffering man at Gethsemane, thou hast taken indeed a hold on us, such as thou wouldst not relax in life or death! "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and so being sent from above he took hold upon us.

Then what a wondrous drawing took place after that grip had once been given, He drew us out of many waters, entering into them himself, plunging into the rivers of grief and infirmity, and then into the waters of the curse, being "made a curse for us": descending deep, as it were, into the very depths of hell to bring up the Lord's jewels, that they might be delivered from the pit. Oh, the matchless uplifting which he gave to us when he drew us out of many waters by his own suffering life and agonizing death. Fix your eyes, brethren, upon the work of Jesus. See the human race all sinking. Behold how hopeless and helpless it is; and see

him descending, walking the waters, snatching with his own right hand sinking men and women from the billows of destruction, and landing them on the Rock of Ages, putting a new song into their mouths. As you feel that you are partakers of this deliverance, let each one of you say, "He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters."

This was the great deed itself, but, just a minute, I ask you to remember the application of it to your own experience. Do you recollect when you felt everything sinking from beneath you? My own self-wreck will help me to describe your experience. I had sailed on gallantly in the good vessel of my own works, hearing music, and full of delight, never dreaming of danger; but suddenly the law of God came along, moving unswervingly in its terrible course, and it cut into the vessel of my works, as though it had been vanity itself. Down it began to sink, and I with it. I looked around for something I could lay hold upon, but nothing availed. The priest was there and offered me his inventions, but I knew him of old, and knew that he would sink as well as I. What, then, could he do for me? Ceremonials were there, but I knew that they prove bubbles to a man who trusts in them. Hopes of salvation by self-mortification were there, and the like, but they clearly could not bear the weight of such a sinner as I was. I sank, I sank, nor had I will or wish to be saved, nor did I struggle for life; yet Jesus came, whose will of grace precedes our will, whose purpose of love outruns our desire for salvation. "He took me": well do I recollect his grasp. He took me and made me more conscious of my danger than I had been before. He took me, by his Holy Spirit, and I knew that he had taken me, for I began to feel his grip tightening upon me. He drew me gradually to look at him, to trust him, and to leave myself and all my hopes entirely in his hand, then he drew me right out of the many waters and made my heart to sing for joy. Do you not recollect the time with yourself? As you look with wonder upon some friend who has been rescued from the great calamity of this week, I want you to feel that you may look with equal wonder upon yourself, for you have experienced a greater rescue. You have been delivered from sinking into the pit that hath no bottom, a sinking down in sin and into the lower depths of corruption. He came from heaven, he took you, he drew you out of many waters, therefore praise and bless his name! You were too anxious to hope, and yet he taught you to hope in his mercy. You were too despairing to struggle, but

he made you exercise holy violence to enter the kingdom. You were too weary and despondent to trust, but he led you to faith. His divine Spirit wrought all your works in you, and here you are sitting in this house of prayer this morning to say, "He hath delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."

Now, I should not wonder if since then you have been pretty nearly shipwrecked as to your spiritual hopes, and have a second and a third time been rescued. You have begun to grow somewhat cold, and you have wandered from the Lord, and you have, therefore, dreaded the total destruction of all true religion within your spirit. Then you have cried out in fear "I have been a hypocrite, or a mere formalist, and shall perish after all." But when you were ready to give all up under the temptation of the powers of darkness the Lord has again restored you. Has he not sent from above and taken you out of the deep yet again? Yes, blessed be his name, he has sought you and led you back to his ways. If I address a backslider who feels as if he were sinking deeper and deeper, I would pray for him that he may yet know how Christ can save a sinking Peter and bring a runaway Jonah to the shore again.

Last of all, we shall soon come into the many waters of death: sooner, perhaps, than we think. To some the stream of death is very shallow. We have known certain of the saints go over dry-shod, singing all the way. They can hardly have been conscious of death, nor have known when they were last on earth and when they were first in heaven. But there are others who have to cross Jordan at a time when it overfloweth its banks, and, like Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress," they are up to their necks in the stream, and need words of comfort. You remember how one said, "Fear not, brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good." There is a rocky bottom all the way across. No slippery sand nor sucking mud, but sound rock from shore to shore, and however deep it is, it is never so deep as to drown a believer's hope, nor destroy his soul. Yet I can imagine the best of saints to be flooded with many troubles in their last hours—physical weakness, depression of spirit, temptations of Satan, family difficulties, all increase the swellings of Jordan. Do you know what will happen? He will send from above, he will take you, and he will draw you out of many waters, and you shall rise to glory. What a heaven of heavens above

others will you feel when you go right up from the depths to the heights! To leap right away from de profundis to in excelsis, from the death-sweat and the expiring faintness to the ecstasy and the ineffable glory, how transcendent the bliss! What an exchange it will be, brethren, for those who have grown old and decrepit, or for those who could scarcely say even a word to testify their dying faith, to find themselves on a sudden rid of every ache and pain, and all their withering flesh, and to be disembodied in perfect liberty, charmed with the beatific vision of their Lord, from whom they are never to part again. Why, methinks, we might almost choose the death-road of the two. Some are very fond of expecting that their Lord will surely come in time to prevent their dying. Ah, well, you may be very thankful if it happens, but I do not think it is the way I shall go, nor can I say that I envy you the prospect in which you delight. In heaven you will come to us who die, and ask us—What was it to fall asleep in Jesus? What was the feeling of putting off the body? What was the joy of being made like our Covenant Head in death? I do not say that you will regret that you did not descend into the tomb, but of this I am sure, none of us who shall sleep will think that you had any preference over us.

"Where should the dying members rest,
But with their dying Head?"

If the Master went that way, descending into the sepulcher, and so up by the hill of resurrection to the golden gate, we will not even envy Enoch and Elias, though they were permitted to take the reserved route, and enter the city by the postern gate. It shall be all well with us if we are resting in Jesus, for at the last he will send from above and take us, and draw us out of many waters. To his name be praises. Amen.

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Divine Sovereignty

Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? - Matthew 20:15

The householder says, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" and even so does the God of heaven and earth ask this question of you this morning, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" There is no attribute of God more comforting to his children than the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe troubles, they believe that Sovereignty hath ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children of God ought more earnestly to contend than the dominion of their Master over all creation -- the kingship of God over all the works of his own hands -- the throne of God, and his right to sit upon that throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a foot-ball, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on his throne. They will allow him to be in his workshop to fashion worlds and to make stars. They will allow him to be in his almonry to dispense his alms and bestow his bounties. They will allow him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends his throne, his creatures then gnash their teeth; and when we proclaim an enthroned God, and his right to do as he wills with his own, to dispose of his creatures as he thinks well, without consulting them in the matter, then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on his throne is not the God they love. They love him anywhere better than they do when he sits with his scepter in his hand and his crown upon his head. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon his throne whom we trust. It is God upon his throne of whom we have been singing this morning; and it is God upon his throne of whom we shall speak in this discourse. I shall dwell only, however, upon one portion of God's Sovereignty, and that is God's Sovereignty in the distribution of his gifts. In this respect I believe he has a right to do as he wills with his own, and that he exercises that right.

We must assume, before we commence our discourse, one thing certain, namely, that all blessings are gifts and that we have no claim to them by

our own merit. This I think every considerate mind will grant. And this being admitted, we shall endeavor to show that he has a right seeing they are his own to do what he wills with them -- to withhold them wholly if he pleaseth -- to distribute them all if he chooseth -- to give to some and not to others -- to give to none or to give to all, just as seemeth good in his sight. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

We shall divide God's gifts into five classes. First, we shall have gifts temporal; second, gifts saving; third, gifts honorable; fourth, gifts useful; and fifth, gifts comfortable. Of all these we shall say, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

I. In the first place then, we notice GIFTS TEMPORAL. It is an indisputable fact that God hath not, in temporal matters, given to every man alike; that he hath not distributed to all his creatures the same amount of happiness or the same standing in creation. There is a difference. Mark what a difference there is in men personally (for we shall consider men chiefly); one is born like Saul a head and shoulders taller than the rest -- another shall live all his life a Zaccheus -- a man short of stature. One has a muscular frame and a share of beauty -- another is weak, and far from having anything styled comeliness. How many do we find whose eyes have never rejoiced in the sunlight, whose ears have never listened to the charms of music, and whose lips have never been moved to sounds intelligible or harmonious. Walk through the earth and you will find men superior to yourself in vigor, health, and fashion, and others who are your inferiors in the very same respects. Some here are preferred far above their fellows in their outward appearance, and some sink low in the scale and have nothing about them that can make them glory in the flesh. Why hath God given to one man beauty and to another none; to one all his senses, and to another but a portion? why, in some, hath he quickened the sense of apprehension, while others are obliged to bear about them a dull and stubborn body? We reply, let men say what they will, that no answer can be given except this, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." The old Pharisee asked, "Did this man sin or his parents, that he was born blind?" We know that there was neither sin in parents nor child, that he was born blind, or that others have suffered similar distresses, but that God has done as it has pleased him in the

distribution of his earthly benefits, and thus hath said to the world, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

Mark, also, in the distribution of mental gifts, what a difference exists. All men are not like Socrates; there are but few Platos; we can discover but here and there a Bacon; we shall but every now and then converse with a Sir Isaac Newton. Some have stupendous intellects wherewith they can unravel secrets -- fathom the depths of oceans -- measure mountains - dissect the sunbeams, and weigh the stars. Others have but shallow minds. You may educate and educate but can never make them great. You cannot improve what is not there. They have not genius, and you cannot impart it. Anybody may see that there is an inherent difference in men from their very birth. Some, with a little education do surpass those who have been elaborately trained. There are two boys educated it may be in the same school, by the same master, and they shall apply themselves to their studies with the same diligence, but yet one shall far outstrip his fellow. Why is this? Because God hath asserted his sovereignty over the intellect as well as the body. God hath not made us all alike, but diversified his "gifts. One man is as eloquent as Whitfield; another stammers if he but speaks three words of his mother tongue. What makes these various differences between man and man? We answer, we must refer it all to the Sovereignty of God, who does as he wills with his own.

Note, again, what are the differences of men's conditions in this world. Mighty minds are from time to time discovered in men whose limbs are wearing the chains of slavery, and whose backs are laid bare to the whip - - they have black skins, but are in mind vastly superior to their brutal masters. So, too, in England; we find wise men often poor, and rich men not seldom ignorant and vain. One comes into the world to be arrayed at once in the imperial purple -- another shall never wear aught but the humble garb of a peasant. One has a palace to dwell in and a bed of down for his repose, while another finds but a hard resting-place, and shall never have a more sumptuous covering than the thatch of his own cottage. If we ask the reason for this, the reply still is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." So, in other ways you will observe in passing through life how sovereignty displays itself. To one man God giveth a long life and uniform health, so that he scarcely knows what it is

to have a day's sickness, while another totters through the world and finds a grave at almost every step, feeling a thousand deaths in fearing one. One man, even in extreme old age, like Moses, has his eye undimmed; and though his hair is grey, he stands as firmly on his feet as when a young man in his father's house. Whence, again, we ask is this difference? And the only adequate answer is, it is the effect of Jehovah's Sovereignty. You find, too, that some men are cut off in the prime of their life -- the very midst of their days -- while others live beyond their threescore years and ten. One departs before he has reached the first stage of existence, and another has his life lengthened out until it becomes quite a burden, we must, I conceive, necessarily trace the cause of all these differences in life to the fact of God's Sovereignty. He is Ruler and King, and shall he not do as he wills with his own.

We pass from this point -- but before we do so we must stop to improve it just a moment. O thou who art gifted with a noble frame, a comely body, boast not thyself therein, for thy gifts come from God. O glory not, for if thou gloriest thou becomes uncomely in a moment. The flowers boast not of their beauty, nor do the birds sing of their plumage. Be ye not vain ye daughters of beauty; be not exalted ye sons of comeliness; and O ye men of might and intellect, remember, that all you have is bestowed by a Sovereign Lord: he did create; he can destroy. There are not many steps between the mightiest intellect and the helpless idiot -- deep thought verges on insanity. Thy brain may at any moment, be smitten, and thou be doomed henceforth to live a madman. Boast not thyself of all that thou knowest, for even the little knowledge thou hast has been given thee. Therefore, I say, exalt not thyself above measure, but use for God what God has given thee, for it is a royal gift, and thou shouldst not lay it aside. But if the Sovereign Lord has given thee one talent, and no more, lay it not up in a napkin, but use it well, and then it may be that he will give thee more. Bless God that thou hast more than others, and thank him also that he has given thee less than others, for thou hast less to carry on thy shoulders, and the lighter thy burden the less cause wilt thou have to groan as thou travellest on towards the better land. Bless God then if thou possesseth less than thy fellows, and see his goodness in withholding as well as in giving.

II. So far most men probably have gone with us; but when we come to the second point, GIFTS SAVING, there will a large number who will go from us because they cannot receive our doctrine. When we apply this truth regarding the Divine Sovereignty to man's salvation, then we find men standing up to defend their poor fellow creatures whom they conceive to be injured by God's predestination. But I never heard of men standing up for the devil, and yet think if any of God's creatures have a right to complain of his dealings it is the fallen angels. For their sin they were hurled from heaven at once, and we read not that any message of mercy was ever sent to them. Once cast out, their doom was sealed; while men were respited, redemption sent into their world, and a large number of them chosen to eternal life. Why not quarrel with Sovereignty in the one case as well as the other. We say that God has elected a people out of the human race, and his right to do this is denied. But I ask, why not equally dispute the fact that God has chosen men and not fallen angels, or his justice in such a choice. If salvation be a matter of right, surely the angels had as much claim to mercy as men. Were they not seated in more than equal dignity? Did they sin more? We think not. Adam's sin was so wilful and complete, that we cannot suppose a greater sin than that which he committed. Would not the angels who were thrust out of heaven have been of greater service to their Maker if restored, than we can ever be? Had we been the judges in this matter we might have given deliverance to angels but not to men. Admire then, Divine Sovereignty and love, that whereas the angels were broken into shivers, God hath raised an elect number of the race of men to set them among princes, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Note again, the Divine Sovereignty, in that God chose the Israelitish race and left the Gentiles for years in darkness. Why was Israel instructed and saved, while Syria was left to perish in idolatry? Was the one race purer in its origin and better in its character than the other? Did not the Israelites take unto themselves false gods a thousand times, and provoke the true God to anger and loathing? Why then, should they be favored above their fellows? Why did the sun of heaven shine upon them while all around the nations were left in darkness, and were sinking into hell by myriads? Why? The only answer that can be given is this, that God is a Sovereign, and "will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will

he hardeneth." So now, also, why is it that God hath sent his word to us while a multitude of people are still without his word? Why do we each come up to God's tabernacle, Sabbath after Sabbath, privileged to listen to the voice of the minister of Jesus, while other nations have not been visited thereby? Could not God have caused the light to shine in the darkness there as well as here? Could not he, if he had pleased, have sent forth messengers swift as the light to proclaim his gospel over the whole earth? He could have done it if he would. Since we know that he has not done it, we bow in meekness, confessing his right to do as he wills with his own.

But let me drive the doctrine home once more. Behold how God displays his Sovereignty in this fact, that out of the same congregation, those who hear the same minister, and listen to the same truth, the one is taken and the other left. Why is it that one of my hearers shall sit in yonder pew, and her sister by her side, and yet that the effect of the preaching shall be different upon each? They have been nursed on the same knee, rocked in the same cradle, educated under the same auspices, they hear the same minister, with the same attention -- why is it that the one shall be saved and the other left? Far be it from us to weave any excuse for the man who is damned: we know of none: but also, far be it from us to take glory from God. We assert that GOD makes the difference -- that the saved sister will not have to thank herself but her God. There shall even be two men given to drunkenness. Some word spoken shall pierce one of them through, but the other shall sit unmoved, although they shall, in all respects, be equally the same both in constitution and education. What is the reason? You will reply, perhaps, because the one accepts and the other rejects the message of the gospel. But must you not come back to the question, who made the one accept it, and who made the other reject it? I dare you to say that the man made himself to differ. You must admit in your conscience that it is God alone to whom this power belongs. But those who dislike this doctrine are nevertheless up in arms against us, and they say, how can God justly make such a difference between the members of his family? Suppose a father should have a certain number of children, and he should give to one all his favors, and consign the others to misery -- should we not say that he was a very unkind and cruel father? I answer, yes. But the cases are not the same. You have not a father to deal with, but a judge.

You say all men are God's children; I demand of you to prove that. I never read it in my Bible. I dare not say, "Our father which art in heaven," till I am regenerated. I cannot rejoice in the fatherhood of God towards me till I know that I am one with him, and a joint heir with Christ. I dare not claim the fatherhood of God as an unregenerated man. It is not father and child -- for the child has a claim upon its father -- but it is King and subject; and not even so high a relation as that, for there is a claim between Subject and King. A creature -- a sinful creature, can have no claim upon God; for that would be to make salvation of works and not of grace. If men can merit Salvation, then to save them is only the payment of a debt, and he gives them nothing more than he ought to give them. But we assert that grace must be distinguishing if it be grace at all. O, but some say is it not written that "He giveth to every man a measure of grace to profit withal?" If you like to repeat that wonderful quotation so often hurled at my head, you are very welcome, for it is no quotation from Scripture, unless it be an Arminian edition. The only passage at all like it refers to the spiritual gifts of the saints and the saints only. But I say, granted your supposition, that a measure of grace is given to every man to profit withal, yet he has given to some a measure of particular grace to make that profit. For what do you mean by grace, which I put out, to profit? I can understand a man's improvement in the use of grease, but grace improved and made use of by the power of man I cannot comprehend. Grace is not a thing which I use; grace is something which uses me. But people talk of grace sometimes as if it was something they could use, and not as influence having power over them. Grace is something not which I improve, but which improves me, employs me, works on me; and let people talk as they will about universal grace, it is all nonsense, there is no such thing, nor can there be. They may talk correctly of universal blessings, because we see that the natural gifts of God are scattered everywhere, more or less, and men may receive or reject them. It is not so, however, with grace. Men cannot take the grace of God and employ it in turning themselves from darkness to light. The light does not come to the darkness and say, use me; but the light comes and drives the darkness away. Life does not come to the dead man and say, use me, and be restored to life; but it comes with a power of its own and restores to life. The spiritual influence does not come to the dry bones and say, use this power and clothe yourselves with flesh; but it

comes and clothes them with flesh, and the work is done. Grace is a thing which comes and exercises an influence on us.

"The sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of grace
Born in the image of his Son,
A new-created race."

And we say to all of you who gnash your teeth at this doctrine, whether you know it or not, you have a vast deal of enmity towards God in your hearts; for until you can be brought to know this doctrine, there is something which you have not yet discovered, which makes you opposed to the idea of God absolute, God unbounded, God unfettered, God unchanging, and God having a free will, which you are so fond of proving that the creature possesses. I am persuaded that the Sovereignty of God must be held by us if we would be in a healthy state of mind. "Salvation is of the Lord alone." Then give all the glory to his holy name, to whom all glory belongs.

III. We now come, in the third place, to notice the differences which God often makes in his Church in HONORABLE GIFTS. There is a difference made between God's own children -- when they are his children. Note what I mean: One hath the honorable gift of knowledge, another knows but little. I meet, every now and then, with a dear Christian brother with whom I could talk for a month, and learn something from him every day. He has had deep experience -- he has seen into the deep things of God -- his whole life has been a perpetual study wherever he has been. He seems to have gathered thoughts, not from books merely, but from men, from God, from his own heart. He knows all the intricacies and windings of Christian experience: he understands the height, the depths, the lengths, and the breadths of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. He has gained a grand idea, an intimate knowledge of the system of grace, and can vindicate the dealings of the Lord with his people.

Then you meet with another who has passed through many troubles, but he has no deep acquaintance with Christian experience. He never learned a single secret by all his troubles. He just floundered out of one trouble

into another, but never stopped to pick up any of the jewels that lay in the mire -- never tried to discover the precious jewels that lay in his afflictions. He knows very little more of the heights and depths of the Savior's love than when he first came into the world. You may converse with such a man as long as you like, but you will get nothing from him. If you ask why is it, I answer, there is a Sovereignty of God in giving knowledge to some and not to others. I was walking the other day with an aged Christian, who told me how he had profited by my ministry. There is nothing humbles me like that thought of yon old man deriving experience in the things of God, receiving instruction in the ways of the Lord from a mere babe in grace. But I expect that when I am an old man, if I should live to be such, that some babe in grace will instruct me. God sometimes shutteth the mouth of the old man and openeth the mouth of the child. Why should we be a teacher to hundreds who are, in some respects, far more able to teach us? The only answer we can find is in the Divine Sovereignty, and we must bow before it, for has he not a right to do as he wills with his own? Instead of being envious of those who have the gift of knowledge, we should seek to gain the same, if possible. Instead of sitting down and murmuring that we have not more knowledge, we should remember that the foot cannot say to the head, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of thee, for God hath given us talents as it hath pleased him.

Note, again, when speaking of honorable gifts. Not only knowledge, but office is an honorable gift. There is nothing more honorable to a man than the office of a deacon or a minister. We magnify our office, though we would not magnify ourselves. We hold there is nothing can dignify a man more than being appointed to an office in a Christian church. I would rather be a deacon of a church than Lord Mayor of London. To be a minister of Christ is in my estimation an infinitely higher honor than the world can bestow. My pulpit is to me more desirable than a throne, and my congregation is an empire more than large enough; an empire before which the empires of the earth dwindle into nothing in everlasting importance. Why does God give to one man a special call by the Holy Ghost, to be a minister, and pass by another? There is another man more gifted, perhaps, but we dare not put him in a pulpit, because he has not had a special call. So with the deaconship; the man whom some would perhaps think most suitable for the office is passed by, and another

chosen. There is a manifestation of God's Sovereignty in the appointment to office -- in putting David on a throne, in making Moses the leader of the children of Israel through the wilderness, in choosing Daniel to stand among princes, in electing Paul to be the minister to the Gentiles, and Peter to be the Apostle of the Circumcision. And you who have not the gift of honorable office, must learn the great truth contained in the question of the Master, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

There is another honorable gift, the gift of utterance. Eloquence hath more power over men than all else besides. If a man would have power over the multitude, he must seek to touch their hearts, and chain their ears. There are some men who are like vessels full of knowledge to the brim, but having no means of giving it forth to the world. They are rich in all gems of learning, but know not how to set them in the golden ring of eloquence. They can collect the choicest of flowers, but know not how to tie them up in a sweet garland to present them to the admirer's eye. How is this? We say again, the Sovereignty of God is here displayed in the distribution of gifts honorable. Learn here, O Christian man, if you have gifts to cast the honor of them at the Savior's feet, and if you possess them not, learn not to murmur; remember that God is equally as kind when he keepeth back as when he distributeth his favors. If any among you be exalted, let him not be puffed up; if any be lowly, let him not be despised; for God giveth to every vessel his measure of grace. Serve him after your measure, and adore the King of Heaven who doth as he pleaseth.

IV. We notice in the fourth place, the gift of USEFULNESS. I have often done wrong in finding fault with brother ministers for not being useful, I have said you might have been as useful as I have been had you been in earnest. But surely there are others even more earnest, and more efficient: others laboring as constantly, but with far less effect. And, therefore, let me retract my accusation, and in lieu thereof assert that the gift of usefulness is the result of God's Sovereignty. It is not in man to be useful, but in God to make him useful. We may labor ourselves with all our might, but God alone can make us useful. We can put every stitch of canvass on when the wind blows, but we cannot make the wind blow.

The Sovereignty of God is seen also in the diversity of ministerial gifts.

You go to one minister and are fed with plenty of good food: another has not enough to feed a mouse; he has plenty of reproof, but no food for the child of God. Another can comfort the child of God, but he cannot reprove a backslider. He has not strength of mind enough to give those earnest home strokes which are sometimes needed. And what is the reason! God's Sovereignty. One can wield the sledge hammer but could not heal a broken heart. If he were to attempt it, you would be reminded of an elephant trying to thread a needle. Such a man can reprove, but he cannot apply oil and wine to a bruised conscience. Why? Because God hath not given to him the gift. There is another one who always preaches experimental divinity; and very rarely touches upon doctrine. Another is all doctrine, and cannot preach much about Jesus Christ and him crucified. Why? God hath not given him the gift of doctrine. Another always preaches Jesus -- blessed Jesus; men of the Hawker school -- and many say, oh! they do not give us experience enough; they do not go into the deep experience of the corruption which vexes the children of God. But we do not blame them for this. You will notice that out of the same man will at one time flow streams of living water, while at another time he will be as dry as possible. On one Sabbath you go away refreshed by the preaching, and the next you get no good. There is Divine Sovereignty in all this, and we must learn to recognize and admire it. I was preaching on one occasion last week to a large crowd of people, and in one part of the sermon the people were very much affected; I felt that the power of God was there; one poor creature absolutely shrieked out because of the wrath of God against sin; but at another time the same words might have been uttered and there might have been the same desire in the minister's heart, and yet no effect produced. We must trace, I say, Divine Sovereignty in all such cases. We ought to recognize God's hand in everything. But the present is the most godless generation that ever trod this earth, I verily believe. In our fathers, days there was hardly a shower but they declared that God caused it to fall; and they had prayers for rain, prayers for sunshine, and prayers for harvest; as well when a haystack was on fire, as when a famine desolated the land; our forefathers said, the Lord hath done it. But now our philosophers try to explain everything, and trace all phenomena to second causes. But brethren, let it be ours to ascribe the origin and direction of all things to the Lord, and the Lord alone.

V. Lastly, GIFTS COMFORTABLE are of God. O, what comfortable gifts do some of us enjoy in the ordinances of God's house, and in a ministry that is profitable. But how many churches have not a ministry of that kind; and why then have we? Because God hath made a difference. Some here have strong faith, and can laugh at impossibilities; we can sing a song in all ill weathers -- in the tempest as well as in the calm. But there is another with little faith who is in danger of tumbling down over every straw. We trace eminent faith entirely to God. One is born with a melancholy temperament, and he sees a tempest brewing even in the calm; while another is cheerful, and sees a silver lining to every cloud, however black, and he is a happy man. But why is that? Comfortable gifts come of God. And then observe that we ourselves, differ at times. For a season we may have blessed intercourse with heaven, and be permitted to look within the veil? but anon, these delightful enjoyments are gone. But do we murmur on that account? May he not do as he will with his own? May he not take back what he has given? The comforts we possess were his before they were ours.

"And shouldst thou take them all away,
Yet would I not repine,
Before they were possessed by me
They were entirely shine."

There is no joy of the Spirit -- there is no exceeding blessed hope -- no strong faith -- no burning desire -- no close fellowship with Christ, which is not the gift of God, and which we must not trace to him. When I am in darkness and suffer disappointment, I will look up and say, he giveth songs in the night; and when I am made to rejoice, I will say, my mountain shall stand fast for ever. The Lord is a Sovereign Jehovah; and, therefore, prostrate at his feet I lie, and if I perish, I will perish there.

But let me say, brethren, that so far from this doctrine of Divine Sovereignty making you to sit down in sloth, I hope in God it will have a tendency to humble you, and so to lead you to say, "I am unworthy of the least of all thy mercies. I feel that thou hast a right to do with me as thou wilt. If thou dost crush me, a helpless worm, thou wilt not be dishonored;

and I have no right to ask thee to have compassion upon me, save this, that I want thy mercy. Lord, if thou wilt, thou art able to pardon, and thou never gavest grace to one that wanted it more. Because I am empty, fill me with the bread of heaven; because I am naked, clothe me with thy robe; because I am dead, give me life." If you press that plea with all your soul and all your mind, though Jehovah is a Sovereign, he will stretch out his scepter and save, and thou shalt live to worship him in the beauty of holiness, loving and adoring his gracious sovereignty. "He that believeth" is the declaration of Scripture "and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." He that believeth in Christ alone, and is baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, shall be saved, but he who rejecteth Christ and believeth not in him, shall be damned. That is the Sovereign decree and proclamation of heaven -- bow to it, acknowledge it, obey it, and God bless you.

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Do You Know Him?

That I may know him. - Philippians 3:10

The object of the apostle's life—that for which he sacrificed everything: country, kindred, honor, comfort, liberty, and life itself, was, that he might know Christ. Observe that this is not Paul's prayer as an unconverted man, that he may know Christ, and so be saved; for it follows upon the previous supplication that he might win Christ and be found in him. This is the desire of one who has been saved, who enjoys the full conviction that his sins are pardoned, and that he is in Christ. It is only the regenerated and saved man who can feel the desire, "That I may know him." Are you astonished that a saved man should have such a desire as this? A moment's reflection will remove your astonishment. Imagine for a moment that you are living in the age of the Roman emperors. You have been captured by Roman soldiers and dragged from your native country; you have been sold for a slave, stripped, whipped,

branded, imprisoned, and treated with shameful cruelty. At last you are appointed to die in the amphitheatre, to make holiday for a tyrant. The populace assemble with delight. There they are, tens of thousands of them, gazing down from the living sides of the capacious Colosseum. You stand alone, and naked, armed only with a single dagger—a poor defense against gigantic beasts. A ponderous door is drawn up by machinery, and forth there rushes the monarch of the forest—a huge lion; you must slay him or be torn to pieces. You are absolutely certain that the conflict is too stern for you, and that the sure result must and will be that those terrible teeth will grind your bones and drip with your blood. You tremble; your joints are loosed; you are paralyzed with fear, like the timid deer when the lion has dashed it to the ground. But what is this? O wonder of mercy!—a deliverer appears. A great unknown leaps from among the gazing multitude, and confronts the savage monster. He quails not at the roaring of the devourer, but dashes upon him with terrible fury, till, like a whipped cur, the lion slinks towards his den, dragging himself along in pain and fear. The hero lifts you up, smiles into your bloodless face, whispers comfort in your ear, and bids you be of good courage, for you are free. Do you not think that there would arise at once in your heart a desire to know your deliverer? As the guards conducted you into the open street, and you breathed the cool, fresh air, would not the first question be, "Who was my deliverer, that I may fall at his feet and bless him?" You are not, however, informed, but instead of it you are gently led away to a noble mansion house, where your many wounds are washed and healed with salve of rarest power. You are clothed in sumptuous apparel; you are made to sit down at a feast; you eat and are satisfied; you rest upon the softest down. The next morning you are attended by servants who guard you from evil and minister to your good. Day after day, week after week, your wants are supplied. You live like a courtier. There is nothing that you can ask which you do not receive. I am sure that your curiosity would grow more and more intense till it would ripen into an insatiable craving. You would scarcely neglect an opportunity of asking the servants, "Tell me, who does all this, who is my noble benefactor, for I must know him?" "Well, but" they would say, "is it not enough for you that you are delivered from the lion?" "Nay," say you, "it is for that very reason that I pant to know him." "Your wants are richly supplied—why are you vexed by curiosity as to the hand which reaches you the boon? If your garment

is worn out, there is another. Long before hunger oppresses you, the table is well loaded. What more do you want?" But your reply is, "It is because I have no wants, that, therefore, my soul longs and yearns even to hungering and to thirsting, that I may know my generous loving friend." Suppose that as you wake up one morning, you find lying up on your pillow a precious love-token from your unknown friend, a ring sparkling with jewels and engraved with a tender inscription, a bouquet of flowers bound about with a love-motto! Your curiosity now knows no bounds. But you are informed that this wondrous being has not only done for you what you have seen, but a thousand deeds of love which you did not see, which were higher and greater still as proofs of his affection. You are told that he was wounded, and imprisoned, and scourged for your sake, for he had a love to you so great, that death itself could not overcome it: you are informed that he is every moment occupied in your interests, because he has sworn by himself that where he is there you shall be; his honors you shall share, and of his happiness you shall be the crown. Why, methinks you would say, "Tell me, men and women, any of you who know him, tell me who he is and what he is;" and if they said, "But it is enough for you to know that he loves you, and to have daily proofs of his goodness," you would say, "No, these love-tokens increase my thirst. If ye see him, tell him I am sick of love. The flagons which he sends me, and the love-tokens which he gives me, they stay me for awhile with the assurance of his affection but they only impel me onward with the more unconquerable desire that I may know him. I must know him; I cannot live without knowing him. His goodness makes me thirst, and pant, and faint, and even die, that I may know him."

Have I imagined emotions which would not be natural? I think not. The most cool and calculating would be warmed with desires like these. Methinks what I have now pictured before you will wake the echoes in your breasts, and you will say, "Ah, it is even so! It is because Christ loved me and gave himself for me that I want to know him; it is because he has shed his blood for me and has chosen me that I may be one with him for ever, that my soul desires a fuller acquaintance with him."

Now may God, the Holy Ghost, very graciously lead me onward that I may also quicken in you the desire to know HIM.

I. Beloved, let us PASS BY THAT CROWD OF OUTER-COURT WORSHIPPERS WHO ARE CONTENT TO LIVE WITHOUT KNOWING CHRIST. I do not mean the ungodly and profane; we will not consider them just now—they are altogether strangers and foreigners to him—I mean children of God: the visible saints. How many there are of these whom I must call outer-court worshippers, for they are strangers to this panting to know him. They can say with Paul, "That I may win him and be found in him"—that they do want; but this higher wish, "That I may know him," has not stirred their hearts. How many brethren we know, who are content to know Christ's historic life! They read the evangelists and they are charmed with the perfect beauty of the Savior's history. "Never man spake like this man," say they; and they confess that never man acted with such love as he did. They know all the incidents of his life, from his manger to his cross; but they do not know HIM. They are as men who have read "Caesar's Commentaries," but who have never seen Caesar. They know the battles which Caesar fought; they can even recognize the mantle which Caesar wore "that day he overcame the Nervii;" but they do not know Caesar himself. The person of the Lord Jesus is as much hidden from their eyes as the golden pot of manna when concealed in the ark. They know the life of Christ, but not Christ the Life; they admire his way among men, but they see not himself as the way.

Others there are who know Christ's doctrine, and prize it too, but they know not Him. All which he taught is dear to them; orthodoxy—for this they would burn at Smithfield, or lay down their necks at Tower Hill. Many of them are well-instructed and divinely-illuminated in the doctrine of Christ, and the wonder is, that they should stop there; because, beloved, it does seem to me when I begin to know a man's teaching, that the next thing is the desire to know his person. Addison, in one of the "Spectators," tells us that the reason why so many books are printed with the portraits of the authors is just this, that as a man reads a book, he feels a desire to know what sort of appearance the author had. This, indeed, is very natural. If you have ever been refreshed under a minister's printed sermons, if you have at any time received any benefit from his words, I know you have said, "I would like to see that man; I would like to hear the truth flow hot and fresh from his living lips; I

would like to know just how he said that sentence, and how that passage sounded as it came from his earnest heart." My beloved, surely if you know the doctrine of Jesus, if you have so been with Christ as to sit at his feet and hear what he has to say, you must, I hope, have had some longings to know him—to know his person; and if you have, you will have had to pass by multitudes of followers of Jesus who rest satisfied with his words, but forget that he is himself "THE WORD."

Beloved, there are others—and against them I bring no complaint; they go as far as they can—who are delighted with Christ's example. Christ's character is in their esteem the mirror of all perfection. They desire to walk in his footsteps; they listen to his sermon upon the Mount; they are enchanted with it—as well they may be; they pray to be obedient in all things to Christ, as their Master and their Lord. They do well. Mark, I am finding no fault with any of these who prize the history, or who value the doctrine, or who admire the precept; but I want more. I do want, beloved, that you and I should "know HIM." I love his precepts, but I love HIM better. Sweet is the water from Bethlehem's well; and well worth the struggle of the armed men to win but a bucket from it; but the well itself is better, and deserves all Israel's valor to defend it. As the source is ever more valuable than the stream, so is Christ ever better than the best words of his lips, or the best deeds of his hand. I want to know him. I do care for his actions; my soul would sit down and admire those masterly works of holy art—his miracles of humiliation, of suffering, of patience, and of holy charity; but better far I love the hands which wrought these master-works, the lips which spoke these goodly words, and the heart which heaved with that matchless love which was the cause of all. Yes, beloved, we must get farther than Immanuel's achievements, however glorious; we must come to "know him."

Most believers rest perfectly at ease with knowing Christ's sacrifice. They see Jesus as the great High Priest, laying a great sacrifice upon the altar for their sins, and with their whole heart they accept his atonement. By faith they know that all their sin is taken away by precious blood. This is a most blessed and hallowed attainment, I will grant you; but it is not every Christian who perceives that Christ was not only the offerer of a sacrifice, but was himself the sacrifice, and, therefore, loves him as such. Priest,

altar, victim, everything Christ was. He gathers up all in himself, and when I see that he loved me, and gave himself for me, it is not enough to know this fact: I want to know him, the glorious person who does and is all this. I want to know the man who thus gave himself for me. I want to behold the Lamb once slain for me. I want to rest upon the bosom which covers the heart which was pierced with the spear; I pray him to kiss me with the kisses of that mouth which cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" I love Calvary, the scene of woe, but I love Christ better, the great object of that agony; and even his cross and all his sufferings, dear though these must ever be to the Christian mind, only occupying a second place; the first seat is for himself, his person, his deity, and humanity.

Thus, you see, we have to leave a great many believers behind; nor have we enumerated all, for I believe that even some of those saints who have received grace to look for the coming of Christ, yet in their vision of his coming too much forget him. Is it not possible for nine to pant for the second advent as to lose sight of him who is to make that advent? So to long for a millennium, that I may forget him who is to reign King of kings? So to pant after that glory of Israel that I may forget him who is Israel's glory? Anywhere short of knowing him, I would not have you stop, beloved; and even when you know him, I would urge you still to be impelled with the same desire, and to press forward, crying with the apostle, "That I may know him."

Beloved, how many there are who have heard of Christ and read about Christ, and that is enough for them! But it is not enough for me, and it should not be enough for you. The apostle Paul did not say "I have heard of him, on whom I have believed," but "I know whom I have believed." To hear about Christ may damn you, it may be a savor of death unto death to you. You have heard of him with the ear; but it is essential that you know him in order that you may be partakers of eternal life. My dear hearers, be not content unless you have this as your soul's present portion.

Others there be who have been persuaded by the judgment and encouragement of others, that they know something about the great Redeemer. They do not know him, but still they are persuaded by others

that they have an interest in him. Let me warn you of second-hand spirituality, it is a rotten, soul-deceiving deception. Beware of all esteeming yourself according to the thoughts of others, or you will be ruined. Another man's opinion of me may have great influence over me, I have heard of a man in perfectly good health killed by the opinion of others. Several of his friends had foolishly agreed to play him a practical trick; whereupon one of them met him and said, "How ill you look this morning." He did not feel so; he was very much surprised at the remark. When he met the next, who said to him, "Oh! dear, how bad you look," he began to think there might be something in it; and as he turned smart round the corner, a third person said to him, "What a sight you are! How altered from what you used to be!" He went home ill, he took to his bed and died. So goes the story, and I should not marvel if it really did occur. Now, if such might be the effect of persuasion and supposed belief in the sickness of a man, how much more readily may men be persuaded into the idea of spiritual health! A believer meets you, and by his treatment seems to say, "I welcome you as a dear brother"—and means it too. You are baptized, and you are received into Church-fellowship, and so everybody thinks that you must be a follower of Christ; and yet you may not know him. Oh, I do pray you, do not be satisfied with being persuaded into something like an assurance that you are in him, but do know him—know him for yourself.

There are many who I hope will be saved ere long; but I am in great doubt of them, because they can only say they half think they know Christ; they do not quite believe in him, but they do not disbelieve in him; they halt between two opinions. Ah, dear hearer, that is a very dangerous place to stand in. The border-land is the devil's hunting ground. Undecided souls are fair game for the great fowler. God give you once for all the true decision by which through grace you shall know him. Do not be satisfied with thinking you know him; hoping you know him, but know him. Oh, it is nothing to have heard about him, to have talked about him, to have eaten and have drunk with him, to have preached him, or even to have wrought miracles in his name, to have been charmed by his eloquence, to have been stirred with the story of his love, to have been moved to imitate him—this shall nothing avail you, unless you win him and are found in him. Seek with the apostle, to give up everything of your own

righteousness, and all other objects and aims in life, and say, "This I seek after, that I may know him." Thus much, then, on the first point. Leaving those behind who do not know him, let us make an advance.

II. Secondly, let us DRAW CURTAIN AFTER CURTAIN WHICH SHALL ADMIT US TO KNOW MORE OF CHRIST.

Did you ever visit the manufactory of splendid porcelain at Sevres? I have done so. If anybody should say to me, "Do you know the manufactory at Sevres?" I should say, "Yes, I do, and no, I do not. I know it, for I have seen the building; I have seen the rooms in which the articles are exhibited for sale, and I have seen the museum and model room; but I do not know the factory as I would like to know it, for I have not seen the process of manufacture, and have not been admitted into the workshops, as some are. "Suppose I had seen, however, the process of the moulding of the clay, and the laying on of the rich designs, if anybody should still say to me, "Do you know how they manufacture those wonderful articles?" I should very likely still be compelled to say, "No, I do not, because there are certain secrets, certain private rooms into which neither friend nor foe can be admitted, lest the process should be open to the world." So, you see, I might say I knew, and yet might not half know; and when I half knew, still there would be so much left, that I might be compelled to say, "I do not know." How many different ways there are of knowing a person—and even so there are all these different ways of knowing Christ; so that you may keep on all your lifetime, still wishing to get into another room, and another room, nearer and nearer to the great secret, still panting to "know him." Good Rutherford says, "I urge upon you a nearer communion with Christ, and a growing communion. There are curtains to be drawn by, in Christ, that we never shut, and new foldings in love with him. I despair that ever I shall win to the far end of that love; there are so many plies in it. Therefore, dig deep, and set by as much time in the day for him as you can, he will be won by labor."

To begin with. We know a person when we recognize him. You know the Queen. Well, I do. I recollect seeing her, and if I were to see any quantity of ladies, I think I should know which was the Queen and which was not. You may say honestly that you know her to that extent. Beloved, every

Christian must in this sense know Christ. You must know him by a divine illumination so as to know who he is and what line is. When Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Whom sayest thou that I am," he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and the Lord replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." It is an early step in this knowledge of Christ, to know and to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord; to know that Christ is God, divine to me; that Christ is man, brother to me—bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh—that as such line is a sin-subduing Savior; that line is for inc an intercessor, pleading before the throne; my prophet, priest, and king—in this sense I trust that most of you know him. If you do not, breathe the silent prayer now, "Lord, help me that I may know him." But this knowledge of recognition is comparatively a low attainment, one of the lowest rounds of the ladder of light.

In the second place, a believer knows Christ, to a higher degree when he knows him by practical experiment at acquaintance with what he does. For instance, I know Christ as a cleanser. They tell me he is a refiner, that he cleanses from spots; he has washed me in his precious blood, and to that extent I know him. They tell me that he clothes the naked; he hath covered me with a garment of righteousness, and to that extent I know him. They tell me that he is a breaker, and that he breaks fetters, he has set my soul at liberty, and therefore I know him. They tell me that he is a king and that he reigns over sin; he hath subdued my enemies beneath his feet, and I know him in that character. They tell me he is a shepherd: I know him for I am his sheep. They say he is a door: I have entered in through him, and I know him as a door. They say he is food: my spirit feeds on him as on the bread of heaven, and, therefore, I know him as such. You know if anyone says, "Do you know doctor So-and-so?" It is a very satisfactory answer, if you can reply, "Oh, yes, I know him, for he attended me the last time that I was ill." There is more knowledge in that, than if on could only say, " Oh, yes, I know him: he wears such-and-such a hat or "line is a man of such-and-such an appearance." So, Christian, thing is a second and higher step to know Christ, because you have experienced in your own soul that he is just what God has revealed him to be.

But we know a man in a better sense than this when we are on speaking terms with him. "Do you know So-and-so?" " Yes," you say, I not only know him by name, so as to recognize him; I not only know him as a tradesman having dealt with him, but I know him because when we pass each other in the morning, we exchange a word or two; and if I had anything to say upon matters—any request to make—I should feel no difficulty about asking him." Well, now. the Christian knows his Lord in this sense, line has every day official communication with Christ, line is on speaking terms with him. There may be persons here, perhaps, who know the Queen in a sense in which I do not know her—perhaps they speak to him. They have so done; I have never done that; they go beyond me there. But you see, dear friends, this is not a very great thing because you may be on speaking terms with a man, but you may not know much of him for all that. So you may be in the habit of daily prayer, and you may talk with Christ every morning and every evening, and you may know exceedingly little of him. You are on speaking terms with him; but there ins something beyond this, very far beyond this. As I might say that I know a man merely because I meet him every day, and ask him for what I want, and understand that he is kind and generous; but how shallow is such an acquaintance, for I do not know his private character nor his inward heart. Even so a believer may have constant dealings with Christ in his prayers and in his praises, and yet for all that, he may have only gone a certain distance, and may have need still to pray, "That I may know him."

But you are said to know a person better still when he invites you to his house. At Christmas time there is a family party and a romp, and he asks you there, and you are one of the children, and enter into all their sports around the fire-side, and you indulge as they do in the genialities of social life. You are asked again; you go there pretty often; in fact, if there is a happy evening in that house they generally expect to see friend So-and-so there. Well, now, that is better. We are getting now into something like knowing a man; and I do trust there are many of you, beloved, who have got as far as this with regard to your divine Lord. Christ has entertained you with some rare visits from his gracious presence. He brought you into the banquetting-house, and his banner over you was love. When he manifested himself, he did it unto you as he did not unto the world. He

was pleased in the majesty of his condescension, to take you aside and show you his hands and his side. He called you "Friend;" he treated you as such, and permitted you to enjoy thine sweets of being one of the family.

Ah, but you may go into a man's house as a constant visitor, and yet you may not know him—that is to say, not in the highest sense. You speak to the man's wife and say, "Your husband is a marvellously charming man; what a cheerful, joyful, spirited man he is; he never seems to have any depressions of spirit, and experiences no changes whatever." She shakes her head. and she says, "Ah! you do not know him, you do not know him as I do;" because she sees him at all times and at all hours; she can read the very heart of the man. That Christian has grown much in grace who has advanced not only to be the friend of Christ, having occasional fellowship with him, but who comes to recognize his marriage-union with the person of his Lord, and of whom it can be said, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant," Now we have the intimacy of love, with its perfect frankness, nearness, sweetness, joyousness, delight. The rending away of every separating veil makes the communion to be as near as it well can be this side the black river; but a Christian may get farther than this.

Even the spouse may not know her husband. The most loving wife who ever entered into the cares of her husband, must have discovered that there is a something which separates his experience from her powers of comprehension. Luther's wife. Catherine, was of all women the wife for Luther; but there were times in Luther's gigantic tribulations, when he must leave Kate behind. There were extraordinary times within him; times both of ecstatic joy, when like a great angel, he stretched his mighty wings, and flew right up to heaven, and of awful misery, when he seemed to sink down to the very depths of hell; and in either case, no other heart could keep pace with him. Then it was himself alone who had communion with himself. And a Christian may so grow in grace as to become identified with Christ, a member of his body; not so much married to him as a part of him, a member of the great body of Christ, so that he suffers with Christ, sympathizes with Jesus, his heart beating to the same dolorous tune, his veins swollen with the sumac floods of grief,

or else his eyes sparkling with that same gleam of joy, according to the Master's Word, "That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Well, have not you waded out of your depth some of you? I have certainly got out of my own. I feel as if the Master might come on to this platform, look round on many of us, and say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" for truly even in the minor sense, though I trust we are saved, though we have believed in Jesus, yet we have not reached the height of this great text—"That I may know him."

III. Having taken you so far, let us SIT DOWN A FEW MINUTES AND CONSIDER WHAT SORT OF KNOWLEDGE THIS KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST IS—"That I may know him."

Then it is clear, if I know him I shall have a very vivid sense of his personality. "That I may know him." He will not be to me a myth, a vision, a spirit, but a person, a real solid person, as much real as I am myself, or as my dearest friend can be to me. My soul, never be satisfied within a shadowy Christ. My heart, be thou never content until he hath embraced thy soul, and proved to thee that he is the lover of his people. This knowledge, then, must be a knowledge of him in his personality. Then, beloved, it must be a personal knowledge on our part. I cannot know Christ through another person's brains. I cannot love him with another man's heart, and I cannot see him with another man's eyes. Heaven's delight is, "Mine eyes shall see him and not another." These eyes shall behold the King in his beauty. Well, beloved, if this be heaven, we certainly cannot do without a personal sight of Christ here. I am so afraid of living in a second-hand religion. God forbid that I should get a biographical experience. Lord save us from having borrowed communion. No, I must know him myself. O God, let me not be deceived in this. I must know him without fancy or proxy; I must know him on mine own account.

Then these few thoughts upon what sort of knowledge we must have. It must be an intelligent knowledge—I must know him. I must know his natures, divine and human. I must know his offices—I must know his

attributes—I must know his works—I must know his shame—I must know his glory; for I do not know him if it be merely a subject of passion and not of intellect. I must let my head consciously meditate upon him until I own something like an idea of him, that I may "Comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

Then I must have an affectionate knowledge of him; and, indeed, if I do know him at all, I must love him. As it is said of some men, that there is such a charm about them, that if you once get into their company you cannot criticise any longer, but must admire; so you feel with Christ. It is said of Garibaldi, that if you are in his society he charms all, so that even malice and slander must be silent in his presence. Infinitely, supremely so is it with Christ. Being near him, his love warms our hearts, till we glow with intense love to him.

Then I shall find, if I know Christ, that this is a satisfying knowledge. When I know Christ my mind will be filled to the brim—I shall feel that I have found that which my spirit panted after. "This is that bread whereof if a man eat he shall never hunger."

At the same time it is an exciting knowledge; the more I know of Christ, the more I shall want to know. The deeper I plunge the greater the depths which will be revealed. The higher I climb the loftier will be the summits which invite my eager footsteps. I shall want the more as I get the more. My spiritual thirst will increase, though in another sense it will be entirely quenched.

And this knowledge of Christ will be a most happy one, in fact, so happy, that sometimes it will completely bear me up above all trials, and doubts, and sorrows; and it will, while I enjoy it, make me something more than "Man that is born of a woman who is of few days, and full of trouble;" for it will fling about me the immortality of the ever-living Savior, and gird me with the golden girdle of his eternal happiness. To be near to Christ, is to be near to the pearly gates of the golden-streeted city. Say not, "Jerusalem, my happy home, my labors have an end in thee;" but say, "Jesus, thou art my rest, and when I have thee, my spirit is at peace." I

might thus keep on speaking in praise of this knowledge, but I will not.

Only permit me to say, what a refreshing, what a sanctifying knowledge is this, to know him. When the Laodicean Church was neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, how did Christ seek her revival? Did he send her precious doctrines? Did he send her excellent precepts? Mark you, he came himself, for thus it is said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." That is a cure for it all, you see. No matter how lukewarm, though God may say, "I will spue thee out of my mouth," yet, if Christ comes, that is the cure. The presence of Christ with his Church puts away all her sicknesses. When the disciples of Christ were at sea in a storm, do you recollect how he comforted them? Did he send them an angel? No. "It is I, line not afraid;" and when they knew him, then they had no more fears. They were assembled one night, "the doors being shut for fear of the Jews:" how did he comfort them? Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you." There was Thomas, full of doubts and fears. How did Jesus Christ take away his doubts? "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." Oh! it is Christ, it is Christ who cures all. The company of Christ is the only thing which a Christian wants. I will undertake that if his heart be like an iceberg, as soon as Jesus comes, it shall flame like Vesuvius. His spirit shall be dead and like a rotten corpse; but if Jesus comes he shall leap like a hart, and become strong as a young unicorn. Thy presence makes me like the chariots of Amminadib. Now, do not think I am talking what I do not know. Do not imagine that I am talking mere fanatical slip-slop which I cannot prove. I do assert (and God who searcheth all hearts, knows how true this is), I do assert that, from the depths of doubt, of dullness, of worldliness, I have leaped in one moment into love, and life, and holy enthusiasm, when Jesus Christ has manifested himself to mine. I cannot describe the difference between my spirit, water-logged, worm-eaten, ready to sink to the bottom without Christ, and that same spirit, like a strong staunch ship, with sails full, with favorable wind, speeding into harbor, with a golden freight. Like you poor little bird which some cruel boy has torn from the nest and almost killed—it is not fledged yet, and cannot fly, and it lies down to die, trampled in the mire in the streets—that is my heart without

Christ. But see that other bird! The cage-door is opened, its wings vibrate, it sings within all its might. and flies up to talk with the sun—that is my heart when I have the conscious presence of my Lord Jesus Christ! I only bring in my own consciousness because I do not know yours; but I think I will now venture to say that every believer here will admit it is the same with him—

"Midst darkest shades if he appear
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's bright morning star,
And he my rising sun.

IV. I shall close by urging you, dearly beloved, who know the Lord, to take this desire of the apostle, and by exhorting you, make it your own, "That I may know him." I wish I had time this morning—time will fly—I wish I had time to urge and press you, believers, onward to seek to know him. Paul, you see, gave up everything for this—you will be seeking what is worth having. There can be no mistake about this. If Paul will renounce all, there must be a reward which is worthy of the sacrifice. If you have any fears, if you seek Christ and find him, they will be removed. You complain that you do not feel the guilt of sin; that you cannot humble yourself enough. The sight of Christ is the very best means of setting sin in its true colors. There is no repenting like that which comes from a look of Christ's eye: the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and he went out and wept bitterly. So it is not a sight of the law, it is the sight of Christ looking upon us which will break our hearts.

There is nothing like this to fill you with courage. When Dr. Andrew Reed found some difficulties in the founding of one of his orphan asylums, he sat down and drew upon a little piece of paper the cross, and then he said to himself, "What, despair in the face of the cross?" and then he drew a ring round the cross, and wrote in it *nil desperandum!* and took it for his coat of arms. Oh, there cannot be any despair in the presence of the cross. Thou dying Lamb, didst thou endure the cross, despising the shame, and shall I talk of difficulties when thy glory is in the way? God forbid! O holy face, bedewed with bloody sweat, I pledge myself in thy solemn and awful

presence, that though this face of mine should be bedewed with sweat of the like sort, to accomplish any labor upon which thou shalt put me; by thy will and in thy strength, I will not shrink from the task. A sight of Christ, brethren, will keep you from despondency, and doubts, and despair. A sight of Christ! How shall I stir you to it? It will fire you to duty; it will deliver you from temptation; it will, in fact, make you like him. A man is known by his company; and if you have become acquainted with Christ, and know him, you will be sure to reflect his light. It is because the moon hath converse within the sun, that she hath any light for this dark world's night; and if you talk with Christ, the Sun, he will shine on you so gloriously, that you, like the moon, shall reflect his light, and the dark night of this world shall be enlightened by your radiance. The Lord help us to know him.

But I do seem, this morning, to have been talking to you about him, and not to have brought him forward. O that I knew how to introduce you to him! You who do not love him, O that I could make you seek after him! But you who do love him and have trusted in him, O that I could make you hunger and thirst until you were filled with him! There he is, nailed to his cross, suffering—oh! how much!—for you; there he is, risen, ascended, pleading before the throne of God for you. Here he is: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Here he is, waiting to be comforted with your company, desiring communion with you, panting that his sister, his spouse, would be no longer a stranger to him. Here he is, waiting to be gracious, saying, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come, Christian, come, let this be thy desire, "That I may know him."

And you who do not know him, and have not loved him, I pray you, breathe this prayer with me, " Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." O sinner, he is a gentle Christ; he is a loving Savior, and they that seek him early shall find him. May you seek and find him, for his name's sake. Amen.

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The Doctrines Of Grace Do Not Lead To Sin

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. - Romans 6:14-15

Last Sabbath morning I tried to show that the substance and essence of the true gospel is the doctrine of God's grace—that, in fact, if you take away the grace of God from the gospel you have extracted from it its very life-blood, and there is nothing left worth preaching, worth believing, or worth contending for. Grace is the soul of the gospel: without it the gospel is dead. Grace is the music of the gospel: without it the gospel is silent as to all comfort. I endeavoured also to set forth the doctrine of grace in brief terms, teaching that God deals with sinful men upon the footing of pure mercy: finding them guilty and condemned, he gives free pardons, altogether irrespective of past character, or of any good works which may be foreseen. Moved only by pity he devises a plan for their rescue from sin and its consequences—a plan in which grace is the leading feature. Out of free favour he has provided, in the death of his dear Son, an atonement by means of which his mercy can be justly bestowed. He accepts all those who place their trust in this atonement, selecting faith as the way of salvation, that it may be all of grace. In this he acts, from a motive found within himself, and not because of any reason found in the sinner's conduct, past, present, or future. I tried to show that this grace of God flows towards the sinner from of old, and begins its operations upon him when there is nothing good in him: it works in him that which is good and acceptable, and continues so to work in him till the deed of grace is complete, and the believer is received up into the glory for which he is made meet. Grace commences to save, and it perseveres till all is done. From first to last, from the "A" to the "Z" of the heavenly alphabet, everything in salvation is of grace, and grace alone; all is of free favour, nothing of merit. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God," "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

No sooner is this doctrine set forth in a clear light than men begin to cavil at it. It is the target for all carnal logic to shoot at. Unrenewed minds never did like it, and they never will; it is so humbling to human pride, making so light of the nobility of human nature. That men are to be saved by divine charity, that they must as condemned criminals receive pardon by the exercise of the royal prerogative, or else perish in their sins, is a teaching which they cannot endure. God alone is exalted in the sovereignty of his mercy; and the sinner can do no better than meekly touch the silver scepter, and accept undeserved favour just because God wills to give it:—this is not pleasant to the great minds of our philosophers, and the broad phylacteries of our moralists, and therefore they turn aside, and fight against the empire of grace. Straightway the unrenewed man seeks out artillery with which to fight against the gospel of the grace of God, and one of the biggest guns he has ever brought to the front is the declaration that the doctrine of the grace of God must lead to licentiousness. If great sinners are freely saved, then men will more readily become great sinners; and if when God's grace regenerates a man it abides with him, then men will infer that they may live as they like, and yet be saved. This is the constantly-repeated objection which I have heard till it wearies me with its vain and false noise. I am almost ashamed to have to refute so rotten an argument. They dare to assert that men will take license to be guilty because God is gracious, and they do not hesitate to say that if men are not to be saved by their works they will come to the conclusion that their conduct is a matter of indifference, and that they may as well sin that grace may abound.

This morning I want to talk a little about this notion; for in part it is a great mistake, and in part it is a great lie. In part it is a mistake because it arises from misconception, and in part it is a lie because men know better, or might know better if they pleased.

I begin by admitting that the charge does appear somewhat probable. It does seem very likely that if we are to go up and down the country, and say, "The very chief of sinners may be forgiven through believing in Jesus Christ, for God is displaying mercy to the very vilest of the vile," then sin will seem to be a cheap thing. If we are everywhere to cry, "Come, ye sinners, come and welcome, and receive free and immediate pardon

through the sovereign grace of God," it does seem probable that some may basely reply, "Let us sin without stint, for we can easily obtain forgiveness." But that which looks to be probable is not, therefore, certain: on the contrary, the improbable and the unexpected full often come to pass. In questions of moral influence nothing is more deceptive than theory. The ways of the human mind are not to be laid down with a pencil and compasses; man is a singular being. Even that which is logical is not always inevitable, for men's minds are not governed by the rules of the schools. I believe that the inference which would lead men to sin because grace reigns is not logical, but the very reverse; and I venture to assert that, as a matter of fact, ungodly men do not, as a rule plead the grace of God as an excuse for their sin. As a rule they are too indifferent to care about reasons at all; and if they do offer an excuse it is usually more flimsy and superficial. There may be a few men of perverse minds who have used this argument, but there is no accounting for the freaks of the fallen understanding. I shrewdly suspect that in any cases in which such reasoning has been put forward it was a mere pretence, and by no means a plea which satisfied the sinner's own conscience. If men do thus excuse themselves, it is generally in some veiled manner, for the most of them would be utterly ashamed to state the argument in plain terms. I question whether the devil himself would be found reasoning thus—"God is merciful, therefore let us be more sinful." It is so diabolical an inference, that I do not like to charge my fellow-men with it, though our moralist opposers do not hesitate thus to degrade them. Surely, no intelligent being can really persuade itself that the goodness of God is a reason for offending him more than ever. Moral insanity produces strange reasonings, but it is my solemn conviction that very rarely do men practically consider the grace of God to be a motive for sin. That which seems so probable at the first blush, is not so when we come to consider it.

I have admitted that a few human beings have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness; but I trust no one will ever argue against any doctrine on account of the perverse use made of it by the baser sort. Cannot every truth be perverted? Is there a single doctrine of Scripture which graceless hands have not twisted into mischief? Is there not an almost infinite ingenuity in wicked men for making evil out of good? If we are to

condemn a truth because of the misbehaviour of individuals who profess to believe it, we should be found condemning our Lord himself for what Judas did, and our holy faith would die at the hands of apostates and hypocrites. Let us act like rational men. We do not find fault with ropes because poor insane creatures have hanged themselves therewith; nor do we ask that the wares of Sheffield may be destroyed because edged tools are the murderer's instruments.

It may appear probable that the doctrine of free grace will be made into a license for sin, but a better acquaintance with the curious working of the human mind corrects the notion. Fallen as human nature is, it is still human, and therefore does not take kindly to certain forms of evil—such, for instance, as inhuman ingratitude. It is hardly human to multiply injuries upon those who return us continued benefits. The case reminds me of the story of half-a-dozen boys who had severe fathers, accustomed to flog them within an inch of their lives. Another boy was with them who was tenderly beloved by his parents, and known to do so. These young gentlemen met together to hold a council of war about robbing an orchard. They were all of them anxious to get about it except the favoured youth, who did not enjoy the proposal. One of them cried out, "You need not be afraid: if our fathers catch us at this work, we shall be half-killed, but your father won't lay a hand upon you." The little boy answered, "And do you think because my father is kind to me, that therefore I will do wrong and grieve him? I will do nothing of the sort to my dear father. He is so good to me that I cannot vex him." It would appear that the argument of the many boys was not overpoweringly convincing to their companion: the opposite conclusion was quite as logical, and evidently carried weight with it. If God is good to the undeserving, some men will go into sin, but there are others of a nobler order whom the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. They scorn the beast-like argument—that the more loving God is, the more rebellious we may be; and they feel that against a God of goodness it is an evil thing to rebel.

By-the-way I cannot help observing that I have known persons object to the evil influence of the doctrines of grace who were by no means qualified by their own morality to be judges of the subject. Morals must be in a poor way when immoral persons become their guardians. The

doctrine of justification by faith is frequently objected to as injurious to morals. A newspaper some time ago quoted a verse from one of our popular hymns -

"Weary, working, plodding one,
Why toil you so?
Cease your doing; all was done
Long, long ago.

"Till to Jesus' work you cling
By a simple faith,
'Doing' is a deadly thing,
'Doing' ends in death."

This is styled mischievous teaching. When I read the article I felt a deep interest in this corrector of Luther and Paul, and I wondered how much he had drunk in order to elevate his mind to such a pitch of theological knowledge. I have found men pleading against the doctrines of grace on the ground that they did not promote morality, to whom I could have justly replied, "What has morality to do with you, or you with it?" These sticklers for good works are not often the doers of them. Let legalists look to their own hands and tongues, and leave the gospel of grace and its advocates to answer for themselves.

Looking back in history, I see upon its pages a refutation of the oft-repeated calumny. Who dares to suggest that the men who believed in the grace of God have been sinners above other sinners? With all their faults, those who throw stones at them will be few if they first prove themselves to be their superiors in character. When have they been the patrons of vice, or the defenders of injustice? Pitch upon the point in English history when this doctrine was very strong in the land; who were the men that held these doctrines most firmly? Men like Owen, Charnock, Manton, Howe, and I hesitate not to add Oliver Cromwell. What kind of men were these? Did they pander to the licentiousness of a court? Did they invent a Book of Sports for Sabbath diversion? Did they haunt ale-houses and places of revelry? Every historian will tell you, the greatest fault of these men in the eyes of their enemies was that they were too precise for the

generation in which they lived, so that they called them Puritans, and condemned them as holding a gloomy theology. Sirs, if there was iniquity in the land in that day, it was to be found with the theological party which preached up salvation by works. The gentlemen with their womanish locks and essenced hair, whose speech savoured of profanity, were the advocates of salvation by works, and all bedabbled with lust they pleaded for human merit; but the men who believed in grace alone were of another style. They were not in the chambers of rioting and wantonness; where were they? They might be found on their knees crying to God for help in temptation; and in persecuting times they might be found in prison, cheerfully suffering the loss of all things for the truth's sake. The Puritans were the godliest men on the face of the earth. Are men so inconsistent as to nickname them for their purity, and yet say that their doctrines lead to sin?

Nor is this a solitary instance—this instance of Puritanism; all history confirms the rule: and when it is said that these doctrines will create sin, I appeal to facts, and leave the oracle to answer as it may. If we are ever to see a pure and godly England we must have a gospelized England: if we are to put down drunkenness and the social evil it must be by the proclamation of the grace of God. Men must be forgiven by grace, renewed by grace, transformed by grace, sanctified by grace, preserved by grace; and when that comes to pass the golden age will dawn; but while they are merely taught their duty, and left to do it of themselves in their own strength, it is labour in vain. You may flog a dead horse a long while before it will stir: you need to put life into it, for else all your flogging will fail. To teach men to walk who have no feet is poor work, and such is instruction in morals before grace gives a heart to love holiness. The gospel alone supplies men with motive and strength, and therefore it is to the gospel that we must look as the real reformer of men.

I shall fight this morning with the objection before us as I shall find strength. The doctrine of grace, the whole plan of salvation by grace, is most promotive of holiness. Wherever it comes it helps us to say, "God forbid," to the question, "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" This I would set out in the clear sunlight.

I wish to call your attention to some six or seven points.

I. First, you will see that the gospel of the grace of God promotes real holiness in men by remembering that **THE SALVATION WHICH IT BRINGS IS SALVATION FROM THE POWER OF SIN.** When we preach salvation to the vilest of men, some suppose we mean by that a mere deliverance from hell and an entrance into heaven. It includes all that, and results in that, but that is not what we mean. What we mean by salvation is this—deliverance from the love of sin, rescue from the habit of sin, setting free from the desire to sin. Now listen. If it be so, that that boon of deliverance from sin is the gift of divine grace, in what way will that gift, or the free distribution of it, produce sin? I fail to see any such danger. On the contrary, I say to the man who proclaims a gracious promise of victory over sin, "Make all speed: go up and down throughout the world, and tell the vilest of mankind that God is willing by his grace to set them free from the love of sin and to make new creatures of them." Suppose the salvation we preach be this:—you that have lived ungodly and wicked lives may enjoy your sins, and yet escape the penalty—that would be mischievous indeed; but if it be this,—you that live the most ungodly and wicked lives may yet by believing in the Lord Jesus be enabled to change those lives, so that you shall live unto God instead of serving sin and Satan,—what harm can come to the most prudish morals? Why, I say spread such a gospel, and let it circulate through every part of our vast empire, and let all men hear it, whether they rule in the House of Lords or suffer in the house of bondage. Tell them everywhere that God freely and of infinite grace is willing to renew men, and make them new creatures in Christ Jesus. Can any evil consequences come of the freest proclamation of this news? The worse men are, the more gladly would we see them embracing this truth, for these are they who most need it. I say to every one of you, whoever you may be, whatever your past condition, God can renew you according to the power of his grace; so that you who are to him like dead, dry bones, can be made to live by his Spirit. That renewal will be seen in holy thoughts, and pure words, and righteous acts to the glory of God. In great love he is prepared to work all these things in all who believe. Why should any men be angry at such a statement? What possible harm can come of it? I defy the most cunning adversary to object, upon the ground of morals, to God's giving men new hearts and

right spirits even as he pleases.

II. Secondly, let it not be forgotten as a matter of fact that THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE HAS BEEN FOUND TO POSSESS VERY GREAT POWER OVER MEN. In the infancy of history nations dream that crime can be put down by severity, and they rely upon fierce punishments; but experience corrects the error. Our forefathers dreaded forgery, which is a troublesome fraud, and interferes with the confidence which should exist between man and man. To put it down they made forgery a capital offence. Alas for the murders committed by that law! Yet the constant use of the gallows was never sufficient to stamp out the crime. Many offences have been created and multiplied by the penalty which was meant to suppress them. Some offences have almost ceased when the penalty against them has been lightened.

It is a notable fact as to men, that if they are forbidden to do a thing they straightway pine to do it, though they had never thought of doing it before. Law commands obedience, but does not promote it; it often creates disobedience, and an over-weighted penalty has been known to provoke an offence. Law fails, but love wins.

Love in any case makes sin infamous. If one should rob another it would be sufficiently bad; but suppose a man robbed his friend, who had helped him often when he was in need, everyone would say that his crime was most disgraceful. Love brands sin on the forehead with a red-hot iron. If a man should kill an enemy, the offence would be grievous; but if he slew his father, to whom he owes his life, or his mother, on whose breasts he was nursed in infancy, then all would cry out against the monster. In the light of love sin is seen to be exceeding sinful.

Nor is this all. Love has a great constraining power towards the highest form of virtue. Deeds to which a man could not be compelled on the ground of law, men have cheerfully done because of love. Would our brave seamen man the life-boat to obey an Act of Parliament? No, they would indignantly revolt against being forced to risk their lives; but they will do it freely to save their fellow-men. Remember that text of the apostle, "Scarcely for a righteous (or merely just) man will one die: yet

peradventure," says he, "for a good (benevolent) man some would even dare to die." Goodness wins the heart, and one is ready to die for the kind and generous. Look how men have thrown away their lives for great leaders. That was an immortal saying of the wounded French soldier. When searching for the bullet the surgeon cut deeply, and the patient cried out, "A little lower and you will touch the Emperor," meaning that the Emperor's name was written on his heart. In several notable instances men have thrown themselves into the jaws of death to save a leader whom they loved. Duty holds the fort, but love casts its body in the way of the deadly bullet. Who would think of sacrificing his life on the ground of law? Love alone counts not life so dear as the service of the beloved. Love to Jesus creates a heroism of which law knows nothing. All the history of the church of Christ, when it has been true to its Lord, is a proof of this.

Kindness also, working by the law of love, has often changed the most unworthy, and therein proved that it is not a factor of evil. We have often heard the story of the soldier who had been degraded to the ranks, and flogged and imprisoned, and yet for all that he would get drunk and misbehave himself. The commanding officer said one day, "I have tried almost everything with this man, and can do nothing with him. I will try one thing more." When he was brought in, the officer addressed him, and said, "You seem incorrigible: we have tried everything with you; there seems to be no hope of a change in your wicked conduct. I am determined to try if another plan will have any effect. Though you deserve flogging and long imprisonment, I shall freely forgive you." The man was greatly moved by the unexpected and undeserved pardon, and became a good soldier. The story wears truth on its brow: we all see that it would probably end so.

That anecdote is such good argument that I will give you another. A drunkard woke up one morning from his drunken sleep, with his clothes on him just as he had rolled down the night before. He saw his only child, his daughter Millie, getting his breakfast. Coming to his senses he said to her, "Millie, why do you stay with me?" She answered, "Because you are my father, and because I love you." He looked at himself, and saw what a sottish, ragged, good-for-nothing creature he was, and he answered her,

"Millie, do you really love me?" The child cried, "Yes, father, I do, and I will never leave you, because when mother died she said, 'Millie, stick to your father, and always pray for him, and one of these days he will give up drink, and be a good father to you'; so I will never leave you." Is it wonderful when I add that, as the story has it, Millie's father cast away his drink, and became a Christian man? It would have been more remarkable if he had not. Millie was trying free grace, was she not? According to our moralists she should have said, "Father, you are a horrible wretch! I have stuck to you long enough: I must now leave you, or else I shall be encouraging other fathers to get drunk." Under such proper dealing I fear Millie's father would have continued a drunkard till he drank himself into perdition. But the power of love made a better man of him. Do not these instances prove that undeserved love has a great influence for good?

Hear another story: In the old persecuting times there lived in Cheapside one who feared God and attended the secret meetings of the saints; and near him there dwelt a poor cobbler, whose wants were often relieved by the merchant; but the poor man was a cross-grained being, and, most ungratefully, from hope of reward, laid an information against his kind friend on the score of religion. This accusation would have brought the merchant to death by burning if he had not found a means of escape. Returning to his house, the injured man did not change his generous behaviour to the malignant cobbler, but, on the contrary, was more liberal than ever. The cobbler was, however, in an ill mood, and avoided the good man with all his might, running away at his approach. One day he was obliged to meet him face to face, and the Christian man asked him gently, "Why do you shun me? I am not your enemy. I know all that you did to injure me, but I never had an angry thought against you. I have helped you, and I am willing to do so as long as I live, only let us be friends." Do you marvel that they clasped hands? Would you wonder if ere long the poor man was found at the Lollards' meeting? All such anecdotes rest upon the assured fact that grace has a strange subduing power, and leads men to goodness, drawing them with cords of love, and bands of a man. The Lord knows that bad as men are the key of their hearts hangs on the nail of love. He knows that his almighty goodness, though often baffled, will triumph in the end. I believe my point is proved. To myself it is so. However, we must pass on.

III. There is no fear that the doctrine of the grace of God will lead men to sin, because ITS OPERATIONS ARE CONNECTED WITH A SPECIAL REVELATION OF THE EVIL OF SIN. Iniquity is made to be exceeding bitter before it is forgiven or when it is forgiven. When God begins to deal with a man with a view of blotting out his sins and making him his child, he usually causes him to see his evil ways in all their heinousness; he makes him look on sin with fixed eyes, till he cries with David, "My sin is ever before me." In my own case, when under conviction of sin, no cheering object met my mental eye, my soul saw only darkness and a horrible tempest. It seemed as though a horrible spot were painted on my eyeballs. Guilt, like a grim chamberlain, drew the curtains of my bed, so that I rested not, but in my slumbers anticipated the wrath to come. I felt that I had offended God, and that this was the most awful thing a human being could do. I was out of order with my Creator, out of order with the universe; I had damned myself for ever, and I wondered that I did not immediately feel the gnawing of the undying worm. Even to this hour a sight of sin causes the most dreadful emotions in my heart. Any man or woman here who has passed through that experience, or anything like it, will henceforth feel a deep horror of sin. A burnt child dreads the fire. "No," says the sinner to his tempter, "you once deceived me, and I so smarted in consequence, that I will not again be deluded. I have been delivered, like a brand from the burning, and I cannot go back to the fire." By the operations of grace we are made weary of sin; we loathe both it and its imaginary pleasures. We would utterly exterminate it from the soil of our nature. It is a thing accursed, even as Amalek was to Israel. If you, my friend, do not detest every sinful thing, I fear you are still in the gall of bitterness; for one of the sure fruits of the Spirit is a love of holiness, and a loathing of every false way. A deep inward experience forbids the child of God to sin: he has known within himself its judgment and its condemnation, and henceforth it is a thing abhorrent to him. An enmity both fierce and endless exists between the chosen seed and the serpent brood of evil: hence the fear that grace will be abused is abundantly safeguarded.

IV. Remember also that not only is the forgiven man thus set against sin by the process of conviction, but EVERY MAN WHO TASTES OF THE

SAVING GRACE OF GOD IS MADE A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST JESUS. Now if the doctrine of grace in the hands of an ordinary man might be dangerous, yet it would cease to be so in the hands of one who is quickened by the Spirit, and created anew in the image of God. The Holy Spirit comes upon the chosen one, and transforms him: his ignorance is removed, his affections are changed, his understanding is enlightened, his will is subdued, his desires are refined, his life is changed—in fact, he is as one new-born, to whom all things have become new. This change is compared in Scripture to the resurrection from the dead, to a creation, and to a new birth. This takes place in every man who becomes a partaker of the free grace of God. "Ye must be born again," said Christ to Nicodemus; and gracious men are born again. One said the other day, "If I believed that I was eternally saved, I should live in sin." Perhaps you would; but if you were renewed in heart you would not. "But," says one, "if I believed God loved me from before the foundation of the world, and that therefore I should be saved, I would take a full swing of sin." Perhaps you and the devil would; but God's regenerate children are not of so base a nature. To them the abounding grace of the Father is a bond to righteousness which they never think of breaking: they feel the sweet constraints of sacred gratitude, and desire to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. All beings live according to their nature, and the regenerated man works out the holy instincts of his renewed mind: crying after holiness, warring against sin, labouring to be pure in all things, the regenerate man puts forth all his strength towards that which is pure and perfect. A new heart makes all the difference. Given a new nature, and then all the propensities run in a different way, and the blessings of almighty love no longer involve peril, but suggest the loftiest aspirations.

V. One of the chief securities for the holiness of the pardoned is found in the way of CLEANSING THROUGH ATONEMENT. The blood of Jesus sanctifies as well as pardons. The sinner learns that his free pardon cost the life of his best Friend; that in order to his salvation the Son of God himself agonized even to a bloody sweat, and died forsaken of his God. This causes a sacred mourning for sin, as he looks upon the Lord whom he pierced. Love to Jesus burns within the pardoned sinner's breast, for the Lord is his Redeemer; and therefore he feels a burning indignation against the murderous evil of sin. To him all manner of evil is detestable,

since it is stained with the Saviour's heart's blood. As the penitent sinner hears the cry of, "Eloi, sabachthani!" he is horrified to think that one so pure and good should be forsaken of heaven because of the sin which he bore in his people's stead. From the death of Jesus the mind draws the conclusion that sin is exceedingly sinful in the sight of the Lord; for if eternal justice would not spare even the Well-beloved Jesus when imputed sin was upon him, how much less will it spare guilty men? It must be a thing unutterably full of poison which could make even the immaculate Jesus suffer so terribly. Nothing can be imagined which can have greater power over gracious minds than the vision of a crucified Saviour denouncing sin by all his wounds, and by every falling drop of blood. What! live in the sin which slew Jesus? Find pleasure in that which wrought his death? Trifle with that which laid his glory in the dust? Impossible! Thus you see that the gifts of free grace, when handed down by a pierced hand, are never likely to suggest self-indulgence in sin, but the very reverse.

VI. Sixthly, a man who becomes a partaker of divine grace, and receives the new nature, is ever afterwards A PARTAKER OF DAILY HELPS FROM GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. God the Holy Ghost deigns to dwell in the bosom, of every man whom God has saved by his grace. Is not that a wonderful means of sanctifying? By what process can men be better kept from sin than by having the Holy Spirit himself to dwell as Vice-regent within their hearts? The Ever-blessed Spirit leads believers to be much in prayer, and what a power for holiness is found in the child of grace speaking to the heavenly Father! The tempted man flies to his chamber, unbosoms his grief to God, looks to the flowing wounds of his Redeemer, and comes down strong to resist temptation. The divine word also, with its precepts and promises, is a never-failing source of sanctification. Were it not that we every day bathe in the sacred fountain of eternal strength we might soon be weak and irresolute; but fellowship with God renews us in our vigorous warfare with sin. How is it possible that the doctrines of grace should suggest sin to men who constantly draw near to God? The renewed man is also by God's Spirit frequently quickened in conscience; so that things which heretofore did not strike him as sinful are seen in a clearer light, and are consequently condemned. I know that certain matters are sinful to me today which did not appear so ten years ago: my

judgment has, I trust, been more and more cleared of the blindness of sin. The natural conscience is callous and hard; but the gracious conscience grows more and more tender till at last it becomes as sensitive as a raw wound. He who has most grace is most conscious of his need of more grace. The gracious are often afraid to put one foot before another for fear of doing wrong. Have you not felt this holy fear, this sacred caution? It is by this means that the Holy Spirit prevents your ever turning your Christian liberty into licentiousness, or daring to make the grace of God an argument for folly.

Then, in addition to this, the good Spirit leads us into high and hallowed intercourse with God, and I defy a man to live upon the mount with God, and then come down to transgress like men of the world. If thou hast walked the palace floor of glory, and seen the King in his beauty, till the light of his countenance has been thy heaven, thou canst not be content with the gloom and murkiness of the tents of wickedness. To lie, to deceive, to feign, as the men of the world do, will no longer beseem thee. Thou art of another race, and thy conversation is above them: "Thy speech betrayeth thee." If thou dost indeed dwell with God, the perfume of the ivory palaces will be about thee, and men will know that thou hast been in other haunts than theirs. If the child of God goes wrong in any degree, he loses to some extent the sweetness of his communion, and only as he walks carefully with God does he enjoy full fellowship; so that this rising or falling in communion becomes a sort of parental discipline in the house of the Lord. We have no court with a judge, but we have home with its fatherhood, its smile and its rod. We lack not for order in the family of love, for our Father dealeth with us as with sons. Thus, in a thousand ways, all danger of our presuming upon the grace of God is effectually removed.

VII. THE ENTIRE ELEVATION OF THE MAN WHO IS MADE A PARTAKER OF THE GRACE OF GOD is also a special preservative against sin. I venture to say, though it may be controverted, that the man who believes the glorious doctrines of grace is usually a much higher style of man than the person who has no opinion upon the matter. What do most men think about? Bread-and-butter, house-rent and clothes. But the men who consider the doctrines of the gospel muse upon the

everlasting covenant, predestination, immutable love, effectual calling, God in Christ Jesus, the work of the Spirit, justification, sanctification, adoption, and such like noble themes. Why, it is a refreshment merely to look over the catalogue of these grand truths! Others are as children playing with little sand-heaps on the seashore; but the believer in free grace walks among hills and mountains. The themes of thought around him tower upward, Alps on Alps; the man's mental stature rises with his surroundings, and he becomes a thoughtful being, communing with sublimities. No small matter this, for a thing so apt to grovel as the average human intellect. So far as deliverance from mean vices and degrading lusts must in this way be promoted, I say, it is no small thing. Thoughtlessness is the prolific mother of iniquity. It is a hopeful sign when minds begin to roam among lofty truths. The man who has been taught of God to think will not so readily sin as the being whose mind is buried beneath his flesh. The man has now obtained a different view of himself from that which led him to trifle away his time with the idea that there was nothing better for him than to be merry while he could. He says, "I am one of God's chosen, ordained to be his son, his heir, joint-heir with Jesus Christ. I am set apart to be a king and priest unto God, and as such I cannot be godless, nor live for the common objects of life." He rises in the object of his pursuit: he cannot henceforth live unto himself, for he is not his own, he is bought with a price. Now he dwells in the presence of God, and life to him is real, earnest, and sublime. He cares not to scrape together gold with the muck-rake of the covetous, for he is immortal, and must needs seek eternal gains. He feels that he is born for divine purposes, and enquires "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" He feels that God has loved him that his love may flow forth to others. God's choice of any one man has a bearing upon all the rest: he elects a Joseph that a whole family, a whole nation, nay, the whole world, may be preserved alive when famine had broken the staff of bread. We are each one as a lamp kindled that we may shine in the dark, and light up other lamps.

New hopes come crowding on the man who is saved by grace. His immortal spirit enjoys glimpses of the endless. As God has loved him in time, he believes that the like love will bless him in eternity. He knows that his Redeemer lives, and that in the latter days he shall behold him;

and therefore he has no fears for the future. Even while here below he begins to sing the songs of the angels, for his spirit spies from afar the dawn of the glory which is yet to be revealed. Thus with joyous heart and light footstep he goes forward to the unknown future as merrily as to a wedding-feast.

Is there a sinner here, a guilty sinner, one who has no merit, no claim to mercy whatever; is there one willing to be saved by God's free grace through believing in Jesus Christ? Then let me tell thee, sinner, there is not a word in God's book against thee, not a line or syllable, but everything is in thy favour. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief. Jesus came into the world to save thee. Only do thou trust him, and rest in him. I will tell thee what ought to fetch thee to Christ at once, it is the thought of his amazing love. A profligate son had been a great grief to his father; he had robbed him and disgraced him, and at last he ended by bringing his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. He was a horrible wretch of a son: no one could have been more graceless. However, he attended his father's funeral, and he stayed to hear the will read: perhaps it was the chief reason why he was there. He had fully made up his mind that his father would cut him off with a shilling, and he meant to make it very unpleasant for the rest of the family. To his great astonishment, as the will was read it ran something like this: "As for my son Richard, though he has fearfully wasted my substance, and though he has often grieved my heart, I would have him know that I consider him still to be my own dear child, and therefore, in token of my undying love, I leave him the same share as the rest of his brothers." He left the room; he could not stand it, the surprising love of his father had mastered him. He came down to the executor the next morning, and said, "You surely did not read correctly?" "Yes I did; there it stands." "Then," he said, "I feel ready to curse myself that I ever grieved my dear old father. Oh, that I could fetch him back again!" Love was born in that base heart by an unexpected display of love. May not your case be similar? Our Lord Jesus Christ is dead, but he has left it in his will that the chief of sinners are objects of his choicest mercy. Dying he prayed, "Father, forgive them." Risen he pleads for transgressors. Sinners are ever on his mind: their salvation is his great object. His blood is for them, his heart for them, his

righteousness for them, his heaven for them. Come, O ye guilty ones, and receive your legacy. Put out the hand of faith and grasp your portion. Trust Jesus with your souls, and he will save you. God bless you. Amen.

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A Drama In Five Acts

But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. - 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Holy scripture seldome gives a special rule for each particular case, but it rather instructeth us by general principles applicable to all cases. To meet every distinct moral emergency which could possibly arise, and solve every separate problem of action, would require rather a library than a volume. To men who are taught of the Spirit of God, general principles are far more valuable than special precepts, and I am half persuaded that it is so with all persons; for it is less difficult to apply a general principle to a peculiar case than it is to find out exactly what the particular case may be, and what the special rule applicable to it. In writing to the Church at Corinth the apostle had to answer several questions with regard to marriage; whether, for instance, it was not better in those persecuting times, when men often had to flee suddenly from their houses, that they should remain unmarried; whether, again, supposing a person became a Christian after marriage, it was lawful for him to separate from the person with whom he was unequally yoked; and several other questions as to fitting action in certain extraordinary positions. To these the apostle answers with an "I suppose," or again, "Howbeit, for this speak I, not the Lord;" as if he felt himself quite out of his element in attempting to meet every case; but soon he lands on sure ground in the verses before us, and seems to say, "Whatever may be the answers which

I ought to give to these special questions, of this one thing I am quite sure; I say positively and without any doubt that the time is short, and therefore it remaineth, whether ye are married or not, whether ye weep or whether ye rejoice, whether ye buy or whether ye sell, that ye should act in all these things as knowing, their temporary and unsubstantial character."

Dear brethren, the important lesson which we endeavor to teach this morning is just this—that because time is so short, and the things of this world so frail and fleeting, it becomes us always to look at the things which are seen in their true character, and never to build substantial hopes on unsubstantial comforts, nor seek for solid joy from unreal things.

In order that I may make this matter very plain, and may be the more likely to enlist your attention, and to secure the friendship of your memories in future years, I intend this morning to take you to a play. Strange thing for me to do, who have never crossed the threshold of a theater on any occasion, good or bad! Yet this morning I shall seat you in front of the stage, and I shall put the worldling side by side with you while the five acts are performed. I shall next invite you to attend in the character of a Christian, to look through the whole and discern its emptiness; then, in the third place, I shall point you to the curtain which is quite sure to drop upon the scene; and then we will walk out of this theater of unreal show, this fashion of this world which passeth away, and see what there is to do in this world which is real, practical, and lasting.

Do not suppose that the idea of taking you to a theater this morning is original on my part; it is in my text. "The fashion of this world passeth away,"—the word translated "fashion" is borrowed from the changing scenes of the drama; where the splendid pageantry vanishes as the scene changes. Nor will you think Holy Scripture too severe in its comparison, when I remind you that one of the world's own poets has said

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players."

Nor will the most precise among you complain of the levity of a metaphor which is sanctioned by Apostolic use; but I trust you will all cheerfully listen, while in simple words I tell the story which the bard of the sanctuary has sung in flowing verse.

"This life's a dream, an empty show;
But the bright world to which I go,
Hath joys substantial and sincere:
When shall I wake and find me there?"

I. WE WILL WITNESS "THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD" AS IT PASSES BEFORE US, LISTENING TO THE WORLDLING'S COMMENT.

The first act introduces those that have wives. It opens with a wedding. The bride and bridegroom advance to the altar in bridal attire. The bells are ringing; crowds are cheering at the door, while overflowing mirth is supreme within. In another scene we observe domestic happiness and prosperity, a loving husband and a happy wife. Yet, further on in the performance, rosy children are climbing the father's knee; the little prattlers are lisping their mother's name. "Now," says our companion as he gazes with rapture, "This is real and enduring, I know it is; this will satisfy me; I crave for nothing more than this. Home is a word as sweet as heaven, and a healthy happy race of children is as fine a possession as even angels can desire. On this rock will I build all my hope; secure me this portion, and I cheerfully renounce the dreamy joys of religion." We whisper in his ear that all this is but a changing scene, and will by-and-by pass away, for time is short, and wife and children are dying creatures. The man laughs at us, and says, "Fanatics and enthusiasts may seek eternal joys, but these are enough me." He believes that if there be anything permanent in the universe it is marrying and being given in marriage, educating and bringing up a family, and seeing them all comfortably settled. He is right in valuing the blessing, but wrong in making it his all. Will he see his error before the curtain falls? Or will he continue to found the hopes of an immortal spirit upon dying joys? See the green mounds in the cemetery, and the headstone, with "Here he lies." Alas for thee, poor deluded worldling, where is thy soul now? Doth it console thee that the dust of thine offspring shall mingle with thine

ashes? Where hast thou now a home? What family hast thou now to care for? The first act is over; take breath and say, "This also is vanity."

The tenour of the drama changes, alas, how soon! Household joys are linked with household sorrows. They that weep are now before us in the second act. The cloudy and dark days have come. There are parents wringing their hands; a beloved child has died, and they are following its corpse to the tomb. Anon, the merchant has suffered a tremendous loss; he puts his hand to his aching head and mourns, for he knows not what will be the end of his troubles. The wife is smitten by the hand of death; she lies on her bed, blanched with sickness and wan with pain; there is a weeping husband at her side, and then there is another funeral, and in the dim distance I see the black horses again and again. The woes of men are frequent, and sorrow's visits are not, like those of angels, few and far between. Our man of the world, who is much moved at this second act, foreseeing his own sorrows therein, weeps, until he fairly sobs out his feelings, clutches us with earnestness, and cries, "Surely this is awfully real; you cannot call this a fleeting sorrow or a light affliction. I will wring my hands for ever; the delight of my eyes has been taken from me; I have lost all my joys now; my beloved in whom I trusted has withered like a leaf in autumn before my face; now shall I despair; I shall never look up again!" "I have lost my fortune," says the afflicted merchant, "and distress overwhelms me; this world is indeed a wilderness to me; all its flowers are withered. I would not give a snap of my finger to live now, for everything worth living for is gone!" Sympathising deeply with our friend, we nevertheless venture to tell him that these trials to the Christian, because they are so short and produce such lasting good, are not killing sorrows. "Ah," says he, "you men of faith may talk in that way, but I cannot; I tell you these are real things." Like an English sailor, who, seeing a play, sprung upon the stage to help a lady in distress, believing that the whole was real, so do such men weep and sigh, as if they were to mourn for ever, because some earthly good has been removed. Oh that they knew that the depths of sorrow were never yet explored by a mortal mourner! Oh that they would escape from those lower deeps where immortal spirits weep and wail amidst an emphasis of misery! The sorrows of time are trifles indeed when compared with the pains of everlasting punishment; and on the other hand we reckon that they me

not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. They are but light afflictions, which are but for a moment, a mere pin's prick to the man of faith. Happy is the man whose eyes are opened to see that heirs of heaven sorrow not as those who are without hope. A real joy of heavenly origin is ever with believers, and it is but the shadow of sorrow which falls upon them. There let the curtain drop—let us enter into an eternal state, and what and where are these temporary griefs?

But the third act comes on, and presents us with a view of those who rejoice. It may be that the first-born son has come of age, and there are great festivities. They are eating and drinking in the servants' hall, and in the master's banquet chamber; there are high notes of joy, and many compliments, and the smiling sire is as glad as man can be. Or it is the daughter's wedding, and kind friends implore a thousand blessings on her head, and the father smiles and shares the joy. Or it is a gain in business, a fortunate speculation; or the profits of industry have come flowing in, slowly perhaps, but still surely, and the man is full of rejoicing; he has a house, and home, and friends, and reputation, and honor, and he is, in the eyes of all who know him, happy; those who do not know him, think he has no cares, that he can have no sorrows, that his life must be one perpetual feast, and that, surely there can be no spot in his sun, no winter in his year, no ebb to follow his floods. Our friend by our side is smiling at this sunny picture. "There," says he, "is not that real? Why, there must be something in that! What more do you want? Only let me get the same, and I will leave you the joys of faith, and heaven, and immortality, to yourselves; these are the things for me; only let me laugh and make merry, and you may pray as you will. Fill high the bowl for me; put the roast and the viands on the table, and let me eat and drink, for to-morrow I die." If we gently hint to our friend that all this passes away like a vision of the night, and that we have learned to look on it as though it were not, he laughs us to scorn, and accounts us mad when he is most mad himself. As for ourselves, so far from resting upon the softest couch that earth can give us, we spurn its vain delights.

"There's nothing round this spacious earth
That suits my large desire;
To boundless joy and solid mirth

My nobler thoughts aspire.

Where pleasure rolls its living flood,
From sin and dross refined,
Still springing from the throne of God,
And fit to cheer the mind."

But the fourth act of the drama is before us, and they that buy demand our attention. The merchant is neither a mourner nor a man of mirth; in the eyes of certain Mammonites he is attending to the one thing needful, the most substantial of all concerns. Here feast your eyes, ye hard, practical, earth-scrappers. There are his money-bags; hear how they thump on the table! There are the rolls of bonds, the banker's books, the title-deeds of estates, mortgages and securities, and the solid investment in his country's own console. He has made a good thing of life, and still he adheres business, as he should do; and, like a painstaking man, he is accumulating still and piling up his heap, meanwhile adding field to field and estate to estate, till soon he will possess a whole county. He has just now been buying a large and very fine house, where he intends to spend the remainder of his days, for he is about to retire from business; the layover is busy making out the transfer; the sum of money is waiting to be paid, and the whole thing is as good as settled. "Ah! now," says our friend, who is looking on at the play, "you are not going to tell me that this is all a shadow? It is not; there is something very solid and real here, at least, something that will perfectly satisfy me." We tell him we dare say there is something that will satisfy him, but our desires are of a larger span, and nothing but the infinite can fill them. Alas for the man who can find satisfaction in earthly things! It will be only for a time; for when he comes to lie upon his dying-bed, he will find his buyings and his sellings poor things wherewithal to stuff a dying pillow; he will find that his gainings and his acquisitions bring but little comfort to an aching heart, and no peace to a conscience exercised with the fear of the wrath to come. "Ah, ah!" he cries, and sneers sarcastically, putting us aside as only fit for Bedlam, "Let me trade and make a fortune, and that is enough for me; with that I shall be well content!" Alas, poor fool, the snow melts not sooner than the joy of wealth, and the smoke of the chimney is as solid as the comfort of riches.

But we must not miss the fifth act. See the rich man, our friend whom lately we saw married, whom we then saw in trouble, afterwards rejoicing and then prospering in business, has entered upon a green old age; he has retired, and has now come to use the world. You will notice that in my text this is the last act of the drama. The world says he has been a wise man and has done well, for all men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself. Now he keeps a liberal table, a fine garden, excellent horses, and many servants, he has all the comforts in fact that wealth can command, and as you look around his noble park, as you gaze at his avenue of fine old trees, or stay a day or two at the family mansion and notice all its luxuries, you hear your friend saying, "Ay, there is something very real here; what do you think of this?" When we hint that the gray hairs of the owner of all these riches betoken that his time is short, and that if this be all he has he is a very poor man, for he will soon have to leave it, and that his regrets in leaving will make his death more pitiable than that of a pauper, our friend replies, "Ah! ah! you are always talking in this way. I tell you this is not a play. I believe it is all real and substantial, and I am not, by any talking of yours, to be made to think that it is unsubstantial and will soon be gone." O world, thou hast fine actors, to cheat men so well, or else mortal man is an easy fool, taken in thy net like the fishes of the sea. The whole matter is most palpably a mere show, but yet men give their souls to win it. Wherefore, O sons of men, are ye thus beside yourselves? "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"

Dear friends, I have put before your mind's eye a fair picture of that which men who live by sight and not by faith regard as being the chief end of man, and the real object of his being. It is to be married; to pass through the trials and joys of life with decency, to trade and grow rich, and at last to use the comforts of this world without abuse: a very comfortable and quiet picture, by no means the representation we should have to present before you of the profligate, He profane, the dissolute, or the debauched. There is nothing here but what is proper and right, and yet everything is improper and everything becomes wrong at once if these be thought to be the substantial things for which an immortal spirit is to spend its fires, and for which an undying soul is to exhaust its powers.

II. Let us now take the CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THIS DRAMA.

"Life is real; life is earnest:" it is real thus far to the Christian, it is real for work and activity for God; it is real in the solemn responsibility which it brings; it is real in the gratitude which we owe to God for the comforts which he is pleased to bestow; it is real to us so far as we can see God therein, and can turn everything to God's glory. The unreality of this world to a Christian, is found in the fact that time is short. This is the wand which torches the substance and makes it, before the eye of wisdom, dissolve into a shade. Time is short!

When the apostle declares that they that have wives, should be as though they had none, he does not teach us to despise the marriage state, but not to seek our heaven in it, nor let it hinder our serving the Lord. It is supposed that there are some things which a man without a wife and family can do—those things the man with a wife and family should do. It is supposed that a man without a wife can give his time to the cause of God: the man with a wife should do the same, and he will not find it difficult to do so if God hath blessed him with one who will second all his holy endeavors. It is supposed that a man without a wife has no care: a man with a wife should have none, for he should cast all his cares on God who careth for him. "He that careth not for his own house is worse than a heathen man and a publican;" and yet the apostle says, in the verse following my text, "But I would have you without carefulness;" for we should learn to live by faith. The man who has a large family, and many things to exercise his mind, should yet, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, lye as quietly and comfortably as though he had none, depending and resting by simple faith upon the providence and goodness of God. Then, again, it is supposed that an unmarried man will find it easier to die, for there will be none of that sorrow at leaving his beloved family: the man with a wife and family should, by faith, find it just as easy since the promise runs, "Leave thy fatherless children, and let thy widows trust in me." Full of the same faithful tenderness and affection which another husband would exhibit, and even excelling in love and kindness, yet the Christian should look up to the divine Lord who is the husband of the widow, and with confidence leave his offspring, and bid them trust in his

God. May God the Holy Ghost teach us how to walk in our households, loving ever and yet remembering that all our kindred shall pass away.

Again, there is the second act—weeping. Every Christian man must weep; but the Apostle says that our sorrows are to be regarded by us, because time is short, as though they were no sorrows at all. A man who knows that his trials will not last long, can be cheerful under them. If he sees a Father's hand in the midst of every adversity, and believes that when he is tried he shall come forth like gold from the furnace; if he knows with the Psalmist that "weeping may endure for the night, but that joy cometh in the morning," why then grief has lost its weight, and sorrow has lost its sting; and while the man weeps he yet rejoices, seeing the rainbow of the covenant painted on the cloud. Happy man, who, under bereavement, under crosses, and losses, can still cast his burden upon God, and can say, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!" The Christian man is bound to live above his sorrows; he weeps, for "Jesus wept;" he may mourn, for the faithful have been mourners often, but he must not so mourn and weep as to be eaten up with grief; over the tops of the rolling waves he must see the haven of peace, and rejoice evermore.

So is it in the third part. The Christian has his rejoicings, and he is not forbidden to be happy; indeed, he is commanded to rejoice; and the things of this life he may freely enjoy with the double zest of the mercy itself, and of the God who gave it to him. But still, believer, in all thy joys, remember to hold them with a loose hand. Never so hold thy joys as if they were all in all to thee. Though it be wife, or child, or property, or health, or wealth, or fame, still ever stand ready to surrender all into thy Father's hand, feeling that these, after all, are not thy joys; that thou hast better springs to drink from than those which earth's summers can dry up, and that thou hast rivers of pleasure deeper and broader than any which earth's winter shall be able to freeze. Do thou still stand steadily to this, that, as earth cannot cast thee down to despair, so it cannot lift thee up so as to make thee forget thy God. Learn in these things to rejoice as

though thou hadst them not, and let this be thy solace, that thy name is written in heaven.

So, too, in the matter of buying and possessing. It is not wrong for a Christian to trade and to trade well. I cannot see any reason why a Christian should be a fool; in fact, those who are fools in business are very often a great dishonor to the Christian religion, for a fool is very often first-cousin, if not father, to a knave. But, still, while we buy and sell it should always be thus—"This is not my real trade; this is not the way in which I really get rich, for my treasure is beyond the skies, where moth devours not, and where rust cannot consume." Handle these things, brethren, knowing that they take to themselves wings and flee away; look at them as transient objects which are to be used and sanctified in the passing, not your own, but lent to you for a time; to be repaid at last, with interest, in the day when the Master saith, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." A man may be as rich as Croesus, and his wealth will never hurt him if he does not hold it with a tight hand; and a man may be as happy as happiness can make him here, and yet it will not hurt him if he learns to keep it under his feet. But oh! when one's rejoicings or possessions get the upper hand of us there is as dreadful a drowning in a sea of pleasure as in a sea of misery. Keep before your mind the words of our sweet singer—

"To thee we owe our wealth and friends,
And health, and safe abode;
Thanks to thy name for meaner things,
But they are not my God.

What empty things are all the skies,
And this inferior clod!
There's nothing here deserves my joys,
There's nothing like my God."

The last scene is the using of the things of this life. The creatures of God are given us to be used. John the Baptist may be an ascetic, but the Son of Man is come eating and drinking. The Christian man knows that the mercies which God has given him are to be used, but while he uses them

he must use them as though he did not use them. That is a high philosophy which I fear me not many of us have learned, the philosophy of the apostle when he said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." That man is the fullgrown and true Christian whom circumstances cannot alter! He trusts in God when he is penniless, and he trusts in his God just the same when he is rich; he rests on God when he can enjoy nothing, and he rests on him just the same when he can enjoy everything; he learned to build on the Rock of Ages when he had no comfort, and he builds on the Rock of Ages now, when he has every comfort! This, I take it, is where the apostle would have us brought. To the true Christian the things of this world are only real so far as they involve responsibility; but, seeing that time is short, he looks on life as men look upon a play; he sees a monarch strut, and he says, "Ah! he is to pull off his robes behind the stage!" He sees a peasant or a beggar, and he smiles and thinks of the time when the king and the peasant shall be equal, and the servant and his lord shall stand before one tribunal to give an account of the things done in the body. Send your souls longing after real and unchanging joys, for these splendid, gaudy, shifting scenes, mock the beholder and delude his hopes. Gorgeous as the colors of the bubble, and quite as frail, farewell ye worthless things, our spirit leaves you for eternal mansions in the skies.

III. And now, dear friends, I want your attention a few minutes while I point you to THE CURTAIN WHICH IS SOON TO DROP UPON ALL THESE THINGS, it bears this short device, "TIME IS SHORT."

It is very difficult to keep men in mind of the fact that they are mortal. We confess that we are mortal, but we profess by our actions that we are immortal. Said a man of eighty-two concerning another of seventy, when he wanted to buy his land and could not get it at the price he wished—"Never mind, So-and-so is an old man, he will soon be dead, and then I'll buy it." Though he was ten or twelve years older than the other, yet the other must of course, soon die, while he, in his own thoughts, must live for many a year. How short time is! Do we not, dear friends, get more and more that impression? I am but young compared with very many of you, yet the impression constantly grows upon my mind. Why, it seems but

the day before yesterday when I plucked the first early primrose of spring, while the flowers were breaking up from under the earth, and the buds were ready to burst from the sheath! It was only as yesterday that we were walking in the fields and were remarking that the corn was just beginning to be tinged with the golden hue of harvest! Only a few Sabbaths ago I was talking to you of Ruth in the harvest-fields, and of the heavily-laden waggon that was pressed down with sheaves; and now the leaves are almost all gone; but few remain upon the trees; these frosty nights and strong winds have swept the giants of the forest till their limbs are bare, and the hoar frosts plate them with silver. Then, before we shall have time to burn the winter's log, we shall see the snow-drops and the yellow crocus heralding another spring! At what a rate we whirl along! Childhood seems to travel in a waggon, but manhood at express-speed. As we grow older I am told that the speed increases till the gray-headed old man looks back upon all his life as being but a day; and I suppose, if we could live to be a hundred and thirty we should feel the same, till, like Jacob, we should say, "Few and evil have been the days of thy servant!" and, if we could live as long as Methuselah, I doubt not our life would appear shorter still. How time flies, not only by the measurement of the seasons, but by ourselves! A few days ago I trudged with my satchel on my back to school, or joined in boyish sport. How lately was it when the boy became a youth, and must be doing something, and was teaching other boys as he had been taught in his day. It was but yesterday I came to Park Street to address some few of you, and yet how time has fled since then, till now some nine years of our ministry have passed. No weaver's shuttle, no arrow from a bow, no swift post, no meteor seems to fly at a rate so wonderful as does our life! We heard of one the other day who had seen Wesley preach, and so we find ourselves side-by-side with the last century, and those old people have known some others in their youth who told them of the yet older time, and you find that going through the history of some ten or twelve persons you are carried back to the days of William the Conqueror, and you see our country taken by the Normans, and then you fly back to ancient British times as with a thought. You no longer say, "How long the nation has existed!" for it is as a sleep. You stand by some old cliff and see a deposit of shells, and as you remember that it may have taken a million of years to have formed that bed, you think—"What is man? and what is time? It is not here, but gone!" We

have only to think of what time is to conclude at once that time is not! It is but a little interlude in the midst of the vast eternity; a narrow neck of land jutting out into the great, dread, and unfathomable sea of everlastingness!

But while time is thus short, its end is absolutely sure. That curtain yonder must fall soon! It must fall; it is inevitable. I cannot prevent my death by the most regular habits of life; the most skillful physician cannot preserve my life for me; a host of angels, should they swear to make me immortal, could not! When the time comes, die I must! And, as my death is inevitable, so it may be very near. Let each man remember that! How soon it may be we cannot tell! Every Sabbath there are some in this house who are dead before the next Sabbath. I am not now venturing a guess; it is a matter of fact, a matter of fact, too, that comes under my own cognizance very frequently. According to our population and the gradual number of deaths, there must be some out of this congregation here this morning who will have gone the way of all flesh before next Sabbath-day! There was one—I look at her seat now, and a brother sitting near by looks there with sorrow!—who was with us one Sabbath-day, and we soon heard that she had gone to enjoy the Eternal Sabbath! At a Church-meeting last week, no less than three of our sisters were reported as having fallen asleep in Jesus within a week. Ah! how near is death to us! Perhaps he now stands looking over thy shoulder, young man; God holds back his hand, but the dart of death is close to thy heart, and soon,—ah, how soon!—may you be taken to the place appointed for all living! Go, thou strong man, and remember that thou art a mass of feebleness! Go, thou young man, and remember that death reaps green corn! Go, thou old man, and expect the sickle! And go, thou rich man, and remember that thou shalt soon leave everything that thou hast, and then where art thou if thou hast no treasure in heaven, if thou hast not laid up in store for immortality?

And I must add here that, to those who have no God, death, while inevitable and very near, will be most awful and tremendous! There was a dreadful story told in the papers of this last week. At the seaport town of Garliestown one day last week, certain workmen were busy preparing a better berth for a vessel which seems to have taken the ground a little too

soon. On a sudden some one raised a cry that the ship was listing over, and while some four men were able to escape, one poor fellow was unable to do so, and the ship fell upon his lower extremities and loins. Now this was thought, perhaps, to be no great danger, for they could take away the sludge and extricate him. So they began to shore the ship, and willing hands brought ropes and blocks, and wedges, and earnest strength. But they soon discovered that the thing was impossible from the nature of the bottom of the river, and from the position of the cargo, which, I suppose, they could not speedily remove. The man was jammed under the bulwarks, and must remain fixed there without hope. There was just one awful hour before the coming tide would reach the spot. Well might a solemn hush succeed the frantic labors of the townsmen as death was seen riding on the advancing flood. The poor creature had to lie there that hour as the tide came gently in. A minister stood his side praying with him; let us trust that his soul found peace with God! But O the terror of his position; well might he say, "Cover my head, that I may not see the water." Steadily the cold un pitying waters flowed on until a corpse was hidden where an hour or so before a strong man labored. This is a graphic picture of the position of every ungodly man! He does not know it, but the waves of time are coming up about him now, and we cannot help him to escape. The load of his sins is on his loins: he cannot deliver himself; the great waters of God's wrath must swallow him up quick. O, sinner, would that I could save thee! Alas, it is not in my power! But there is an arm that can deliver thee; there is one who can lift the burden off thee, and say to thee, "Be free!" Believe in him and thou shalt never die! Trust thou in his power and rest thyself on his love, and thou shalt escape as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; and when death cometh it shall be no death to thee, but a peaceful migration from the land of shadows to the world of substance. God help us to be wise, that we may remember our latter end!

I would say a few more words to the sinner. I cannot think, O worldling, why thou shouldst love this world so much when it is so soon to vanish! In the old Greek cities they had a king every year, and, because it was so poor a thing to be a king for only one year and then to be a common man again, all the citizens dreaded to be kings. How canst thou long to be rich, when thou art only to be rich for so short a time? When the sailor is just about to furl his sail because he is near the port, he will not fret himself

with some little inconvenience in the ship; and wherefore art thou so sore vexed with all these little trials, when thou art so near the eternal haven? When men buy property on a short lease, they will not give much for it, for they are only to have it for a brief term; wherefore spendest thou thy soul to buy this world? What will it profit thee, if thou gain it, if thy soul be lost? When men have a house and they are soon to leave it, they will not lay out much in repairing it; wherefore, then, caress thou so much for thy body? Why mindest thou so much this life; the bell is even now trembling to toll for thee, and the grave is yawning that it may swallow thee up? Oh man! Oh man! I would that thou wert wise! Thou art to live for ever, for ever, for ever, either

"In flames that no abatement know,
Though briny tears for ever flow."

or else in joy beyond degree. Which shall it be with thee, man? If thou diest as thou art, O sinner, remember, there remaineth nothing for thee but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation! I pray thee by the love of God, to consider thy ways. Thus saith the Lord unto thee this day by my lips, as truly as he spake to Hezekiah by the prophet of old, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." How wilt thou stand, sinner, in the day when the Lord cometh to make inquisition for sin, and to avenge their iniquity upon the heads of the unpardoned? Fly, sinner; God help thee by his grace to fly now to yonder open door, where Jesus waits to receive thee and to put away thy sin. Whosoever believeth on him is not condemned. Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of man is lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

IV. Come, come, ye wise men, rise and leave this theater, we have seen enough of it. "The fashion of this world passeth away;" and for you and for me happy shall it be when it shall have passed away for ever. But is there nothing real? Can I do nothing real here? Is there nothing I can do that shall last for ever? Yes, the soul is lasting. Then let me see to my own soul. Let me make my calling and election sure, for I shall have been of all fools the most mad, if I shall have trifled with these things and yet have neglected my soul. The Roman emperor, Claudius, once invaded Great

Britain, but his performance only consisted of gathering pebbles and shells from the sea-coast. This shall be my triumph, this my sole reward, if here in this world I live only to gather wealth. At the last I shall be as though I gathered pebbles, for these things shall be of no value to me if my soul shall perish. O Lord, by thy rich grace set me upon a sure foundation, and make me right before thy face.

Yes, there are some real things besides my own soul. There are other men's souls. What am I doing for them? Am I teaching, am I preaching, or, if I am not doing this, am I helping others to preach? Am I doing my best to add to the kingdom of Christ by the ingathering of immortals? Have I a sphere in the ragged school or in tract distributing, or am I helping in some way or other to do good? For, if not, my life is a play, I am doing nothing real; I am only hurrying here and there, and when it comes to the last I shall have been as a workman that has neglected his own work to play with children in the streets! Dig up your buried talents, O idlers. Work while it is called to-day, O ye who are given to slumber.

Yes, there is something real—there is Christ's Church. The Church that is to shine like the stars in heaven for ever, the Bride of the Lamb—what am I doing for Her? Do I seek the good of Jerusalem? As a member of the Church, do I contribute to its strength? Do I give of my substance to her efforts, and of my talents to her doings? Do I cast myself wholly into the arms of Christ, and work for him! Yes, there is something real—Jesus is so. Am I glorifying him here on earth? When I see him in his poor people, do I feed him? When he shivers at my door in the garb of poverty, do I clothe him? When I know that he hath need, do I visit him? If so, I am doing real things. If I devote my life to God, to Christ, to his Church, to the souls of men, and if my own soul is saved, then I am living; but if not, I am dead while I live. "Let us live while we live!" Alas! how many are dying while they live, drivelling while they live! Oh! the scores of pounds we spend on ourselves; the hundreds we give to our own comfort! And where is that? It is gone like smoke! But that which is given to God lasts and endures; it is treasured up in God's bank; that which is given to the poor and needy is made—though unrighteous mammon—to be treasured up in heaven! But I know many practical persons will say, "Yes, this is a very pretty speech for a young minister; but these ministers do not

understand business; they cannot be expected to understand temporal matters." I would to God ye understood them half so well, for our understanding in this matter we know is sound; and when you shall come to see these things in the light of eternity streaming between the curtains of your dying bed, you will understand, then, that there was nothing worth living for but God, and Christ, and his Church; and you will give your verdict then with mine to this, that truly to live must be Christ, or else to die never can be gain!

God add his blessing, and may some be led to trust in Jesus this morning!

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The Duty Of Remembering The Poor

Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do. - Galatians 2:10

Poverty is no virtue; wealth is no sin. On the other hand, wealth is not morally good, and poverty is not morally evil. A man may be a good man and a rich man; it is quite certain that very frequently good men are poor men. Virtue is a plant which depends not upon the atmosphere which surrounds it, but upon the hand which waters it, and upon the grace which sustains it. We draw no support for grace from our circumstances whether they be good or evil. Our circumstances may sometimes militate against the gracious work in our breast, but it is quite certain that no position in life is a sustaining cause of the life of grace in the soul. That must always be maintained by divine power, which can work as well in poverty as in riches; for we see some of the finest specimens of the full development of Christianity in those who are the very meanest in temporal circumstances; far outshining those whom we should have imagined, from their position in society, would have had many things to assist their virtues and sustain their graces. Grace is a plant which draws no nourishment from the wilderness in which it grows; it finds nothing to

feed upon in the heart of man; all it lives upon it receives supernaturally. It sends all its roots upwards, none downwards; it draws no support from poverty, and none from riches. Gold cannot sustain grace; on the other hand, rags cannot make it flourish. Grace is a plant which derives the whole of its support from God the Holy Spirit, and is therefore entirely independent of the circumstances of man. But yet, mark you, it is an undeniable fact, that God hath been pleased for the most part to plant his grace in the soil of poverty. He has not chosen many great, nor many mighty men of this world, but he hath "chosen the poor of this world—rich in faith—to be heirs of the kingdom of God." We should wonder why, were we not quite sure that God is wise in his choice. We cannot dispute a fact which Scripture teaches, and which our own observation supports, that the Lord's people are, to a very large extent, the poor of this world. Very few of them wear crowns; very few ride in carriages; only a proportion of them have a competence; a very large multitude of his family are destitute, afflicted, tormented, and are kept leaning, day by day, upon the daily provisions of God, and trusting him from meal to meal, believing that he will supply their wants out of the riches of his fullness.

Now, to-night, we shall first of all mention the fact that God has a poor people; secondly, the duty—we should remember the poor; and then, thirdly, the obligation for us to perform this duty; for there are sundry reasons why we ought to be specially mindful of the poor of the Lord's flock.

I. First, then, **THE LORD HAS A POOR PEOPLE**—a fact notorious to us all, which daily observation confirms. Why does the Lord have a poor people? This is a question that might suggest itself to us, and we might not at all times find it easy to answer it, if we were poor ourselves. God could make them all rich if he pleased; he could lay hags of gold at their doors, he could send whole rivers of supplies, where now it is a desert, he could scatter round their houses abundance of provisions; as once he made the quails lie in very heaps round the camp of Israel, so now he could rain bread out of heaven to feed them. There is no necessity that they should be poor, only as it pleases his own sovereign will. "The cattle upon a thousand hills are his," he could supply them; he could make the

rich men of this world give up all their wealth, if he so pleased to turn their minds; he could make the richest, the greatest, and the mightiest, bring all their power and riches to the feet of his children, for the hearts of all men are in his control. But he does not choose to do so; he allows them to suffer want, he allows them to pine in penury and obscurity. Why is this? I believe that is a question we should not find it easy to answer, if we were in the circumstances, but seeing that many of us are out of the affliction, we may perhaps hint at one or two reasons why the Lord God has had, has, and always will have, a poor people in this world.

I. I think one reason is, to teach us how grateful we should be for all the comforts he bestows on many of us. One of the sweetest meals I think I have ever eaten was after beholding a spectacle of penury which had made me weep. When we see others wanting daily bread, does not our loaf at once taste very sweet? It may have been very dry; but we saw some one begging for bread in the streets, and we thanked God for what we had that day, when we knew that others wanted. When we take our walks abroad and see the poor, he must be but a very poor Christian who does not lift up his eyes to heaven and thank his God thus -

"Not more than others I deserve,
But God has given me more."

If we were all made rich alike, if God had given us all abundance, we should never know the value of his mercies, but he puts the poor side by side with us, to make their trials, like a dark shadow, set forth the brightness which he is pleased to give to us in temporal matters. Oh! ye would never thank God half so much if ye did not see your cause for thankfulness by marking the needs of others. Oh! ye dainty ones, that can scarcely eat the food that is put before you, it would do you good if you could sit down at the table of the poor. Oh! ye discontented ones, who are always murmuring at your households, because all kinds of delicacies are not provided for you, it would do you good if you could sit down for a while to workhouse fare, and sometimes eat a little less than that, and fast a day or two, to find your appetites. Ay, ye who never sing a song of praise to God, it would be no small benefit to you, if you were for mice made to want his bounties, then you might be led to thank God for all his

abundant supplies. Even Christian men want a spur to their thankfulness. God gives us a great many mercies we never thank him for Day by day his mercies come, but day by day we forget them. His mercies lie

"Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die."

Put you out in the cold some winter's night, and would you not thank God for the fire afterwards? Make you thirst for a little while, and how grateful would be the drop of water! Now, if God has not exposed us in this way, it is at least an instance of his wisdom, that he has placed others in that position, to teach those of his family who are more highly favored in temporal matters, how thankful they ought to be for the gifts of his providence.

2. That, however, I take it, is but a very low view of the matter. There are other and higher, and better reasons. God is pleased always to have a poor people, that he may display his sovereignty in all he does. If there were no poor saints, we should not so strongly believe the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, or, at least, if the saints believed it, as they always must and will, yet the wicked, and those who despise it, would not have so clear an evidence of it, and would not sin against such great light, which shines upon their poor dark, blind eyeballs from evident displays of sovereignty in salvation. Those who deny divine sovereignty, deny it in the face of all testimony certainly in the teeth of Scripture, for it is there positively affirmed, and God, in order that there may be something besides Scripture, has made his providence bear out the written word, and has caused many of his children to be the despised among the people. "I take whom I please," saith God. "Ye would have me choose kings and queens first; I choose their humble servants in their kitchens before I choose their masters and mistresses in their banqueting halls. Ye would have me take the counsellor and the wise man; I take the fool first, that I may teach you to despise the wisdom of man. I take the poor before the rich, that I may humble all your pride, and teach you there is nothing in man that makes me choose him, but that it is the sovereign will of God alone which creates men heirs of grace." I bless God that there are poor saints, for they teach me this lesson, that God will do as he pleases with

his own. They show me manifestly, that however much men may deny the sovereignty of God, they cannot rob him of it, that he will still exert it to the very last, long as this earth shall stand, and mayhap find ways of exerting it, even in future ages. Certainly the existence of a poor people in the world is proof positive in the mind of the saint, and a plain and bold affirmation to the most obtuse intellect of the sinner, that there is a sovereignty of God in the choice of men.

3. Again: God has a poor people, I take it, that he may display more the power of his comforting promises, and the supports of the gospel. If all God's saints were well-to-do in this world, and never lacked, we should scarcely realize the value of the gospel half so much, Oh! my brethren, when we find some that have not where to lay their heads, who yet can say, "Still will I trust in the Lord;" when we see some who have nothing but bread and water who still glory in Jesus; when we see them "wondering where the scene shall end," seeing that "every day new straits attend," and yet having faith in Christ, oh, what honor it reflects on the gospel! Let my rich friend there stand up and say, "I have faith in God for to-morrow with regard to my daily bread;" you would say, "My dear friend, I do not at all wonder at it, for you have plenty of money at home to buy your bread with, and a salary coming in on such a day; there is not much opportunity for faith in your case." But when some poor habakkuk rises and exclaims "although the fig-tree shall not blossom neither shall there be fruit in the vine," and so on, "Yet will I trust in the Lord." Ah! then that shows the power of all-supporting grace. You know we hear of a great many different inventions that will never stand a trial. One man advertises a swimming belt; a fine thing it would be for dry land, but when it is tried at sea, I fear it will not exactly answer the purpose, and really we cannot know the value of an invention unless we test it, and put it through all the trials when it is supposed to be able to endure. Now, grace is tested in the poverty of believers—that they are still in a great degree an uncomplaining and unmurmuring race—that they bear up under every discouragement, believing that all things work together for their good, and that out of all their apparent evils some good shall ultimately spring—that their God will either work a deliverance for them speedily, or most assuredly support them in the trouble, as long as he is pleased to keep them there beloved, this is no doubt one reason why God

puts his people in poor circumstances. "There," says the architect, "this building is strong." Ay, sir, but it must be tested: let the wind blow against it. There is a lighthouse out at sea: it is a calm night—I cannot tell whether the edifice is firm; the tempest must howl about it, and then I shall know whether it will stand. So with religion, if it were not on many occasions surrounded with tempestuous waters, we should not know that the ship was staunch and strong, if the winds did not blow upon it, as they do on our poor tried brethren, we should not know how firm and secure it is. The master-works of God are those that stand in the midst of difficulties—when all things oppose them, yet maintain their stand; these are his all-glorious works, and so his best children, those who honor him most, are those who have grace to sustain them amidst the heaviest load of tribulations and trials. God puts his people into such circumstances, then, to show us the power of his grace.

4. Then, again: God often allows his people to be a tried and a poor people, just to plague the devil. The devil was never more plagued in his life, I think, than he was with Job. As long as Job was rich, Job caused much envy in Satan, but he never made him so angry as when he was poor. It was then that Satan was the most incensed against him because, after all his trials, he would not curse God and die. You know, if a man thinks he can do a thing, he will always wrap himself up in his self-complacency, till he tries to do it and then fails. So Satan thinks he may overthrow one or other of God's children. "Now, Satan," says God, "I will give thee an opportunity of trying thy skill: one of my children is very poor; I will cut off his bread and water, I will give him the water of affliction to drink, and the bread of bitterness to eat; he shall be exceedingly tried; take him, Satan, drag him through fire and water, and see what thou canst do with him." So Satan tries to starve out the divine life from his soul; but he cannot do it, and he finds, after all he has done, that he is defeated, and he goes away plagued and vexed, and feeling another hell within himself, though miserable enough before, because he was foiled in all his attempts to tread out the spark of life in the heart of God's child. God often allows Satan to test the Lord's work. It is marvellous that the crafty devil should continue to work when it all tends to the glory of God after all, but he is a devil all over, and will ever continue so. He always will keep on meddling with God's children; he will

persevere even to the last moment; till every saint is safe across the Jordan, he will still be plaguing and vexing God's beloved. Ah! then let us rejoice, God will deliver us, and bring us off safe at last, yea, "more than conquerors, through him that loved us."

5. Furthermore, the design of our heavenly Father in allowing a poor people in this world, and keeping his people poor, when he might make them rich, is possibly to give us some living glimpse of Christ. A poor man is the image of Jesus Christ, if he be a Christian. All Christians are the image of Jesus Christ, for the sanctifying influence of Christ exerted on them has made them in some degree like their Master. But the poor man is like his Master, not only in his character, but in his circumstances too. When you look on a poor saint, you have a better picture of Jesus than you have in a rich saint. The rich saint is a member of Christ; he has the image of his Master stamped upon him, and that image shall be perfected when he shall arrive in heaven; but the poor saint has something else; he has not only the most prominent feature, but the back-ground, and the fore-ground, and all in the picture. He has the circumstances of it. Look at his brown hands, hardened by toil; such were his Saviour's once; look at his weary feet, blistered with his journeyings; such were his-Saviour's many a time. He sits upon a well from weariness, as did his Lord once; he hath nowhere to rest, nor had his Master; foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but he had not where to lay his head. He is fed by charity, so was his Master; others supplied his wants. See! he sits down at an invited table, so did his Master; he had not one of his own. Thou seest Christ, then; thou seest as much of Christ as thou wilt see just yet, until thou art taken up where thou shalt be like him, and see him as he is. He would have us always remember the Saviour's poverty: "How he was rich, and yet for our sakes became poor." And just as, on some memorable day, they strike medals which bear the impress of its hero, so I look upon every poor saint as being a medal struck from the mint divine, to be a memento of the existence of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is to make me remember my Lord, to bid me meditate upon that wondrous depth of poverty into which he stooped, that he might lift me up to light and glory. Oh! blessed Jesus, this is wise, for we oft forget thee—wise that thou hast given us some opportunity to remember thee.

6. But now one more reason, and I have done with this part of the subject. The Lord, has a poor people in the midst of us, for this reason, that he determines to give us opportunities of showing our love to him. Now, we show our love to Christ when we sing of him and when we pray to him; but if there were no poor people in the world we should often say within ourselves, "Oh I how I wish there were one of Christ's brethren that I could help; I should like to give Christ something; I should like to show my Master that I loved him, not by words only but by deeds too." And if all the poor saints were taken clean away, and we were all well-to-do, and had abundance, there would be none to require any assistance, and I think we might begin to weep, because there were no poor saints to help. It is one of the most healthy things in the world to help a saint; it is a great blessing to our own souls; it is a healthy exercise of the mind to visit the poor of the Lord's flock, and distribute as we are able of our substance to their necessities. Let us look upon it, not as a mere duty, but as a delight and privilege; for if we were not able to give something of our substance to Christ, we should have to go down on our knees to ask him to give us some opportunity of showing our love to him. Take away the saints, and one channel wherein our love might flow is withdrawn at once. But that shall never be, for the poor we always shall have with us, and there are some reasons why we always shall have them.

II. The second thing we shall endeavor to speak of is THE DUTY here alluded to: "They would that we should remember the poor." "Remember the poor;" that word "remember" is a very comprehensive word.

We ought to remember the poor in our prayers. I need not remind you to offer supplication for the rich, but remember the poor; remember them and pray that God would comfort and cheer them in all the trials of their penury, that he would supply their wants out of the riches of his fullness. Let the angel touch you on the arm, when you have nearly finished your prayer, and say, "Remember the poor; remember the poor of the flock." Let your prayers always go up to heaven for them.

Remember the poor, too, in your conversation. It is remarkable that all of us remember the rich. We talk about all men being equal, but I do not believe there is an Englishman who is not silly enough to boast, if he has

happened to be with a lord in his lifetime. To have seen a live lord is a most marvellous thing, and there is scarcely one of us that could resist the temptation of talking about it. We may say what we like about believing in the equality of mankind; so we do, till we happen to get a little elevated, then we don't believe it any longer. We are all ready enough to pull others down when we are in humble circumstances; but when we get a little elevated, we foolishly think it only a child's fancy that we indulged in, and that after all there are more differences than we imagined. We always remember the rich. You see a man respectable in church; you always know him, don't you? You are on the exchange, or walking down the street; you never find any difficulty in recognising him. Somehow or other, your memory is very treacherous in remembering the poor, but very strong in remembering a rich man. Let me remind you to "Remember the poor." It is singular enough that there, is no command to remember the rich; I suppose because there is no necessity for it, for we usually remember them. But there is a command for us to remember the poor. Now, the next time you see a poor brother coal-heaver, bricklayer, hodsman, or whatever he may be, do know him, if you please; and if you see him in all his dirty garments still know him; do not forget him; try and recollect him. Next sacrament Sunday look him in the face as though you remembered him; for the last twenty times you have seen him you have appeared as if you did not remember him, and the poor man's mind has been hurt as much as if it were some slight on your part, because he was a poor brother. I will not say that it was so, but I am rather afraid it was in some degree. Now, when you see him in the street, say, "Well, brother, I know you," and if he comes up to speak to you, do not think it will lower you to be seen speaking to him in the street. If he is your brother, acknowledge him; if he is not tell no lie about it, but leave the church, and make no false professions. But if you believe it, carry it out.

Now, often, when you are walking home from the house of God, you do not remember the poor, do you. If they should require to speak to you, however important their errand, they would not get attended to very frequently. If Mr. So-and-so, who is a respectable gentleman, wanted you, "Oh! yes, sir, I can stop a moment and have a little conversation with you;" but if a poor person wants you, "Oh! I am in such a hurry; I must go home;" and you are sure to go off directly. Now, for the future, just

reverse your habit. When you see a rich man, do just what you like about attending to him; I know what you will like to do; but when you see a poor man, just make it a point of conscience that you attend to him. I was very much pleased with the conduct of a brother who is here present. He may remember the circumstance, and bless God that he gave him grace to act as he did. A short time ago there stood in the aisle near his pew door, a gentleman and a poor fellow in a smock frock. I thought to myself, "He will let one in I know, I wonder which it will be." I did not wait long, before out he came, and in went the smock frock. He thought very rightly, that the gentlemen would stand a chance of getting a seat out of some of you, but he thought it best to remember the poor; and it was likely that the poorman was the most tired, for he had no doubt had a hard week's work, and probably a long walk, for there are not many smock frocks near London. Therefore he gave in reality to the most necessitous. I say, again, "Remember the poor." There is no necessity to tell you to remember the rich—to be very respectful, and to speak very kindly and lovingly to those who are above you; you will take care of yourselves on that point; but it is the poor you are disposed not to attend to, and therefore I will press on you this commandment, that you remember the poor.

But this especially means, I think, that in the provision for their necessities, we ought to remember the poor. Some of us have pretty good need to remember the poor. I am sure I have, for I have about ten times as many poor people come to me every day as I can possibly relieve. If I were as rich as the Mayor of London, or Her Majesty the Queen, I could scarcely accede to the immense requests sometimes made to me. There is scarcely a poor man that is hard run by his creditors, or a poor woman that cannot make up her rent, but they write to the minister. All the poor souls come to him; and I think to myself, "What can I do with you? I have really done as much as I can, and here are three or four more coming." So I am obliged to send them away, and can only pity, but cannot assist; and this must be the case, unless some one shot a waggon load of gold before my door. Still, we must "remember the poor." Some think it very hard to have so many calls on them; I do not; I only think it hard when I cannot help them; if I could, I would think it a great blessing to assist them all. If I were put in possession of great wealth, I do not say what I would do, for very frequently people's hearts get smaller when their means get greater;

but where God has given us wealth, I am sure where there are necessitous children of God, we ought to remember them directly. How much of the superfluities might be given to their necessities! How many of our lavished luxuries might be bestowed on that which they crave for their very existence. Ye know not how poor this world is. You ride through one part of this magnificent city, and you say, "Talk of poverty! There is no such thing." You ride through another part, and you say, Talk of riches! There is no such thing. The world is poor." Some of you should, now and then, go and search out poverty. Place you above it, and your movements in life seldom bring you into contact with it. If you would have your hearts enlarged, visit the poor; follow them into their dens, for they are but little better in some cases; go up their creaking staircases; see the straw in the corner of the room where they sleep, ay, see worse than that—see a chair whereon a man has been for the last five years, not able to sit without being propped, obliged to be fed by others, and yet living on four or five shillings a week, with nothing to support him properly, or give him sufficient bodily nutriment. Go and see such cases, and if you do not put your hands in your pockets, and help the aged pilgrims, I am afraid there is not much Christianity in you, or if you do not help the one that you see has the greatest need, I am afraid the love of God dwelleth not in you. It is a duty we owe to the poor of the Lord's flock, and we reap many advantages we should not have if we had not to remember the poor.

III. Now, allow me to press home THIS OBLIGATION: why should we remember poor? I shall not urge it upon the ground of common philanthropy and charity, that were a too mean and low way of addressing Christian men, although even they perhaps might be benefited by it. I shall urge it in another way.

"Remember the poor," because they are your Lord's brethren. What! do you not feel, like David, that you would do anything for Jonathan's sake? and if he hath some poor sick son, some Mephibosheth, lame in his feet, wilt thou not seat him at thy table, or give him a maintenance, if thou canst, seeing that Jonathan's blood is in his veins? Remember, beloved, the blood of Jesus runs in the veins of poor saints they are his relatives, they are his friends, and if that move thee not, remember they are thy friends too. They are thy brethren if thou art a child of God; they are

allied to thee; if they are sons of God, so art thou, and they are brethren of thine. What! let thy brother starve? If thou canst, wilt thou not relieve thy brother's necessity, not shield him from the cold, not ward off hunger, not provide for his needs? Oh! I know thou lovest Jesus I know thou lovest the friends of Jesus and I know thou lovest thine own family and, therefore, thou wilt love thy poor brethren, wilt thou not? I know thou writ, thou wilt relieve them. Remember, too, that thou thyself mayst be like thy poor brother ere long, therefore, take heed that thou despise him not, for some one will despise thee. Oh! think thee that all thou hast God has lent thee, he may take it all from thee if he pleases, and if he seeth that thou makest an ill use of it, perhaps he will take it from thee now. Full many a man has lost his wealth by God's righteous judgment for his misuse of it. Thou art God's steward, wilt thou cheat him? He has given thee his wealth to distribute to the poor; wilt thou not supply their needs out of what he hath given thee? Yes, surely thou wilt; I cannot believe thou wilt turn them away, so long as thou hast aught wherewith to relieve them, but wilt share what thou hast with them. Remember, if thou dost not relieve them, thou givest great and grave suspicion that thou lovest not Christ, for if ye love not Christ's people, how can it be that ye are his disciples, since it is the mark, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another;" and how can ye love, where ye have, and give not where God hath made you rich, and yet you do not bestow? Gravely ye give cause to doubt that the love of God is in you, if the love of the brethren is not in you also. Oh! remember, when thou givest, God can give thee more. Thou hast lost nothing! thou hast put it in another purse, and God may hand it back to thee in larger measure yet. Men lose nothing by what they give to God's saints. It would often be a heavenly investment if they bestowed it upon God's family; but if they retain it, God hath other means to make them poor, if they will not give to his cause. John Bunyan tells of a man who had a roll of cloth, and the more he cut from it, the more he had; and he says, in his rhyiming way, -

"A man there was, though some did count him mad,
The more he cast away, the more he had."

He was not much of a madman, after all, if he had more the more he gave away. But that is a very selfish view; remember, it thou never hast it back

again, it is no small honor to give it to Christ; and remember, what thou givest to his children thou putteth into his palm; and if Christ should stand at the door as thou passeth the plate, how wouldst thou put thy money in to please him! Remember, his poor believing family are his hand; give into his hand, then, as ye can at all times and seasons. Remember the poor; ye shall always have the poor to remember.

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Earnest Expostulation

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? - Romans 2:4

The apostle is intensely personal in his address. This verse is not spoken to us all in the mass, but to some one in particular. The apostle fixes his eyes upon a single person, and speaks to him as "Thee" and "Thou." "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" It should ever be the intent of the preacher to convey his message to each hearer in his own separate individuality. It is always a very happy sign when a man begins to think of himself as an individual, and when the expostulations and invitations of the gospel are seen by him to be directed to himself personally. I will give nothing for that indirect, essay-like preaching which is as the sheet lightning of summer, dazzling for the moment, and flaming over a broad expanse, but altogether harmless, since no bolt is launched from it, and its ineffectual fires leave no trace behind. I will give nothing for that kind of hearing which consists in the word being heard by everybody in general, and by no one in particular. It is when the preacher can "Thee" and "Thou" his hearers that he is likely to do them good. When each man is made to say, "This is for

me," then the power of God is present in the word. One personal, intentional touch of the hem of Christ's garment conveys more blessing than all the pressure of the crowd that thronged about the Master. The laying of his healing hand upon the individual who was suffering had more virtue in it than all those heavenly addresses which fell from his lips upon minds that did not receive the truth for themselves. I do pray that we may come to personal dealings with the Lord each one for himself, and that the Spirit of God may convince each man and each woman, according as the case may stand before the living God. O my hearer, thou art now to be lovingly spoken with: I speak not to You as unto many, but unto thee, as one by thyself.

Observe that the apostle singled out an individual who had condemned others for transgressions, in which he himself indulged. This man owned so much spiritual light that he knew right from wrong, and he diligently used his knowledge to judge others, condemning them for their transgressions. As for himself, he preferred the shade, where no fierce light might beat on his own conscience and disturb his unholy peace. His judgment was spared the pain of dealing with his home offenses by being set to work upon the faults of others. He had a candle, but he did not place it on the table to light his own room; he held it out at the front door to inspect therewith his neighbours who passed by. Ho! my good friend, my sermon is for thee. Paul looks this man in the face and says, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whoever thou art, that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things:" and then he pointedly says to him: "Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" Well did the apostle aim that piercing arrow; it hits the center of the target and strikes a folly common to mankind. The poet of the night-watches wrote, -

All men think all men mortal but themselves.

As truly might I say, "All men think all men guilty but themselves." The punishment which is due to sin the guilty reckon to be surely impending upon others, but they scarce believe that it can ever fall upon themselves. A personal doom for themselves is an idea which they will not harbour: if

the dread thought should light upon them they shake it off as men shake snow-flakes from their cloaks. The thought of personal guilt, judgment, and condemnation is inconvenient; it breeds too much trouble within, and so they refuse it lodging. Vain men go maundering on their way, whispering of peace and safety; doting as if God had passed an act of amnesty and oblivion for them, and had made for them an exception to all the rules of justice, and all the manner of his courts. Do men indeed believe that they alone shall go unpunished? No man will subscribe to that notion when it is written down in black and white, and yet the mass of men live as if this were true; I mean the mass of men who have sufficient light to condemn sin in others. They start back from the fact of their own personal guiltiness and condemnation, and go on in their ungodliness as if there were no great white throne for them, no last assize, no judge, no word of condemnation, and no hell of wrath. Alas, poor madmen, thus to dream! O Spirit of Truth save them from this fatal infatuation.

Sin is always on the downward grade, so that when a man proceeds a certain length he inevitably goes beyond it. The person addressed by the apostle first thought to escape judgment, and then he came to think lightly of the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering of God. He thinks he shall escape in the future, and because of that he despises the present goodness and longsuffering of the Most High. Of course he does. If he does not believe in the terrors of the world to come for himself, he naturally reckons it to be a small thing to have been spared their immediate experience. Barren tree as he is, he does not believe that he will ever be cut down, and therefore he feels no gratitude to the dresser of the vineyard for pleading, "Let it alone yet another year, till I dig about it, and dung it." I wish, as God shall help me, to drive hard at the consciences of men upon this matter. I would be to you, my careless friend, what Jonah was to Nineveh: I would warn you, and bestir you to repentance. Oh that the Holy Ghost would make this sermon effectual for the arousing of every unsaved soul that shall hear or read it!

I. First, let me speak this morning to thee, O unregenerate, impenitent man, concerning THE GOODNESS OF GOD WHICH THOU HAST EXPERIENCED. Thou hast known the goodness, and forbearance, and

longsuffering of God. According to the text, "riches" of these have been spent upon unconverted, ungodly men, and upon thee as one of them. Let me speak with thee first, O man, and remind thee how favoured thou hast been of God by being made a partaker of "the riches of his goodness." In many cases this is true of temporal things. Men may be without the fear of God, and yet, for all that, God may be pleased to prosper their endeavours in business. They succeed almost beyond their expectation—I mean some of them; probably the description applies to thee. They rise from the lowest position, and accumulate about them the comforts and luxuries of life. Though they have no religion, they have wit, and prudence, and thrift, and so they compete with others, and God permits them to be winners in the race for wealth. Moreover, he allows them to enjoy good health, vigour of mind, and strength of constitution: they are happy in the wife of their youth, and their children are about them. Theirs is an envied lot. Death seems for awhile forbidden to knock at their door, even though he has been ravaging the neighbourhood; even sickness does not molest their household. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Abraham had to prepare a Machpelah, and David mourned over his sons; but these have had to make scant provision for family sepulchre; a hedge has in very deed been set about them and all that they have. I know that it is thus with many who do not love God, and have never yielded to the entreaties of his grace. They love not the hand which enriches them, they praise not the Lord who daily loadeth them with benefits. How is it that men can receive such kindness, and yield no return? O sirs, you are to-day blessed with all that need requires; but I pray you remember that you might have been in the depths of poverty. An illness would have lost you your situation; or a slight turn in trade would have left you bankrupt. You are well to-day; but you might have been tossing to and fro upon a bed of sickness; you might have been in the hospital, about to lose a limb. Shall not God be praised for health and freedom from pain? You might have been shut up in yonder asylum, in the agonies of madness. A thousand ills have been kept from you; you have been exceedingly favoured by the goodness of the Most High. Is it not so? And truly it is a wonderful thing that God should give his bread to those that lift up their heel against him, that he should cause his light to shine upon those who never perceive his goodness therein, that he should multiply his mercies upon ungodly men who only

multiply their rebellions against him, and turn the gifts of his love into instruments of transgression.

Furthermore, this goodness of God had not only come to you in a temporal form, O impenitent man, but it has also visited you in a spiritual manner. Myriads of our fellow men have never had an opportunity of knowing Christ. The missionary's foot has never trodden the cities wherein they dwell, and so they die in the dark. Multitudes are going downward, downward; but they do not know the upward road; their minds have never been enlightened by the teachings of God's word, and hence they sin with less grievousness of fault. You are placed in the very focus of Christian light, and yet you follow evil! Will you not think of this? Time was when a man would have to work for years to earn enough money to buy a Bible. There were times when he could not have earned one even with that toil; now the word of God lies upon your table, you have a copy of it in almost every room of your house; is not this a boon from God? This is the land of the open Bible, and the land of the preached word of God; in this you prove the riches of God's goodness. Do you despise this wealth of mercy? Possibly you have enjoyed the further privilege of sitting under a ministry which has been particularly plain and earnest; you have not had sermons preached before you, they have been preached at you: the minister has seized upon you and tugged at your conscience, as though he would force you to the Saviour. With cries and entreaties you have been invited to your heavenly Father, and yet you have not come. Is this a small thing?

What is more, you have been favoured with a tender conscience. When you do wrong you know it, and smart for it. What mean those wakeful nights after you have yielded to a temptation? What means that miserable feeling of shame? that fever of unrest? You find it hard to stifle the inward monitor, and difficult to resist the Spirit of God. Your road to perdition is made peculiarly hard; do you mean to follow it at all costs, and go over hedge and ditch to hell?

You have not only been aroused by conscience, but the good Spirit has striven with you, and have been almost persuaded to be a Christian. Such has been the blessed work of the Spirit upon your heart that you have at

times been melted down, and ready to be moulded by grace. A strange softness has come over you, and if you had not gathered up all your evil strength, and if the devil had not helped you to resist, you had by this time dropped into the Saviour's arms. Oh, the riches of the goodness of God to have thus wooed you, and pressed his love upon you! You have scarcely had a stripe, or a frown, or an ill word from God; his ways have been all kindness, and gentleness, and longsuffering from the first day of your memory even until now. "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness?" O man, answer this, I implore thee.

The apostle then dwells upon the riches of "forbearance." Forbearance comes in when men having offended, God withholds the punishment that is due to them; when men, having been invited to mercy, have refused it, and yet God continues to stretch out his hands, and invite them to come to him. Patient endurance of offenses and insults has been manifested by God to many of you, who now hear these words of warning. The Lord knows to whom I speak and may he make you, also, know that I am speaking to you, even to you. Some men have gone back to the very sin of which for awhile they repented; they have suffered for their folly, but have turned again to it with suicidal determination. They are desperately set on their own ruin and nothing can save them. The burnt child has run to the fire again; the singed moth has plunged again into the flame of the candle; who can pity such self-inflicted miseries? They are given over to perdition, for they will not be warned. They have returned to the haunt of vice, though they seemed to have been snatched from the deep ditch of its filthiness. They have wantonly and wilfully returned to their cups, though the poison of former draughts is yet burning in their veins. Yet, despite this folly, God shows forbearance towards them. They have grievously provoked him when they have done despite to his word, and have even turned to laughter the solemnities of his worship, against their own consciences, and to their own confusion: yet when his hand has been lifted up he has withdrawn it in mercy. See how God has always tempered his providence with kindness to them. He laid them low so that they were sore sick, but at the voice of their moaning he restored them. They trembled on the brink of death, yet he permitted them to recover strength; and now, despite their vows of amendment, here they are, callous and careless, unmindful of the mercy which gave them a reprieve.

Did you ever think what is included in the riches of forbearance. There are quick tempered individuals who only need to be a little provoked, and hard words and blows come quick and furious: but, oh, the forbearance of God when he is provoked to his face by ungodly men! By men, I mean, who hear his word, and yet refuse it! They slight his love, and yet he perseveres in it. Justice lays its hand on the sword, but mercy holds it back in its scabbard. Well might each spared one say, -

"O unexhausted Grace
O Love unspeakable!
I am not gone to my own place;
I am not yet in hell!
Earth doth not open yet,
My soul to swallow up:
And, hanging o'er the burning pit,
I still am forced to hope."

Our apostle adds to goodness and forbearance the riches of "longsuffering." We draw a distinction between forbearance and longsuffering. Forbearance has to do with the magnitude of sin; longsuffering with the multiplicity of it: forbearance has to do with present provocation; longsuffering relates to that provocation repeated, and continued for a length of time. Oh, how long doth God suffer the ill manners of men! Forty years long was he grieved with that generation whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Has it come to forty years yet with you, dear hearer? Possibly it may have passed even that time, and a half-century of provocation may have gone into eternity to bear witness against you. What if I should even have to say that sixty and seventy years have continued to heap up the loads of their transgressions, until the Lord saith, "I am pressed down under your sins; as a cart that is full of sheaves I am pressed down under you." Yet for all that, here you are on praying ground and pleading terms with God; here you are where yet the Saviour reigns upon the throne of grace; here you are where mercy is to be had for the asking, where free grace and dying love ring out their charming bells of invitation to joy and peace! Oh, the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering. Three-fold is the claim:

will you not regard it? Can you continue to despise it?

I should like to set all this in a striking light if I could, and therefore I would remind you of who and what that God is who has exhibited this goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering to men. Remember how great he is. When men insult a great prince the offence is thought to be highly heinous. If anyone should openly insult our own beloved Queen, and continue to do so, all the nation would be clamorous to have the impertinence ended speedily. We cannot bear that a beloved ruler should be publicly insulted. And what think you of the sin which provokes God? which to his face defies him? and in his very courts resists him? Shall this always be forborne with? Is there not a limit to longsuffering? Goodness also adds another item to the provocation; for we naturally say, "Why should one so good be treated so cruelly?" If God were a tyrant, if he were unrighteous or unkind, it were not so much amiss that men stood out against him; but when his very name is love, and when he manifests the bowels of a Father towards his wandering children it is shameful that he should be so wantonly provoked. Those words of Jesus were extremely touching when he pointed to his miracles, and asked, "For which of these things do you stone me?" When I think of God I may well say—for which of his deeds do you provoke him? Every morning he draws the curtain and glads the earth with light, and gives you eyes to see it; he sends his rain upon the ground to bring forth bread for man, and he gives you life to eat thereof—is this a ground for revolting from him? Every single minute of our life is cheered with the tender kindness of God, and every spot is gladdened with his love. I wonder that the Lord does not sweep away the moral nuisance of a guilty race from off the face of earth. Man's sin must have been terribly offensive to God from day to day, and yet still he shows kindness, love, forbearance. This adds an excessive venom to man's disobedience. How can he grieve such goodness? How can divine goodness fail to resent such base ingratitude?

Think also of God's knowledge; for he knows all the transgressions of men. "What the eye does not see the heart does not rue," is a truthful proverb; but every transgression is committed in the very presence of God, so that penitent David cried, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Transgression is committed in the sight of

God, from whose eyes nothing is hidden. Remember also, that the Lord never can forget; before his eyes all things stand out in clear light, not only the things of to-day, but all the transgressions of a life. Yet for all this he doth forbear. With evil reeking before his face, he is slow to anger, and waiteth that he may be gracious.

All this while, remember, the Lord is great in power. Some are patient because they are powerless: they bear and forbear because they cannot well help themselves; but it is not so with God. Had he but willed it, you had been swept into hell; only a word from him and the impenitent had fallen in the wilderness, and their spirits would have passed into the realms of endless woe. In a moment the Lord could have eased him of his adversary; he could have stopped that flippant tongue, and closed that lustful eye in an instant. That wicked heart would have failed to beat if God had withdrawn his power, and that rebellious breath would have ceased also. Had it not been for longsuffering you unbelievers would long since have known what it is to fall into the hands of an angry God. Will you continue to grieve the God who so patiently bears with you?

Be it never forgotten that sin is to God much more intolerable than it is to us. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Things which we call little sins are great and grievous evils to him: they do, as it were, touch the apple of his eye. "Oh, do not," he says, "do not this abominable thing that I hate!" His Spirit is grieved and vexed with every idle word and every sensual thought; and hence it is a wonder of wonders that a God so sensitive of sin, a God so able to avenge himself of his adversaries, a God who knows the abundance of human evil, and marks it all, should nevertheless exhibit riches of goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; yet this is what you, my ungodly hearer, have been experiencing many a long year. Here let us pause; and oh that each one who is still unsaved would sing most sincerely the words of Watts: -

"Lord, we have long abused thy love,
Too long indulged our sin,
Our aching hearts e'en bleed to see
What rebels we have been.

"No more, ye lusts, shall ye command,
No more will we obey;
Stretch out, O God, thy conqu'ring hand,
And drive thy foes away."

II. Come with me, friend, and let me speak to thee of THE SIN OF WHICH THOU ART SUSPECTED. Hear me, unconverted sinner: the sin of which thou art suspected is this,—"Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering?" The Lord's goodness ought to be admired and to be adored, and dost thou despise it? His goodness ought to be wondered at and told as a marvel in the ears of others, and dost thou despise it? That I may rake thy conscience a little, lend me thine ear.

Some despise God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, because they never even gave a thought to it. God has given you life to keep you in being, and he has indulged you with his kindness, but it has not yet occurred to you that this patience is at all remarkable or worthy of the smallest thanks. You have been a drunkard, have you? a swearer? a Sabbath-breaker? a lover of sinful pleasure? Perhaps not quite so; but still you have forgotten God altogether, and yet he has abounded in goodness to you: is not this a great wrong? The Lord saith, Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but these my creatures do not know, my favoured ones do not consider. Why, you have no such forbearance with others as God has had with you. You would not keep a dog if it never followed at your heel, but snarled at you: you would not even keep a potter's vessel if it held no water, and was of no service to you; you would break it in pieces, and throw it on the dunghill. As for yourself, you are fearfully and wonderfully made, both as to your body and as to your soul, and yet you have been of no service to your Maker, nor even thought of being of service to him. Still, he has spared you all these years, and it has never occurred to you that there has been any wonderful forbearance in it. Assuredly, O man, thou despisest the longsuffering of thy God.

Others have, perhaps, thought of it, but have never seriously meditated

thereon. When we offend a man, if we are right-minded, we not only note the fact with regret, but we sit down and weigh the matter, and seek to rectify it; for we would not be unjust to any person, and if we felt that we had been acting unfairly it would press upon our minds until we could make amends. But are there not some of you who have never given half an hour's consideration to your relation to your God? He has spared you all this while, and yet it has never occurred to you to enter into your chamber and sit down and consider your conduct towards him. It would seem to be too much trouble even to think of your Creator. His longsuffering leads you to repentance, but you have not repented; in fact, you have not thought it worth your while to consider the question at all: you have thought it far more important to enquire, "What shall I eat and what shall I drink?" Bread and broadcloth have shut out the thought of God. Ah me, you will stand at his judgment bar before long—and then? Perhaps ere this week is finished you may have to answer, not to me, but unto him that sits upon the throne; therefore I do implore you now, for the first time give this matter thought. Despise no longer the goodness and longsuffering of God.

This longsuffering is despised, further, by those who have imagined that God does not take any great account of what they do. So long as they do not go into gross and open sin, and offend the laws of their country, they do not believe that it is of any consequence whether they love God or not, whether they do righteousness or not, whether they are sober and temperate, or drunken and wanton; whether they are clean in heart by God's Spirit, or defiled in soul and life. Thou thinkest that God is altogether such an one as thyself, and that he will wink at thy transgression and cover up thy sin; but thou shalt not find it so. That base thought proves that thou despisest his longsuffering.

Some even get to think that the warnings of love are so much wind, and that the threatenings of God will never be fulfilled. They have gone on for many years without being punished, and instead of drawing the conclusion that the longer the blow is in falling the heavier it will be when it does come, they imagine that because it is long delayed the judgment will never come at all; and so they sport and trifle between the jaws of death and hell. They hear warnings as if they were all moonshine, and

fancy that this holy Book, with its threatenings, is but a bugbear to keep fools quiet. If thou thinkest so, sir, then indeed thou hast despised the goodness and forbearance and longsuffering of God. Do you imagine that this forbearance will last for ever? Do you dream that at least it will continue with you for many years? I know your secret thoughts: you see other men die suddenly, but your secret thought is that you will have long space and ample time: you hear of one struck down with paralysis, and another carried off by apoplexy, but you flatter yourselves that you will have plenty of leisure to think about these things. Oh, how can you be so secure? How can you thus tempt the Lord? False prophets in these evil days play into men's hands and hold out the hope that you may go into the next world wrong, and yet be set right in the end. This is a vile flattery of your wicked hearts; but yet remember that even according to their maundering centuries may elapse before this fancied restoration may occur. A sensible man would not like to run the risk of even a year of agony. Half-an-hour of acute pain is dreaded by most people. Can it be that the very men who start back from the dentist's door, afraid of the pinch which extricates an aching tooth, will run the risk of years of misery? Take the future of the impenitent even on this footing, it is a thing to be dreaded, and by every means avoided. I say, these flattering prophets themselves, if rightly understood, give you little enough of hope; but what will come to you if the old doctrine proves to be true and you go away into everlasting fire in hell, as the Scripture puts it? Will you live an hour in jeopardy of such a doom? Will you so despise the longsuffering and forbearance of the Lord?

I will not enlarge and use many words, for I am myself weary of words: I want to persuade you even with tears. My whole soul would attract you to your God, your Father. I would come to close quarters with you, and say, —Do you not think that, even though you fall into no doctrinal error, and indulge no hazy hope as to either restitution or annihilation, yet still it is a dreadful despising of God's mercy when you keep on playing with God, and saying to his grace, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee"? The more gentle God is the more you procrastinate, and the more in tenderness he speaks of pardon the more you transgress. Is this generous? Is it right? Is it wise? Can it be a fit and proper thing to do? Oh, my dear hearer, why will you act thus

shamefully? Some of you delight to come and hear me preach, and drink in all I have to say, and you will even commend me for being earnest with your souls; and yet, after all, you will not decide for God, for Christ, for heaven. You are between good and evil, neither cold nor hot. I would ye were either cold or hot; I could even wish that ye either thought this word of mine to be false, or else that, believing it to be true, you at once acted upon it. How can you incur the double guilt of offending God and of knowing that it is an evil thing to do so? You reject Christ, and yet admit that he ought to be received by you! You speak well of a gospel which you will not accept for yourselves! You believe great things of a Saviour whom you will not have to be your Saviour! Jesus himself says, "If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?"

"Despisest thou the longsuffering of God?" Dare you do it? I tremble as I think of a man despising God's goodness. Is not this practical blasphemy? Darest thou do it? Oh, if thou hast done it hitherto, do it no more. Ere yon sun goes down again, say within thy heart, "I will be a despiser of God's goodness no longer; I will arise and go unto my Father, and I will say unto him,—Father, I have sinned. I will not rest until in the precious blood he has washed my sins away."

III. In closing this sermon I desire to remind thee, O ungodly man, of **THE KNOWLEDGE OF WHICH THOU ART FORGETFUL**. Read my text,—"Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Now there are many here who know as a matter of doctrine that the goodness of God leads them to repentance, and yet they do not know it as a practical truth affecting their lives: indeed, they so act that it is not true to them at all. Yet, if they do not know this they are wilfully ignorant; not willing to retain in their minds a fact so disagreeable to them. None are so blind as those who will not see: but he who does not see, and yet hath eyes, has a criminality about his blindness which is not found in that of those who have no sight. Dear hearer, whether you know this truth or not, I would remind you that God's patience with you is meant to lead you to repentance. "How?" say you. Why, first by giving you an opportunity to repent. These years, which are now coming to a considerable number with you, have been given you in order that you

might turn to God. By the time you were twenty-one you had sinned quite enough; perhaps you had even then begun to mislead other youths, and to instruct in evil those under your influence. Why did not God take you away at once? It might have been for the benefit of the world if he had done so; but yet you were spared till you were thirty. Did not each year of your lengthened life prove that the Lord was saying "I will spare him, for perhaps he will yet amend and think upon his God. I will give him more light, and increase his comforts; I will give him better teaching, better preaching; peradventure he will repent." Yet you have not done so. Have you lived to be forty, and are you where you were when you were twenty? Are you still out of Christ? Then you are worse than you were; for you have sinned more deeply and you have provoked the Lord more terribly. You have now had space enough. What more do you need? When the child has offended, you say, "Child, unless you beg pardon at once, I must punish you": would you give a boy so many minutes to repent in as God has given you years? I think not. If a servant is continually robbing you; if he is careless, slothful, disobedient, you say to him, "I have passed over your faults several times, but one of these days I shall discharge you. I cannot always put up with this slovenliness, this blundering, this idleness: one of these times you will have to go." Have you not so spoken to your female servant, and thought it kind on your part to give her another chance? The lord has said the same to you; yet here you are, a living but impenitent man; spared, but spared only to multiply your transgressions. This know, that his forbearance gives you an opportunity to repent; do not turn it into an occasion for hardening your heart.

But next, the Lord in this is pleased to give a suggestion to you to repent. It seems to me that every morning when a man wakes up still impenitent, and finds himself out of hell, the sunlight seems to say, "I shine on thee yet another day, as that in this day thou mayest repent." When your bed receives you at night I think it seems to say, "I will give you another night's rest, that you may live to turn from your sins and trust in Jesus." Every mouthful of bread that comes to the table says, "I have to support your body that still you may have space for repentance." Every time you open the Bible the pages say, "We speak with you that you may repent." Every time you hear a sermon, if it be such a sermon as God would have us preach, it pleads with you to turn unto the Lord and live. Surely the

time past of your life may suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. "The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth men everywhere to repent." Do not life and death, and heaven and hell, call upon you so to do? Thus you have in God's goodness space for repentance, and a suggestion to repent.

But something more is here; for I want you to notice that the text does not say, "The goodness of God calleth thee to repentance," but "leadeth thee." This is a much stronger word. God calls to repentance by the gospel; God leads to repentance by his goodness. It is as though he plucked at your sleeve and said, "Come this way." His goodness lays its gentle hand on you, drawing you with cords of love and bands of a man. God's forbearance cries, "Why wilt thou hate me? What wrong have I done thee? I have spared thee; I have spared thy wife and children to thee; I have raised thee up from the bed of sickness; I have loaded thy board; I have filled thy wardrobe; I have done thee a thousand good turns; wherefore dost thou disobey me? Turn unto thy God and Father, and live in Christ Jesus."

If, on the other hand, you have not received rich temporal favours, yet the Lord still leads you to repentance by a rougher hand; as when the prodigal fain would have filled his belly with husks, but could not, and the pangs of hunger came upon him; those pains were a powerful message from the Father to lead him to the home where there was bread enough and to spare. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Oh, that thou wouldest yield to its sweet leading, and follow as a child follows the guidance of a nurse. Let thy crosses lead thee to the cross; let thy joys lead thee to find joy in Christ.

Do you not think that all this should encourage you to repent, since God himself leads you that way? If God leads you to repentance he does not mean to cast you away. If he bids you repent, then he is willing to accept your repentance, and to be reconciled to you. If he bids you change your mind, it is because his own mind is love. Repentance implies a radical change in your view of things, and in your estimate of matters; it is a change in your purposes, a change in your thoughts and in your conduct. If the Lord leads you that way he will help you in it. follow his gracious

leading till his divine Spirit shall lead you with still greater power and still greater efficacy, till at last you find that he has wrought in you both repentance and faith, and you are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. If "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance," then be sure of this, that the goodness of God will receive thee when thou dost repent, and thou shalt live in his sight as his well-beloved and forgiven child.

I close now, but I am sorry so to do, for I have not pleaded one-half as I could have wished. Yet what more can I say? I will put it to yourselves. If you were in God's stead, could you bear to be treated as you have treated him? If you were all goodness and tenderness, and had borne with a creature now for thirty or forty years, how would you bear to see that creature still stand out, and even draw an inference from your gentleness to encourage him in his rebellion? Would you not say, "Well, if my longsuffering makes him think little of sin, I will change my hand. If tenderness cannot win him, I must leave him; if even my love does not affect him, I will let him along. He is given unto his evil ways—I will cease from him, and see what his end will be"? O Lord, say not so, say not so unto anyone in this house, but of thy great mercy make this day to be as the beginning of life to many. Oh that hearts may be touched with pity for their slighted Saviour, that they may seek his face! Here is the way of salvation: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You know how the Master bade us put it. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." First, we are to preach faith, whereby we lay hold on Christ; then baptism, whereby we confess that faith, and own that we are dead and buried with Christ that we may live with him in newness of life. Those are the two points he bids us set before you, and I do set them before you. Weary, but not quite wearied out, O impenitent man, I plead with thee! Though thou hast so often been pleaded with in vain, once more I speak with thee in Christ's stead, and say—Repent of thy sin, look to thy Saviour, and confess thy faith in his own appointed way. I verily believe that if I had been pleading with some of you to save the life of a dog I should have prevailed with you a great while ago. And will you not care about the saving of your own souls? Oh, strange infatuation—that men will not consent to be themselves saved; but foolishly, madly, hold out

against the mercy of God which leads them to repentance. God bless you, beloved, and may none of you despise his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering.

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An Earnest Invitation

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. - Psalm 2:12

IT WILL NOT BE NEEDFUL for me this morning to be controversial in my discourse; for but two Sabbaths ago I addressed you from that text, "The mighty God," and endeavored with the utmost of my ability to prove that Christ must be "very God of very God," - co-equal and co-eternal with his Father. Without, then, attempting to prove that, let us drive onward towards the practical issue; for, after all, practice is the end of preaching; or, if ye will have it, I will put it into Herbert's words - "Attend sermons, but prayers most, Praying's the end of preaching."

And that too is in the text, for what lip can give the kiss of sincerity to the Son of God, save the lip of prayer. We drive onward, then, towards the practical conclusion May God the Holy Spirit assist us.

Now it has sometimes been disputed among most earnest and zealous ministers, which is the most likely means of bringing souls to Christ; whether it is the thunder of the threatening, or the still small whisper of the promise. I have heard some ministers who preferred the first; they have constantly dwelt upon the terrors of the law, and they have certainly, many of them, been eminently useful. they have had Scripture for their warrant Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. With "terrible things in righteousness" declaring the just anger and judgment of God against sin, they have alarmed those who were sitting at ease in a graceless state, and have thus been the means in the hands of God, of inducing them to flee from the wrath to come. Some, on the other hand, have rather decried the threatenings; and have dwelt almost entirely upon the promises. Like John their ministry has been full of love; they have constantly preached from such texts as this - "Come now, and let us

reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," - and such like, Now, these also have been eminently useful; and they too have had Scriptural warrant in abundance, for thus spake Christ's apostles full often, and thus spake Jesus Christ himself, wooing with notes of mercy, and melting with tones of love those whom the law's terrors would but have hardened in their sins. My text, however, seems to be a happy combination of the two, and I take it, that the most successful ministry will combine both means of bringing men to Christ. The text thunders with all the bolts of God - "Lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." But it does not end in thunder, there comes a sweet soft, reviving shower after the storm; "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

This morning I shall endeavor to use both arguments, and shall divide my text thus: - First, the command, "Kiss the Son" secondly, the argument used, "lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way;" and thirdly, the benediction with which the text closes - "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him;" this benediction being a second reason why we should obey the commandment.

I. First, then, THE COMMAND - "Kiss the Son." This bears four interpretations. A kiss has divers meanings in it - progressive meanings. I pray that we may be led by grace from step to step, so that we may understand the command in all its fullness by putting it in practice.

1. In the first place, it is a kiss of reconciliation. The kiss is a token of enmity removed, of strife ended, and of peace established. You will remember that when Jacob met Esau, although the hearts of the brothers had been long estranged, and fear had dwelt in the breast of one, and revenge had kindled its fires in the heart of the other; when they met they were pacified towards each other and they fell upon each other's neck, and they kissed: it was the kiss of reconciliation. Now, the very first work of grace in the heart is, for Christ to give the sinner the kiss of his affection, to prove his reconciliation to the sinner. Thus the father kissed his prodigal son when he returned. Before the feast was spread, before

the music and the dance began, the father fell upon his son's neck, and kissed him. On our part, however, it is our business to return that kiss; and as Jesus give's the reconciling kiss on God's behalf, it is ours to kiss the lip of Jesus, and to prove by that deed that we are "reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Sinner, thou hast hitherto been an enemy of Christ's gospel. Thou hast hated his Sabbaths; thou hast neglected his Word; thou hast abhorred his commandments and cast his laws behind thy back; thou hast, as much as lieth in thee, opposed his kingdom; thou hast loved the wages of sin, and the ways of iniquity better than the ways of Christ. What sayest thou? Does the Spirit now strive in thy heart? Then, I beseech thee, yield to his gracious influence, and now let thy quarrel be at an end. Cast down the weapons of thy rebellion; pull out the plumes of pride from thy helmet, and cast away the sword of thy rebellion. Be his enemy no longer; for, rest assured, he willst to be thy friend. With arms outstretched, ready to receive thee, with eyes full of tears, weeping over thine obstinacy, and with bowels moved with compassion for thee, he speaks through my lips this morning, and he says, "Rise the Son;" be reconciled. This is the very message of the gospel - "The ministry of reconciliation." Thus speak we, as God hath commanded us. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And is this a hard thing we ask of you, that you should be at friendship with him who is your best friend? Is this a rigorous law, like the commands of Pharaoh to the children of Israel in Egypt, when he bids you simply strike hands with him who shed his blood for sinners? We ask you not to be friends of death or hell; we beg you rather to dissolve your league with them; we pray that grace may lead you to forswear their company for ever, and be at peace with him who is incarnate love and infinite mercy. Sinners why will ye resist him who only longs to save you? Why scorn him who loves you? Why trample on the blood that bought you, and reject the cross which is the only hope of your salvation? " Kiss the Son."

"Bow the knee, and kiss the Son,
Come and welcome, sinner, come."

That is the first meaning of the text - the kiss of reconciliation. The Spirit of God must work a change in man's heart before he will be willing to give

this kiss, and it is my heart's desire, that by the words which shall be uttered this morning, the Spirit may bow the obdurate heart, and lead you to give Christ the kiss of reconciliation this very day.

2. Again, the kiss of my text is a kiss of allegiance and homage. It is an Eastern custom for the subjects to kiss the feet of the king; nay, in some instances their homage is so abject that they kiss the dust beneath his feet, and the very steps of his throne. Now, Christ requires of every man who would be saved, that he shall yield to his government and his rule. There are some who are willing enough to be saved and take Christ to be their priest:, but they are not willing to give up their sins, not willing to obey his precepts, to walk in his ordinances, and keep his commandments. Now, salvation cannot be cut in twain. If you would have justification you must have sanctification too. If your sins are pardoned they must be abhorred; if ye are washed in the blood to take away the guilt of sin, you must be washed in the water to take away the power of sin over your affections and life. Oh, sinners. the command is, "Kiss the Son," bow your knee, and come and own him to be a monarch, and say, "Other lords have had dominion over us; we have worshipped our lusts, our pleasures, our pride, our selfishness, but now will we submit ourselves to thine easy yoke. Take us and make us thine, for we are willing to be thy subjects -

"Oh, sovereign grace our hearts subdue;
We would be led in triumph too,
As willing captives to our Lord,
To sing the triumphs of his Word."

You must give him the kiss of fealty, of homage, and loyalty; and take him to be your king. And is this a hard thing? Is this a rigorous commandment? Why look at Englishmen, how they spring to their feet and sing with enthusiasm -

"God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,
God save the Queen!"

And is it a hard thing for you and me to be bidden to cry, "God save King Jesus! Spread his kingdom! Let him reign, Ring of kings and Lord of

lords I Let him reign in our hearts?" Is it a hard thing to bow before his gentle scepter? Is there any cruelty in the demand, that we should submit ourselves to the law of right, and rectitude, and justice, and love? "His ways are ways of pleasantness and all his paths are peace." "His commandments are not grievous." "Come unto me," saith the Lord, "and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you;" it is not heavy; "take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." O sinner, leave that black monarch; turn your back upon the king of hell. May grace enable you now to flee away from him who deludes you to-day, and shall destroy you for ever; and come ye to the Prince Immanuel, the Son of God, and now declare yourselves to be the willing subjects of his blessed kingdom. "Kiss the Son." It is the kiss of reconciliation and the kiss of homage.

3. Again, it is the kiss of worship. They that worshipped Baal kissed the calves. It wee the custom in the east for idolaters to kiss the god which they foolishly adored. Now the commandment is that we should give to Christ divine worship. The Unitarian will not do this: he says, "Christ is but a mere man;" he will not kiss the eternal Son of God. Then let him know that God will not alter his gospel to suit his heresy. If he rebelliously denies the Godhead of Christ, he need not marvel if in the last day Christ shall say - "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me," It is no marvel if he who rejects the Godhead of Christ should find that he has built his house upon the sand, and when the rain descends, and the flood comes, his hope shall totter, and great shall be the fall thereof. We are bidden to worship Christ, and O how pleasant is this command, to kiss him in adoration! It is the highest joy of the Christian to worship Jesus. I know of no thrill of pleasure that can more rejoice the Christian's breast, and thrill his soul to music, than the song of -

"Worthy is he that once was slain,
The Prince of Peace that groan'd and died,
Worthy to rise, and live,
and reign let his Almighty Father's side."

Surely that shall be the very song of heaven, to sing "Worthy the Lamb," and yet again to shout louder still, "Worthy the Lamb! worthy the Lamb!"

"Well, sinner, thou art bidden to do this - to acknowledge Christ thy God. "Kiss the Son;" go to him in prayer this very day cast thyself on thy knees and worship him; confess thy sin committed against him; lay hold of his righteousness; touch the hem of his garment adore him by thy faith, trusting in him; adore him by thy service, living for him; adore him with thy lip, praising him; adore him with thy heart, loving him, and surrendering thy whole being to him. God help thee in this way to "kiss the Son."

4. There is yet a fourth meaning, and I think this is the sweetest of all. "Kiss the Son." Ah. Mary Magdalene, I need thee this morning! Come hither, Mary, thou shalt explain my text. There was a woman who had much forgiven and she loved much, and as a consequence, loving much she desired much the company and the presence of the object of her affection. She came to the Pharisee's house where he was feasting, but she was afraid to enter for she was a sinner; the Pharisee would repulse her, and tell her to go away. What did a harlot there in the house of a holy Pharisee? So she came to the door. as if she would peep in and just get a glimpse of him whom her soul loved. But there he lay upon the table, and happily for her, the Pharisee had slighted Christ, he had not put him at the head of the table, but at the end, and therefore his feet - laying backward as he declined - were close against the door. She came, and oh! she could not dare to look upon his head; she stood at his feet, behind him, weeping And as she wept, the tears flowed so plenteously that she washed his feet - which the Pharisee had forgotten to wash - with her tears. And then unbraiding her luxurious tresses, which had been the nets into which she had entangled her lovers, she began to wipe his feet with the hairs of her head. and stooping down she kissed his feet, and kissed them yet again. Poor sinner, thou that art full of guilt, if thou hast played the harlot, or if thou hast been a sinner in other ways, come, I beseech thee, to Jesus now. Look to him, believe in him,
"Trust in his blood, for it alone
Hath power sufficient to atone."

And this done, come thou and "kiss the Son" - kiss his feet with lore. Oh, if he were here this morning, methinks I would kiss those feet again and again. And if any should enquire the reason, I would answer,

"Love I much? I've much forgiven,
I'm a miracle of grace."

Jesus, dost thou permit me to kiss thy feet with the kisses of affection? And may I pray like the spouse in the Canticles: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine." May I so pray? Then, glory be to thy name, I will not be slow in praying it. If I may be so highly favored I will not lose the favor through negligence and coldness of heart. Even now my soul gives the kiss of deep and sincere affection.

"Yes, I love thee and adore,
O for grace to love thee more."

"Kiss the Son." Do you see then the meaning of it? It is a kiss of reconciliation, a kiss of homage, a kiss of worship, and a kiss of affectionate gratitude. "Kiss the Son."

And what if in this great assembly there should be some soul that saith, "I will not kiss the Son, I owe him nothing, I will not serve him, I will not be reconciled to him?" Ah! soul, there are tears for thee. Would God that all the people of Christ would weep for thee until thy heart were changed; for the terrible part of the text which we are to read belongs to thee, and ere long thou shalt know its fearful meaning. But may we not hope better things? Have we not somewhere in this great hall some poor trembling penitent, who with the tear in his eye is saying, "Kiss him and be reconciled to him! - Oh that I might My fear is, sir, if I should try to draw near to Christ, he would say, "Get thee gone, I will have nought to do with thee; thou art too vile, too hardened; thou hast too long resisted the Word, too long despised my grace - get thee gone." No, soul, Jesus never said that yet, and he never will. Whatever are thy sins as long as thou art in the body there is hope. However great thy guilt, however enormous thy transgression, if thou art now willing to be reconciled, God has made thee willing, and he would not have put the will if he did not intend to gratify it. There is nothing that can keep thee from Christ if thou art willing to come. Christ casts out none that desire to be saved. There is in his heart enough for all that seek him, enough for each, enough for evermore. Oh! think not that Christ is ever slower than we are. We never love him before he loves us. If our heart loves him, his soul loved us long ago. and if we

are now willing to be reconciled to him, let us rest assured that Jehovah's melting bowels yearn to clasp his Ephraims to his breast. May God bless this exhortation to every heart now present, and to him be the glory.

II. This brings us to the second part of the text. "kiss the Son" - and THE ARGUMENT is "Lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." read it - "Lest he be angry." And can he be angry? Is he not the Lamb of God? Can a Lamb be angry? Did not he weep over sinners? Can he be angry? Did not he die for sinners - can he be angry. yes, and when he is angry, it is anger indeed When he is angry it is anger that none can match. The most awful word I times think in the whole Bible that shriek of the lost. "Rocks hide us! mountains, fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." What a fearful conjunction of terms - "the wrath of the Lamb?" Can you picture that dear face of his, those eyes that wept, those hands that bled, those lips that spoke quell notes of love, such words of pity and can you believe that one day those eyes shall know no tears. but shall flash with lightning, that those hands shall know no mercy, but shall grasp a rod of iron and break the wicked into pieces like potter's vessels; and those feet shall know no errands of love, but he shall tread upon his enemies, and crush them, even as grapes are trodden by the wine-pressers, and the blood thereof shall stain his garments, and as he comes up from their destruction they shall ask him, "Who is this that cometh" - not from Calvary, not from Gethsemane, but "Who is this that cometh from Edom" - the land of his enemies - with dyed garments from Bozrah?" - the land of his stoutest foes - "this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?" And what shall be the answer? It is most terrible. Who is this that has trodden his enemies and crushed them? - "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Why, Jesus, if thou hadst said, "Mighty to destroy," we might have understood thee; but "mighty to save!" - and so he is - this gives the edge to the whole sentence, that when he shall destroy his enemies, he that is mighty to save will be mighty to crush, mighty to damn, mighty to devour, and rend his prey in pieces. I know nothing, I repeat, more fearful than the thought that Christ will be angry, and that if we live and die finally impenitent, rejecting his mercy and despising his sacrifice we have good need to tremble at this sentence, "Kiss the Son lest he be angry" And now do you

see again that if Christ once be angry, it must be all over with our hopes or our rest? We will suppose now some poor girl who has stepped aside from the paths of right. She has persevered in her iniquity despite many warnings. Friends rise up to help her, but they drop off one by one, for she becomes incorrigibly wicked. Others come to help her, but as often as they rise they fall again, for she sins, and sins, and sins again. There is, however, one who has oftentimes received her to his bosom, erring though she be - her father. He says, "Shall I forget the child I have begotten? Sinner she is, but she is still my child," and often as she sins and goes away he will not reject her; he receives her to his house again; tainted and defiled, again he gives her the kiss of fond affection. At last she perseveres in her iniquity, and goes to such a length, that one day in her desperate despair, some one says to her, why not seek a friend to deliver you in this your awful hour of distress and anguish on account of sin? "Oh," says she, "I have none left." "But there is your father. have you not father or a mother?" "Yes," says she, "but he is angry, and he will do nothing for me." Then her last door is shut, and her hope is over. What wonder that -

"Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurled -
Anywhere, anywhere,
Out of the world,"

she ends her life because her only helper is angry, and her hope is gone? Despair must seize her then, when her best, her only helper is angry with her. Let me give you another picture, - a simpler one. There is a dove long gone out of Noah's ark: suppose that dove to have been flying many hours till its wing is weary Poor, poor dove! Across the shoreless sea it flies, and finds never a spot whereon its weary feet may rest. At last, it bethinks itself of the ark, it flies there, hoping there to find a shelter: but suppose it should see Noah standing looking through the window with crossbow to destroy it, - then where were its hope? Its only hope hath proved the gate of death. Now let it fold its wings and sink into the black stream, and die with all the rest. Ah! sinner, these two are but Saint pictures of the desperateness of your despair when once he is angry, - he who is the sinner's friend, the sinner's wooer, he of whom we sometimes say, -

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

When he is angry, where, where, oh where can sinners hide? When he is angry, when he takes a bow and fits an arrow to the string, where is your shelter then? - where your defense and refuge? Sinners, "Kiss the Son," bow before him now, and receive his grace; acknowledge his sway, lest he be angry with you, and for ever shut you up in black despair, for none can give you hope or joy when once he is angry.

And now mark the effects of Christ's anger. "And ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Let me give you a picture. Ye have seen the maid light the are. At first it is the match, the spark. and there is a little kindling; a kindling but a little. What is that compared with the fire that is to succeed? Ye have heard of the prairie burning. The traveler hath lie his fire and dropped a spark - the fire is kindling but a little, and a small circle of flame is forming. Ye cannot judge what will be the mighty catastrophe when the sheet of flame shall seem to cover half the continent. And yet, mark you, up your text says that "when God's wrath is kindled but a little" it is even then enough to utterly destroy the wicked, so that they " perish from the way " What a fearful thought it presents to us if we have but eyes to see it! It is like one of Martin's great pictures: it has more cloud in it than plain outline; it has in it great masses of blackness; there is only this little kindling and there is the sinner destroyed. But what is that! Black thick darkness for ever. What must become of the sinner then when the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone shall blow up Tophet till its flames reach above all thought, and till the fire burns, beneath, even to the lowest hell? His wrath is kindled but a little then. I and, however, Calvin, together with several other excellent commentators, give another interpretation to this: - "In but a little," and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled very soon, or, "in but a little time." So it may be well translated without any violence whatever to the original. God's anger kindles very speedily when once men have rejected him: when the period of their mercy is passed away, then comes the hour of their black despair, and his wrath is kindled in a little time. This should make each one of us think about our souls - the fact that God may take us away with a stroke, and a great ransom cannot deliver us. We had, last Sabbath day a terrible picture of how soon

God can take away a man with a stroke. On our common, you will remember, at Clapham, a man sought shelter beneath a poplar tree, and in a moment a bolt fell from heaven and rent his body in pieces, and he died. I should not have marveled if last night, when I was reading my text by the glare of the lightning, thinking is over amidst the roarings of the thunder, if many such deaths had occurred. God can soon take us away. But this is the wonder, that men will visit that tree by which their fellow died, and go away and be just as careless as they were before. You and I hear of sudden deaths, and yet we imagine we shall not die suddenly. We cannot think God's wrath will be kindled in a little time, and that he will take us away with a stroke. We get the idea that we shall die in our nests, with a slow and gradual death, and have abundance of time for preparation. Oh, I beseech you, let no such delusion destroy your soul. "Kiss the Son now, lest he be angry in a little while, and ye perish from the way." Now bow before him and receive his grace.

However I return to the old reading of the text, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." How terrible is the doom of the wicked! The little kindling of God's wrath kills them; what shall the eternal burnings be? Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall abide with everlasting burnings? There is a land of thick darkness and despair where dwelleth the undying worm, which in its ceaseless folds doth crush the spirits of the damned. There is a fire quick burning, that drieth up the very marrow of body and soul and yet destroyeth them not. There also is the pit that knoweth no bottom, the hopeless falling without a thought of ever coming to an end. There is a land where souls linger in eternal death, and yet they never die; crushed, but not annihilated; broken, but not destroyed; for ever, for ever, for ever, is the ceaseless wave which rolls its fresh tide of fire upon a shore of agony, whose years are as countless as the sands of the sea. And shall it be your lot and mine to dwell for ever with the howling spirits of the damned? Must these eyes weep the briny tear that cannot assuage thirst? Must these lips be parched with the infinite heat? Must this body be everlastingly tormented, and this soul, with all its powers, become a lake of grief into which torrents of Almighty wrath shall roll ceaselessly with black and fiery streams? Oh, my God, and can the thought be uttered - there may be some in this hell this morning, who, ere

long, shall be in hell? If you should see an arrow fitted to a string pointed in yon direction, would you think it a hard prophecy if I should say, that, ere long, the arrow would find its mark over yonder? "No," you would say, "it is but nature that it should go in the way in which it is directed." But, sinners, some of you are this day fitted on the bow of sin. Sin is the string that impels you forward. Nay, more than this. Some of you are whistling onward towards death, despair and hell. Sin is the path to hell, and you are traveling in it with lightning speed. Why need you think me harsh if I prophecy that you will get to the end ere long and reap the harvest to your soul? Oh, "kiss the Son," I beseech you; for if ye kiss him not, if ye receive not his grace and mercy, perish ye must. there is no hope for you desperate, without remedy, your end must be, if ye will not yield your pride and submit to Jesus, Oh! what language shall I use? Here were a task for Desmosthenes, if he could rise from the dead, and be converted, and preach with all his mighty eloquence, and exhort you to flee from the wrath to come. Here is a text that might exhaust the eloquence of the apostle Paul, while with tears running down his cheeks he would plead with you to flee to Christ, and lay hold upon his mercy. As for me, I cannot speak my soul out. Would that my heart could speak without my lips to tell out the agony I feel just now concerning your souls. Oh, why will ye die? "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Will you make your beds in hell? Will you wrap yourselves about with flame for ever? Will you have the merriment of sin in this life, and then reap the harvest of destruction in the world to come? Oh, men and brethren, I beseech you by the living God, by death, by eternity, by heaven, and by hell; I implore you, stop! stop! and "kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way." Oh I the terrors of the Lord I who shall speak them? I Last night, we saw, as it were, the back parts of the terrible God, when his skirts of light swept through the sky. He made clouds his chariot, and he did ride upon the wings of the wind Sinners, can ye stand before the God of thunder? Can ye war against the God of lightning? Will ye resist him, and despise his Son, and reject the offer of mercy, and dash yourselves upon his spear, and rush upon his sword? Oh, turn ye! turn ye now! Thus saith the Lord: "Consider your ways."

"Bow the knee, and kiss the Son;
Come, and welcome, sinner, come!"

III. And now give me your attention just a moment or two longer while with all earnestness I endeavor to preach for a little while upon THE BENEDICTION WITH WHICH THE TEXT CLOSES "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." I have been beating the big drum of threatening, and now let us have the soft, sweet harp of David, of sweet, wooing benedictions. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." dost thou put thy trust in him, my hearer? Beneath the wings of God we nestle, and we know of no security elsewhere. This is enough for us. Now the test says, that those that trust in him are blessed; and I would observe, first, that they are really blessed. It is no fiction, no imaginary blessing; it is a real blessedness which belongs to those that trust in God: a blessedness that will stand the test of consideration, the test of life, and the trial of death; a blessedness into which we cannot plunge too deeply, for it is none of it a dream, but all a reality.

Again, those that trust in him have not only a real blessedness, but they oftentimes have a conscious blessedness. They know what it is to be blest in their troubles, for they are in their trials comforted, and they are blest in their joys, for their joys are sanctified. They are blest and they know it, they sing about it and they rejoice in it. It is their joy to know that God's blessing is come to them not in word only but in very deed. They are blessed men and blessed women.

"They would not change their blest estate
For all the world calls good and great."

Then, further they are not only really blessed, and consciously blessed, but they are increasingly blessed. Their blessedness grows. They do not go downhill, as the wicked do, from bright hope to black despair. They do not diminish in their delights, the river deepens as they wade into it. They are blessed when the first ray of heavenly light streams on their eye-balls; they are blessed when their eyes are opened wider still, to see more of the love of Christ; they are blessed the more their experience widens, and their knowledge deepens, and their love increases. They are blessed in the hour of death, and, best of all, their blessedness increases to eternal blessedness, - the perfection of the saints at the right hand of God.

"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Time fails me to enter into this blessed benediction, and therefore I pause and come back to my old work again, of endeavoring to reach you by earnest entreaty, while I urge you to "kiss the Son."

Sinner, you are bidin to trust in Christ this morning. Come, this is your only hope. Remember, you may do a hundred things, but you will be none the better. You will be like the woman mentioned in Scripture, who spent all her money on physicians, and was none the better, but, rather, grew worse. There is no hope or you but in Christ. Rest assured, that all the mercy of God is concentrated in the cross. I hear some talk about the uncovenanted mercies of God: there are no such things. The mercies of God are all emptied out into the covenant; God hath put all his grace into the person of Christ, and you shall have none elsewhere. Trust, then, in Christ, - so you shall be blessed, but you shall be blessed nowhere else. Again, I urge you to "kiss the Son," and trust Christ, because this is the sure way. None have perished, trusting in Christ. It shall not be said on earth nor even in hell shall the blasphemy be uttered, that ever a soul perished that trusted in Christ. "But suppose I am not one of God's elect," says one. But if you trust in Christ you are; and there is no supposing about it. "But suppose Christ did not die for me." But, if you trust him, he did die for you. That feet is proved, and you are saved. Cast yourself simply on him. dare it, run the risk of it; venture on him, venture on him, (and there is no risk). You shall not find that you have been mistaken. Sometimes I feel anxiety and doubt about my own salvation; and the only way I can get comfort is this: I go back to where I began, and say, - "I the chief of sinners am;"

I go to my chamber, and once more confess that I am a wretch undone, without his sovereign grace, and I pray him to have mercy on me yet again Depend on it, it is the only way to heaven, and it is a sure one. If you perish trusting in Christ, you will be the first of the kind. Do you think God would allow any to say, "I trusted in Christ and yet he deceived me; I cast my soul on him, and he was not strong enough to bear to me?" Oh, do not be afraid, I beseech you.

And I conclude now by noticing that this is an open salvation. Every soul

in the world that feels its need of a Saviour, and that longs to be saved, may come to Christ. It God hath convinced thee of sin, and brought thee to know thy need come, come away; come, come away! come now; trust now in Christ, and thou shalt now find that blessed are all they that trust in him. The door of mercy does not stand on the jar, it is wide open. The gates of heaven are not merely hanging on the latch, but they are wide open both night and day. Come, let us go together to that blessed house of mercy, and drive our wants away. The grace of Christ is like our street drinking fountains, open to every thirsty wanderer There is the cup, the cup of faith. Come and hold it here while the water freely flows and drink. There is no one can come up and say it is not made for you; for you can say, "Oh, yes it is, I am a thirsty soul; it is meant for me." "Nay," says the devil, "you are too wicked." No, but this is a free-drinking fountain. It does not say over the top of the fountain, "No thieves to drink here." All that is wanted at the drinking fountain, is simply that you should be willing to drink, that you should be thirsty and desire. Come, then, "Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him."

He has given you this; come and drink; drink freely. "The Spirit and the bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and whosoever is athirst, let him come, and take the water of life freely."

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An Earnest Warning About Lukewarmness

Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and

increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. - Revelation 3:14-21

No Scripture ever wears out. The epistle to the church of Laodicea is not an old letter which may be put into the waste basket and be forgotten; upon its page still glow the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This Scripture was not meant to instruct the Laodiceans only, it has a wider aim. The actual church of Laodicea has passed away, but other Laodiceas still exist—indeed, they are sadly multiplied in our day, and it has ever been the tendency of human nature, however inflamed with the love of God, gradually to chill into lukewarmness. The letter to the Laodiceans is above all others the epistle for the present times.

I should judge that the church at Laodicea was once in a very fervent and healthy condition. Paul wrote a letter to it which did not claim inspiration, and therefore its loss does not render the Scriptures incomplete, for Paul may have written scores of other letters besides. Paul also mentions the church at Laodicea in his letter to the church at Colosse; he was, therefore, well acquainted with it, and as he does not utter a word of censure with regard to it, we may infer that the church was at that time in a sound state. In process of time it degenerated, and cooling down from its former ardour it became careless, lax, and indifferent. Perhaps its best men were dead, perhaps its wealth seduced it into worldliness, possibly its freedom from persecution engendered carnal ease, or neglect of prayer made it gradually backslide; but in any case it declined till it was neither cold nor hot. Lest we should ever get into such a state, and lest we should be in that state now, I pray that my

discourse may come with power to the hearts of all present, but especially to the consciences of the members of my own church. May God grant that it may tend to the arousing of us all.

I. My first point will be THE STATE INTO WHICH CHURCHES ARE VERY APT TO FALL. A church may fall into a condition far other than that for which it has a repute. It may be famous for zeal and yet be lethargic. The address of our Lord begins, "I know thy works," as much as to say, "Nobody else knows you. Men think better of you than you deserve. You do not know yourselves, you think your works to be excellent; but I know them to be very different." Jesus views with searching eyes all the works of his church. The public can only read reports, but Jesus sees for himself. He knows what is done, and how it is done, and why it is done. He judges a church not merely by her external activities, but by her internal pieties; he searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men. He is not deceived by glitter; he tests all things, and values only that gold which will endure the fire. Our opinion of ourselves and Christ's opinion of us may be very different, and it is a very sad thing when it is so. It will be melancholy indeed if we stand out as a church notable for earnestness and distinguished for success, and yet are not really fervent in spirit, or eager in soul-winning. A lack of vital energy where there seems to be most strength put forth, a lack of real love to Jesus where apparently there is the greatest devotedness to him, are sad signs of fearful degeneracy. Churches are very apt to put the best goods into the window, very apt to make a fair show in the flesh, and like men of the world, they try to make a fine figure upon a very slender estate. Great reputations have often but slender foundations, and lovers of the truth lament that it should be so. Not only is it true of churches, but of every one of us as individuals, that often our reputation is in advance of our deserts. Men often live on their former credit, and trade upon their past characters, having still a name to live, though they are indeed dead. To be slandered is a dire affliction, but it is, upon the whole, a less evil than to be thought better than we are; in the one case we have a promise to comfort us, in the second we are in danger of self-conceit. I speak as unto wise men, judge ye how far this may apply to us.

The condition described in our text is, secondly, one of mournful

indifference and carelessness. They were not cold, but they were not hot; they were not infidels, yet they were not earnest believers; they did not oppose the gospel, neither did they defend it; they were not working mischief, neither were they doing any great good; they were not disreputable in moral character, but they were not distinguished for holiness; they were not irreligious, but they were not enthusiastic in piety nor eminent for zeal: they were what the world calls "Moderates," they were of the Broad-church school, they were neither bigots nor Puritans, they were prudent and avoided fanaticism, respectable and averse to excitement. Good things were maintained among them, but they did not make too much of them; they had prayer-meetings, but there were few present, for they liked quiet evenings at home: when more attended the meetings they were still very dull, for they did their praying very deliberately and were afraid of being too excited. They were content to have all things done decently and in order, but vigour and zeal they considered to be vulgar. Such churches have schools, Bible-classes, preaching rooms, and all sorts of agencies; but they might as well be without them, for no energy is displayed and no good comes of them. They have deacons and elders who are excellent pillars of the church, if the chief quality of pillars be to stand still, and exhibit no motion or emotion. They have ministers who may be the angels of the churches, but if so, they have their wings closely clipped, for they do not fly very far in preaching the everlasting gospel, and they certainly are not flames of fire: they may be shining lights of eloquence, but they certainly are not burning lights of grace, setting men's hearts on fire. In such communities everything is done in a half-hearted, listless, dead-and-alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not. It makes one's flesh creep to see how sluggishly they move: I long for a knife to cut their red tape to pieces, and for a whip to lay about their shoulders to make them bestir themselves. Things are respectably done, the rich families are not offended, the sceptical party is conciliated, and the good people are not quite alienated: things are made pleasant all round. The right things are done, but as to doing them with all your might, and soul, and strength, a Laodicean church has no notion of what that means. They are not so cold as to abandon their work, or to give up their meetings for prayer, or to reject the gospel; if they did so, then they could be convinced of their error and brought to repentance; but on the other hand they are neither

hot for the truth, nor hot for conversions, nor hot for holiness, they are not fiery enough to burn the stubble of sin, nor zealous enough to make Satan angry, nor fervent enough to make a living sacrifice of themselves upon the altar of their God. They are "neither cold nor hot."

This is a horrible state, because it is one which in a church wearing a good repute renders that reputation a lie. When other churches are saying, "See how they prosper! see what they do for God!" Jesus sees that the church is doing his work in a slovenly, make-believe manner, and he considers justly that it is deceiving its friends. If the world recognizes such a people as being very distinctly an old-fashioned puritanic church, and yet there is unholy living among them, and careless walking, and a deficiency of real piety, prayer, liberality, and zeal, then the world itself is being deceived, and that too in the worst way, because it is led to judge falsely concerning Christianity, for it lays all these faults upon the back of religion, and cries out, "It is all a farce! The thing is a mere pretence! Christians are all hypocrites!" I fear there are churches of this sort. God grant we may not be numbered with them!

In this state of the church there is much self-glorification, for Laodicea said, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." The members say, "Everything goes on well, what more do we want? All is right with us." This makes such a condition very hopeless, because reproofs and rebukes fall without power, where the party rebuked can reply, "We do not deserve your censures, such warnings are not meant for us." If you stand up in the pulpit and talk to sleepy churches, as I pretty frequently do, and speak very plainly, they often have the honesty to say, "There is a good deal of truth in what the man has said": but if I speak to another church, which really is half asleep, but which thinks itself to be quite a model of diligence, then the rebuke glides off like oil down a slab of marble, and no result comes of it. Men are less likely to repent when they are in the middle passage between hot and cold, than if they were in the worst extremes of sin. If they were like Saul of Tarsus, enemies of God, they might be converted; but if, like Gamaliel, they are neither opposed nor favouring, they will probably remain as they are till they die. The gospel converts a sincerely superstitious Luther, but Erasmus, with his pliant spirit, flippant, and full of levity, remains unmoved. There is

more hope of warning the cold than the lukewarm.

When churches get into the condition of half-hearted faith, tolerating the gospel, but having a sweet tooth for error, they do far more mischief to their age than downright heretics.

It is harder a great deal to work for Jesus with a church which is lukewarm than it would be to begin without a church. Give me a dozen earnest spirits and put me down anywhere in London, and by God's good help we will soon cause the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice; but give me the whole lot of you, half-hearted, undecided, and unconcerned, what can I do? You will only be a drag upon a man's zeal and earnestness. Five thousand members of a church all lukewarm will be five thousand impediments, but a dozen earnest, passionate spirits, determined that Christ shall be glorified and souls won, must be more than conquerors; in their very weakness and fewness will reside capacities for being the more largely blessed of God. Better nothing than lukewarmness.

Alas, this state of lukewarmness is so congenial with human nature that it is hard to fetch men from it. Cold makes us shiver, and great heat causes us pain, but a tepid bath is comfort itself. Such a temperature suits human nature. The world is always at peace with a lukewarm church, and such a church is always pleased with itself. Not too worldly,—no! We have our limits! There are certain amusements which of course a Christian must give up, but we will go quite up to the line, for why are we to be miserable? We are not to be so greedy as to be called miserly, but we will give as little as we can to the cause. We will not be altogether absent from the house of God, but we will go as seldom as we can. We will not altogether forsake the poor people to whom we belong, but we will also go to the world's church, so as to get admission into better society, and find fashionable friends for our children. How much of this there is abroad! Compromise is the order of the day. Thousands try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, they are for God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, truth and error, and so are "neither hot nor cold." Do I speak somewhat strongly? Not so strongly as my Master, for he says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He is nauseated with such conduct, it

sickens him, and he will not endure it. In an earnest, honest, fervent heart nausea is created when we fall in with men who dare not give up their profession, and yet will not live up to it; who cannot altogether forsake the work of God, but yet do it in a sluggard's manner, trifling with that which ought to be done in the best style for so good a Lord and so gracious a Saviour. Many a church has fallen into a condition of indifference, and when it does so it generally becomes the haunt of worldly professors, a refuge for people who want an easy religion, which enables them to enjoy the pleasures of sin and the honours of piety at the same time; where things are free and easy, where you are not expected to do much, or give much, or pray much, or to be very religious; where the minister is not so precise as the old school divines, a more liberal people, of broad views, free-thinking and free-acting, where there is full tolerance for sin, and no demand for vital godliness. Such churches applaud cleverness in a preacher; as for his doctrine, that is of small consequence, and his love to Christ and zeal for souls are very secondary. He is a clever fellow, and can speak well, and that suffices. This style of things is all too common, yet we are expected to hold our tongue, for the people are very respectable. The Lord grant that we may be kept clear of such respectability!

We have already said that this condition of indifference is attended with perfect self-complacency. The people who ought to be mourning are rejoicing, and where they should hang out signals of distress they are flaunting the banners of triumph. "We are rich, we are adding to our numbers, enlarging our schools, and growing on all sides; we have need of nothing. What can a church require that we have not in abundance?" Yet their spiritual needs are terrible. This is a sad state for a church to be in. Spiritually poor and proud. A church crying out to God because it feels itself in a backsliding state; a church mourning its deficiency, a church pining and panting to do more for Christ, a church burning with zeal for God, and therefore quite discontented with what it has been able to do; this is the church which God will bless: but that which writes itself down as a model for others, is very probably grossly mistaken and is in a sad plight. This church, which was so rich in its own esteem, was utterly bankrupt in the sight of the Lord. It had no real joy in the Lord; it had mistaken its joy in itself for that. It had no real beauty of holiness upon it;

it had mistaken its formal worship and fine building and harmonious singing for that. It had no deep understanding of the truth and no wealth of vital godliness, it had mistaken carnal wisdom and outward profession for those precious things. It was poor in secret prayer, which is the strength of any church; it was destitute of communion with Christ, which is the very life blood of religion; but it had the outward semblance of these blessings, and walked in a vain show. There are churches which are poor as Lazarus as to true religion, and yet are clothed in scarlet and fare sumptuously every day upon the mere form of godliness. Spiritual leanness exists side by side with vain-glory. Contentment as to worldly goods makes men rich, but contentment with our spiritual condition is the index of poverty.

Once more, this church of Laodicea had fallen into a condition which had chased away its Lord. The text tells us that Jesus said, "I stand at the door and knock." That is not the position which our Lord occupies in reference to a truly flourishing church. If we are walking aright with him, he is in the midst of the church, dwelling there, and revealing himself to his people. His presence makes our worship to be full of spirituality and life; he meets his servants at the table, and there spreads them a feast upon his body and his blood; it is he who puts power and energy into all our church-action, and causes the word to sound out from our midst. True saints abide in Jesus and he in them. Oh, brethren, when the Lord is in a church, it is a happy church, a holy church, a mighty church, and a triumphant church; but we may grieve him till he will say, "I will go and return to my place, until they acknowledge their offence and seek my face." Oh, you that know my Lord, and have power with him, entreat him not to go away from us. He can see much about us as a people which grieves his Holy Spirit, much about any one of us to provoke him to anger. Hold him, I pray you, and do not let him go, or if he be gone, bring him again to his mother's house, into the chamber of her that bare him, where, with holy violence, we will detain him and say, "Abide with us, for thou art life and joy, and all in all to us as a church. Ichabod is written across our house if thou be gone, for thy presence is our glory and thy absence will be our shame." Churches may become like the temple when the glory of the Lord had left the holy place, because the image of jealousy was set up and the house was defiled. What a solemn warning is that

which is contained in Jer 7:12-15, "But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore I will do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim."

II. Now let us consider, secondly, THE DANGER OF SUCH A STATE. The great danger is, first, to be rejected of Christ. He puts it, "I will spue thee out of my mouth,"—as disgusting him, and causing him nausea. Then the church must first be in his mouth, or else it could not be spued from it. What does this mean? Churches are in Christ's mouth in several ways, they are used by him as his testimony to the world; he speaks to the world through their lives and ministries. He does as good as say, "O sinners, if ye would see what my religion can do, see here a godly people banded together in my fear and love, walking in peace and holiness." He speaks powerfully by them, and makes the world see and know that there is a true power in the gospel of the grace of God. But when the church becomes neither cold nor hot he does not speak by her, she is no witness for him. When God is with a church the minister's words come out of Christ's mouth. "Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword," says John in the Revelation, and that "two-edged sword" is the gospel which we preach. When God is with a people they speak with divine power to the world, but if we grow lukewarm Christ says, "Their teachers shall not profit, for I have not sent them, neither am I with them. Their word shall be as water spilt on the ground, or as the whistling of the wind." This is a dreadful thing. Better far for me to die than to be spued out of Christ's mouth.

Then he also ceases to plead for such a church. Christ's special intercession is not for all men, for he says of his people, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." I do not think Christ ever prays for the church of Rome—what would he pray for, but her total overthrow? Other churches are nearing the same fate; they

are not clear in his truth or honest in obedience to his word: they follow their own devices, they are lukewarm. But there are churches for which he is pleading, for he has said, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Mighty are his pleadings for those he really loves, and countless are the blessings which comes in consequence. It will be an evil day when he casts a church out of that interceding mouth, and leaves her unrepresented before the throne because he is none of his. Do you not tremble at such a prospect? Will you not ask for grace to return to your first love? I know that the Lord Jesus will never leave off praying for his own elect, but for churches as corporate bodies he may cease to pray, because they become anti-Christian, or are mere human gatherings, but not elect assemblies, such as the church of God ought to be. Now this is the danger of any church if it declines from its first ardour and becomes lukewarm. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

What is the other danger? This first comprehends all, but another evil is hinted at,—such a church will be left to its fallen condition, to become wretched,—that is to say, miserable, unhappy, divided, without the presence of God, and so without delight in the ways of God, lifeless, spiritless, dreary, desolate, full of schisms, devoid of grace, and I know not what beside, that may come under the term "wretched." Then the next word is "miserable," which might better be rendered "pitiable." Churches which once were a glory shall become a shame. Whereas men said, "The Lord has done great things for them," they shall now say, "see how low they have fallen! What a change has come over the place! What emptiness and wretchedness! What a blessing rested there for so many years, but what a contrast now!" Pity will take the place of congratulation, and scorn will follow upon admiration. Then it will be "poor" in membership, poor in effort, poor in prayer, poor in gifts and graces, poor in everything. Perhaps some rich people will be left to keep up the semblance of prosperity, but all will be empty, vain, void, Christless, lifeless. Philosophy will fill the pulpit with chaff, the church will be a mass of worldliness, the congregation an assembly of vanity. Next, they will

become blind, they will not see themselves as they are, they will have no eye upon the neighborhood to do it good, no eye to the coming of Christ, no eye for his glory. They will say, "We see," and yet be blind as bats. Ultimately they will become "naked," their shame will be seen by all, they will be a proverb in everybody's mouth. "Call that a church!" says one. "Is that a church of Jesus Christ?" cries a second. Those dogs that dared not open their mouths against Israel when the Lord was there will begin to howl when he is gone, and everywhere will the sound be heard, "How are the mighty fallen, how are the weapons of war broken."

In such a case as that the church will fail of overcoming, for it is "to him that overcometh" that a seat upon Christ's throne is promised; but that church will come short of victory. It shall be written concerning it even as of the children of Ephraim, that being armed and carrying bows they turned their backs in the day of battle. "Ye did run well," says Paul to the Galatians, "what did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Such a church had a grand opportunity, but it was not equal to the occasion, its members were born for a great work, but inasmuch as they were unfaithful, God put them aside and used other means. He raised up in their midst a flaming testimony for the gospel, and the light thereof was cast athwart the ocean, and gladdened the nations, but the people were not worthy of it, or true to it, and therefore he took the candlestick out of its place, and left them in darkness. May God prevent such an evil from coming upon us: but such is the danger to all churches if they degenerate into listless indifference.

III. Thirdly, I have to speak of THE REMEDIES WHICH THE LORD EMPLOYS. I do earnestly pray that what I say may come home to all here, especially to every one of the members of this church, for it has come very much home to me, and caused great searching of heart in my own soul, and yet I do not think I am the least zealous among you. I beseech you to judge yourselves, that you be not judged. Do not ask me if I mean anything personal. I am personal in the most emphatic sense. I speak of you and to you in the plainest way. Some of you show plain symptoms of being lukewarm, and God forbid that I should flatter you, or be unfaithful to you. I am aiming at personality, and I earnestly want each beloved brother and sister here to take home each affectionate

rebuke. And you who come from other churches, whether in America or elsewhere, you want arousing quite as much as we do, your churches are not better than ours, some of them are not so good, and I speak to you also, for you need to be stirred up to nobler things.

Note, then, the first remedy. Jesus gives a clear discovery as to the church's true state. He says to it—"Thou art lukewarm, thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." I rejoice to see people willing to know the truth, but most men do not wish to know it, and this is an ill sign. When a man tells you that he has not looked at his ledger, or day-book, or held a stock-taking for this twelvemonths, you know whereabouts he is, and you say to your manager, "Have you an account with him? Then keep it as close as you can." When a man dares not know the worst about his case, it is certainly a bad one, but he that is right before God is thankful to be told what he is and where he is. Now, some of you know the faults of other people, and in watching this church you have observed weak points in many places,—have you wept over them? Have you prayed over them? If not, you have not watched as you should do for the good of your brethren and sisters, and, perhaps, have allowed evils to grow which ought to have been rooted up: you have been silent when you should have kindly and earnestly spoken to the offenders, or made your own example a warning to them. Do not judge your brother, but judge yourself: if you have any severity, use it on your own conduct and heart. We must pray the Lord to use this remedy, and make us know just where we are. We shall never get right as long as we are confident that we are so already. Self-complacency is the death of repentance.

Our Lord's next remedy is gracious counsel. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." Does not that strike you as being very like the passage in Isaiah, "Come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price?" It is so, and it teaches us that one remedy for lukewarmness is to begin again just as we began at first. We were at a high temperature at our first conversion. What joy, what peace, what delight, what comfort, what enthusiasm we had when first we knew the Lord! We bought gold of him then for nothing, let us go and buy again at the same price.

If religion has not been genuine with us till now, or if we have been adding to it great lumps of shining stuff which we thought was gold and was not, let us now go to the heavenly mint and buy gold tried in the fire, that we may be really rich. Come, let us begin again, each one of us. Inasmuch as we may have thought we were clothed and yet we were naked, let us hasten to him again, and at his own price, which is no price, procure the robe which he has wrought of his own righteousness, and that goodly raiment of his Spirit, which will clothe us with the beauty of the Lord. If, moreover, we have come to be rather dim in the eye, and no longer look up to God and see his face, and have no bright vision of the glory to be revealed, and cannot look on sinners with weeping eyes, as we once did, let us go to Jesus for the eye-salve, just as we went when we were stone blind at first, and the Lord will open our eyes again, and we shall behold him in clear vision as in days gone by. The word from Jesus is, "Come near to me, I pray you, my brethren. If you have wandered from me, return; if you have been cold to me I am not cold to you, my heart is the same to you as ever, come back to me, my brethren. Confess your evil deeds, receive my forgiveness, and henceforth let your hearts burn towards me, for I love you still and will supply all your needs." That is good counsel, let us take it.

Now comes a third remedy, sharp and cutting, but sent in love, namely, rebukes and chastenings. Christ will have his favoured church walk with great care, and if she will not follow him fully by being shown wherein she has erred, and will not repent when kindly counselled, he then betakes himself to some sharper means. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." The word here used for "love" is a very choice one; it is one which signifies an intense personal affection. Now, there are some churches which Christ loves very specially, favouring them above others, doing more for them than for others, and giving them more prosperity; they are the darlings of his heart, his Benjamins. Now, it is a very solemn thing to be dearly loved by God. It is a privilege to be coveted, but mark you, the man who is so honoured occupies a position of great delicacy. The Lord thy God is a jealous God, and he is most jealous where he shows most love. The Lord lets some men escape scot free for awhile after doing many evil things, but if they had been his own elect he would have visited them with stripes long before. He is very jealous of those whom he has chosen

to lean upon his bosom and to be his familiar friends. Your servant may do many things which could not be thought of by your child or your wife; and so is it with many who profess to be servants of God—they live a very lax life, and they do not seem to be chastened for it, but if they were the Lord's own peculiarly beloved ones he would not endure such conduct from them. Now mark this, if the Lord exalts a church, and gives it a special blessing, he expects more of it, more care of his honour, and more zeal for his glory than he does of any other church; and when he does not find it, what will happen? Why, because of his very love he will rebuke it with hard sermons, sharp words, and sore smitings of conscience. If these do not arouse it he will take down the rod and deal out chastenings. Do you know how the Lord chastens churches? Paul says, "For this cause some are sickly among you, and many sleep." Bodily sickness is often sent in discipline upon churches, and losses, and crosses, and troubles are sent among the members, and sometimes leanness in the pulpit, breakings out of heresy and divisions in the pew, and lack of success in all church work. All these are smitings with the rod. It is very sad, but sometimes that rod does not fall on that part of the church which does the wrong. Sometimes God may take the best in the church, and chasten them for the wrong of others. You say, "How can that be right?" Why, because they are the kind of people who will be most benefited by it. If a vine wants the knife, it is not the branch that bears very little fruit which is trimmed, but the branch which bears much fruit is purged because it is worth purging. In their case the chastening is a blessing and a token of love. Sorrow is often brought upon Christians by the sins of their fellow-members, and many an aching heart there is in this world that I know of, of brethren and sisters who love the Lord and want to see souls converted, but they can only sigh and cry because nothing is done. Perhaps they have a minister who does not believe the gospel, and they have fellow-members who do not care whether the minister believes it or not, they are all asleep together except those few zealous souls who besiege the throne of grace day and night, and they are the ones who bear the burden of the lukewarm church. Oh, if the chastening comes here, whoever bears it, may the whole body be the better for it, and may we never rest till the church begins to glow with the sacred fire of God, and boil with enthusiastic desire for his glory.

The last remedy, however, is the best of all to my mind. I love it best and desire to make it my food when it is not my medicine. The best remedy for backsliding churches is more communion with Christ. "Behold," saith he, "I stand at the door and knock." I have known this text preached upon to sinners numbers of times as though Christ knocked at their door and they had to open it, and so on. The preacher has never managed to keep to free grace for this reason, that the text was not meant to be so used, and if men will ride a text the wrong way, it will not go. This text belongs to the church of God, not to the unconverted. It is addressed to the Laodicean church. There is Christ outside the church, driven there by her unkindness, but he has not gone far away, he loves his church too much to leave her altogether, he longs to come back, and therefore he waits at the doorpost. He knows that the church will never be restored till he comes back, and he desires to bless her, and so he stands waiting, knocking and knocking, again and again; he does not merely knock once, but he stands knocking by earnest sermons, by providences, by impressions upon the conscience, by the quickenings of his Holy Spirit; and while he knocks he speaks, he uses all means to awaken his church. Most condescendingly and graciously does he do this, for having threatened to spue her out of his mouth, he might have said, "I will get me gone; and I will never come back again to thee," that would have been natural and just; but how gracious he is when, having expressed his disgust he says, "Disgusted as I am with your condition, I do not wish to leave you; I have taken my presence from you, but I love you, and therefore I knock at your door, and wish to be received into your heart. I will not force myself upon you, I want you voluntarily to open the door to me." Christ's presence in a church is always a very tender thing. He never is there against the will of the church, it cannot be, for he lives in his people's wills and hearts, and "worketh in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure." He does not break bolt and bar and come in as he often does into a sinner's heart, carrying the soul by storm, because the man is dead in sin, and Christ must do it all, or the sinner will perish; but he is here speaking to living men and women, who ought also to be loving men and women, and he says, "I wish to be among you, open the door to me." We ought to open the door at once, and say, "Come in, good Lord, we grieve to think we should ever have put thee outside that door at all."

And then see what promises he gives. He says he will come and sup with us. Now, in the East, the supper was the best meal of the day, it was the same as our dinner; so that we may say that Christ will come and dine with us. He will give us a rich feast, for he himself is the daintiest and most plenteous of all feasts for perishing souls. He will come and sup with us, that is, we shall be the host and entertain him: but then he adds, "and he with me," that is, he will be the host and guest by turns. We will give him of our best, but poor fare is that, too poor for him, and yet he will partake of it. Then he shall be host, and we will be guest, and oh, how we will feast on what he gives! Christ comes, and brings the supper with him, and all we do is to find the room. The Master says to us, "Where is the guest chamber?" and then he makes ready and spreads his royal table. Now, if these be the terms on which we are to have a feast together, we will most willingly fling open the doors of our hearts and say, "Come in, good Lord." He says to you, "Children, have you any meat?" and if you are obliged to say, "No, Lord," he will come in unto you none the less readily, for there are the fish, the net is ready to break, it is so full, and here are more upon the coals ready. I warrant you, if we sup with him, we shall be lukewarm no longer. The men who live where Jesus is soon feel their hearts burning. It is said of a piece of scented clay by the old Persian moralist that the clay was taken up and questioned. "How camest thou to smell so sweetly, being nothing but common clay?" and it replied, "I laid for many a year in the sweet society of a rose, until at last I drank in its perfume"; and we may say to every warm-hearted Christian, "How camest thou so warm?" and his answer will be, "My heart bubbleth up with a good matter, for I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. I have been with Jesus, and I have learned of him."

Now, brethren and sisters, what can I say to move you to take this last medicine? I can only say, take it, not only because of the good it will do you, but because of the sweetness of it. I have heard say of some persons that they were pledged not to take wine except as a medicine, but then they were very pleased when they were ill: and so if this be the medicine, "I will come and sup with him, and he with me," we may willingly confess our need of so delicious a remedy. Need I press it on you? May I not rather urge each brother as soon as he gets home today to see whether he cannot enter into fellowship with Jesus? and may the Spirit of God help

him!

This is my closing word, there is something for us to do in this matter. We must examine ourselves, and we must confess the fault if we have declined in grace. An then we must not talk about setting the church right, we must pray for grace each one for himself, for the text does not say, "If the church will open the door," but "If any man hear my voice and open the door." It must be done by individuals: the church will only get right by each man getting right. Oh, that we might get back into an earnest zeal for our Lord's love and service, and we shall only do so by listening to his rebukes, and then falling into his arms, clasping him once again, and saying, "My Lord and my God." That healed Thomas, did it not? Putting his fingers into the print of the nails, putting his hand into the side, that cured him. Poor, unbelieving, staggering Thomas only had to do that and he became one of the strongest of believers, and said, "My Lord and my God." You will love your Lord till your soul is as coals of juniper if you will daily commune with him. Come close to him, and once getting close to him, never go away from him any more. The Lord bless you, dear brethren, the Lord bless you in this thing.

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Ebenezer!

Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.
- 1 Samuel 7:12

IT IS CERTAINLY A VERY DELIGHTFUL THING to mark the hand of God in the lives of ancient saints. How profitable an occupation to observe God's goodness in delivering David out of the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear; his mercy in passing by the transgression, iniquity, and sin of Manasseh; his faithfulness in keeping the covenant made with Abraham; or his interposition on the behalf of the dying Hezekiah. But,

beloved, would it not be even more interesting and profitable for us to remark the hand of God in our own lives? Ought we not to look upon our own history as being at least as full of God, as full of his goodness and of his truth, as much a proof of his faithfulness and veracity as the lives of any of the saints who have gone before? I think we do our Lord an injustice when we suppose that he wrought all his mighty acts in days of yore, and showed himself strong for those in the early time, but doth not perform wonders or lay bare his arm for the saints that are now upon the earth. Let us review, I say, our own diaries. Surely in these modern pages we may discover some happy incidents, refreshing to ourselves and glorifying to our God. Have you had no deliverances? Have you passed through no rivers, supported by the Divine presence? Have you walked through no fires unharmed? Have you not been saved in six troubles? yea, in seven hath not Jehovah helped you? Have you had no manifestations? The God that spoke to Abraham at Mamre, hath he never spoken to you? The angel that wrestled with Jacob at Peniel, hath he never wrestled with you? He that stood in the fiery furnace with the three holy children, hath he never trodden the coals at your side? O beloved, he has manifested himself unto us as he doth not unto the world. Forget not these manifestations; fail not to rejoice in them. Have you had no choice favors? The God that gave Solomon the desire of his heart, hath he never listened to you and answered your requests? That God of lavish bounty, of whom David sang, "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's," hath he never satiated you with fatness? Have you never been made to lie down in green pastures? Have you never been led by the still waters? Surely, beloved, the goodness of God of old has been repeated unto us. The manifestations of his grace to those gone to glory has been renewed to us, and delivering mercies as experienced by them are not unknown even to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

I beg you, therefore, dear friends, for a little time this morning, to fix your thoughts upon your God in connection with yourselves; and, while we think of Samuel piling the stones and saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," let us lay the emphasis upon the last word and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped US," and if you can put it in the singular, and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped ME," so much the better.

Again, it is a very delightful exercise to remember the various ways in which the grateful saints recorded their thankfulness. Who can look without pleasure upon the altar which Noah reared after his preservation from the universal deluge? Have not our eyes often sparkled as we have thought of Abraham building the altar and calling it "Jehovah-jireh, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen?" Have we not read with intense satisfaction, of Jacob setting up the stone which had been his pillow, and pouring oil upon it, and calling upon the name of the Lord, naming the place Bethel, though the name thereof was Luz at the first? Who has failed to rejoice in the martial music of Miriam's timbrel, and the glorious notes of Moses' song at the Red Sea? And have we not paused and looked at the twelve stones set up in the midst of Jordan by good old Joshua when Jordan was driven back, that the hosts of Israel might go through dryshod? Surely, brethren, we have rejoiced in this stone which Samuel set up and called Ebenezer? And, in looking upon all the various ways in which the saints of God have recorded his lovingkindness of old, we have felt a satisfaction in beholding the perpetuity of God's glory, since one generation showeth forth to another all his mighty acts. Oh, would it not be quite as pleasant, and more profitable for us to record the mighty acts of the Lord as we have seen them? Should not we set up the altar unto his name, or weave his mercies into a song? Should we not take the pure gold of thankfulness, and the jewels of praise, and make them into another crown for the head of Jesus? Ought not our souls to give forth musics as sweet and exhilarating as ever came from David's harp? Ought not the feet of our gratitude to trip as lightly as Miriam's when she led the daughters of Israel? Have we not some means of praising God? Are there no methods by which we may set forth the gratitude we feel within? I trust we can make an offering unto our Lord. We can entertain our beloved with the spiced wine of our pomegranate, and the choice drops of our honeycomb. I hope that this day our souls may suggest unto themselves some way in which we may record the Lord's mighty deeds, and hand down to coming generations our testimony of his faithfulness and of his truth.

In the spirit of these two observations then, looking at God's hand in our own life, and acknowledging that hand with some record of thankfulness,

I, your minister, brought by divine grace to preach this morning the five hundredth of my printed sermons, consecutively published week by week, set up my stone of Ebenezer to God. I thank Him, thank Him humbly, but yet most joyfully for all the help and assistance given in studying and preaching the word to these mighty congregations by the voice, and afterwards to so many nations through the press. I set up my pillar in the form of this sermon. My motto this day shall be the same as Samuel's, "Hitherto, the Lord hath helped me." And as the stone of my praise is much too heavy for me to set it upright alone, I ask you, my comrades in the day of battle, my fellow-laborers in the vineyard of Christ, to join with me in expressing gratitude, while together we set up the stone of memorial and say, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

This morning there are three things I want to talk about—three yet only one. This stone of help was suggestive as to the place of its erection, as to the occasion of its setting up, and as to the inscription which it bore.

I. First, then, much valuable instruction, much excitement to devout thankfulness may be found in **THE SPOT WHERE THE STONE OF EBENEZER WAS SET UP.**

Twenty years before on that field Israel was routed. Twenty years before, Hoplini and Phineas, the priests of the Lord, were slain upon that ground, and the ark of the Lord was taken, and the Philistines triumphed. It was well that they should remember the defeat they had sustained, and that amidst the joyous victory they should recollect that the battle had been turned into a defeat unless the Lord had been upon their side. Brethren, let us remember our defeats. Have we forgotten when we went out in our own strength determined to subdue our corruptions, and found ourselves weak as water? Have you forgotten when you reposed in the ark of the Lord, when you rested in ceremonies and ordinances, and not in the rock of your salvation? Have you forgotten, I say, how you were discomfited before your sins and found no place of refuge from your adversaries? Have we forgotten our pitiful failures in preaching and prayer when we waited not upon God for strength? O those times of groaning, when none have believed our report because the Lord's arm was not revealed. I call to remembrance all my failures as I stand on this hill of joy. I doubt not,

that on the field of Ebenezer there were the graves of thousands who had been slain in fight. Let the graves of our past proud notions, the graves of our self-confidence, the graves of our creature-strength and boasting, stir us up to praise the Lord who hath hitherto helped us. Perhaps on that spot there stood a trophy raised by the insulting Philistines. Oh, let the remembrance of the boasting of the adversary, when he said, "Aha! aha!" let that come into our ears to sweeten the shout of triumph while we glorify the God of Israel. Have you done anything for God? You would have done nothing without him. Look to your former defeats. Do you return victorious? You would have returned with your garments trailed in the mire, and your shield dishonored, if God had not been upon your side. Oh, ye that have proven your weakness, perhaps by some terrible fall, or in some sad disappointment, let the recollection of the spot where you were vanquished constrain you the more to praise the Lord who hath helped you even to this day to triumph over your adversaries.

The field between Mizpeh and Shen would also refresh their memories concerning their sins, for it was sin that conquered them. Had not their hearts been captured by sin, their land had never been captured by Philistia. Had they not turned their backs upon their God, they would not have turned their backs in the day of conflict. Brethren, let us recollect our sins; they will serve as a black foil on which the mercy of God shall glisten the more brightly. Egypt's fertility is the more wonderful because of its nearness to the Lybian sands, which would cover it altogether if it were not for the Nile. That God should be so good is marvellous, but that he should be so good to you and to me, who are so rebelhous, is a miracle of miracles. I know not a word which can express the surprise and wonder our souls ought to feel at God's goodness to us. Our hearts playing the harlot; our lives far from perfect; our faith almost blown out; our unbelief often prevailing; our pride lifting up its accursed head; our patience a poor sickly plant, almost nipped by one night's frost; our courage little better than cowardice; our love lukewarmness; our ardor but as ice—oh, my dear brethren, if we will but think any one of us what a mass of sin we are, if we will but reflect that we are after all, as one of the fathers writes, "walking dunghills," we should indeed be surprised that the sun of divine grace should continue so perpetually to shine upon us, and that the abundance of heaven's mercy should be revealed in us. Oh,

Lord, when we recollect what we might have been, and what we really have been, we must say, "Glory be unto the gracious and merciful God who hitherto hath helped us."

Again, that spot would remind them of their sorrows. What a mournful chapter in Israel's history is that which follows their defeat by the Philistines. Good old Eli, you remember, fell backward and broke his neck; and his daughter-in-law in the pangs of her travail cried, concerning her child, "Call him Ichabod, for the glory has departed, because the ark of the Lord is taken." Their harvests were snatched away by the robbers; their vintage was gleaned for them by alien hands. Israel had twenty years of deep and bitter sorrow. They might have said with David, "We went through fire and through water; men did ride over our heads." Well, friends, let the remembrance of our sorrows also inspire us with a profounder thankfulness while we erect the stone of Ebenezer. We have had our sorrows as a Church. Shall I remind you of our black and dark day? Never erased from our memory can be the time of our affliction and trial. Death came into our windows, and dismay into our hearts. Did not all men speak ill of us? Who would give us a good word? The Lord himself afflicted us, and broke us as in the day of his anger—so it seemed to us, then. Ah, God thou knowest how great have been the results which flowed from that terrible calamity, but from our souls the memory never can be taken, not even in heaven itself. In the recollection of that night of confusion, and those long weeks of slander and abuse, let us roll a great stone before the Lord, and let us write thereon, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." Little I ween did the devil get by that master-stroke; small was the triumph which he earned by that piece of malice. Greater multitudes than ever flocked to listen to the word, and some here who otherwise might never have attended the preaching of the gospel, remain as living monuments of God's power to save. Of all evil things out of which good has arisen, we can always point to the Surrey Hall catastrophe as one of the greatest goods which ever befel this neighborhood, notwithstanding the sorrows which it brought. This one fact is but a sample of others; for it is the Lord's rule to bring good out of evil, and so to prove his wisdom and magnify his grace. O ye that have come from beds of languishing, ye that have been bowed down with doubt and fear, and ye that have been poverty-stricken, or slandered, or

apparently deserted by your God, if this day the glory of God's grace resteth upon you, pile the stone, and anoint the pillar, and write thereon, "Ebenezer, hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

While dwelling upon the peculiarity of the locality, we must remark, that, as it had been the spot of their defeat, their sin, their sorrow, so now before the victory, it was the place of their repentance. You see, beloved, they came together to repent, to confess their sins, to put away their false gods, to cast Ashtaroth from their houses and from their hearts. It was there that they saw God's hand and were led to say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." When you and I are most diligent in hunting sin, then God will be most vahant in routing our foes. You look to the work within and overcome sin, and God will look to the work without and overcome your troubles and your trials for you. Ah, dear friends, as we pile that stone thinking how God has helped us, let us shed tears of sorrow to think how ungrateful we have been. On earth penitence and praise must always sing together. Just as in some of our tunes there are two or three parts, we shall always need repentance to take the bass notes while we are here, while faith in praise can mount up to the very highest notes of the divine gamut of gratitude. Yes, with our joy for pardoned guilt we mourn that we pierced the Lord, and with our joy for strengthened graces and ripening experience, we must mourn over ingratitude and unbelief. Hitherto the Lord hath helped thee, and yet thou didst once say, "My God has forgotten me." Hitherto the Lord hath helped thee, and yet thou didst murmur and complain against him. Hitherto the Lord hath helped thee, and yet thou didst once deny him like Peter. Hitherto the Lord hath helped thee, and yet thine eye hath gone astray after vanity, and thy hand hath touched sin, and thy heart hath played the wanton. Let us repent, my brethren, for it is through our tears, that we shall best perceive the beauty of these grateful words, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

You must remember, too, that Ebenezer was the place of lamentation after the Lord. They came together to pray God to return to them. We shall surely see God when we long after him. How delightful it is to see a Church earnest after revivals, crying, pleading for God to come into her midst. When you know, brethren, that without God your ordinances are nothing, when you cannot rest satisfied with the dead, dry letter, but

really want to have the power and the presence of God, then it will not be long before you have it. So while you and I express gratitude for the past, let us breathe another prayer to God for renewed grace. If you personally have lost the light of his face, pray this morning—

"Return, O holy Dove! return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast."

And if it be the entire Church, and in any measure our love has grown cold, and the converting and sanctifying spirit has departed, let us pray also the same prayer.

"Savior, visit thy plantation;
Grant us, Lord, a gracious rain!
All will come to desolation,
Unless thou return again;
Lord, revive us,
All our help must come from thee!"

The place of revival should be the place of gracious thankfulness.

On that day, too, Mizpeh was the place of renewed covenant, and its name signifies the watch-tower. These people, I say, came together to renew their covenant with God, and wait for him as upon a watch-tower. Whenever God's people look back upon the past they should renew their covenant with God. Put your hand into the hand of Christ anew, thou saint of the Most High, and give thyself to him again. Climb thy watch-tower and watch for the coming of thy Lord. See whether there be sin within thee, temptation without thee,—duty neglected or lethargy creeping over thee. Come to Mizpeh, the watch-tower; come to Mizpeh the place of the renewal of the covenant, and then set up your stone and say, "Hitherto, the Lord hath helped us."

It seems to me that the spot where Samuel said "Ebenezer," was exceedingly similar in many respects to the position occupied by us this

day. I do not think the children of Israel could with heartier joy say "Ebenezer!" than we can. We have had many sins, a share of sorrows, and some defeats by reason of our own folly. I hope we have humbled ourselves before God, and lament after him, and desire to behold him, and to dwell very near him, and that our soul doth bless his name while we renew the covenant again this day, and while we come to the watch-tower and wait to hear what God the Lord will speak unto us. Come, then, in this great house which the Lord's favor has builded for us, let us sing together, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

II. We now change the subject to look at the OCCASION OF THE ERECTION OF THIS MEMORIAL.

The tribes had assembled unarmed to worship. The Philistines, hearing of their gathering, suspected a revolt. A rising was not at that time contemplated, though no doubt there was lurking in the hearts of the people a hope that they would somehow or other be delivered. The Philistines being as a nation far inferior in numbers to the children of Israel, they had the natural suspiciousness of weak oppressors. If we must have tyrants let them be strong ones, for they are never so jealous or cruel as those little despots who are always afraid of rebelhon. Hearing that the people had come together, the Philistines determined to attack them; to attack an unarmed company, mark you, who had come together for worship. The people were alarmed; naturally they might be. Samuel, however, the prophet of God, was equal to the occasion. He bade them bring a lamb. I do not know that the lamb was offered according to the Levitical rites, yet prophets in all ages had a right to dispense with ordinary laws. This was to show that the legal dispensation was not permanent, that there was something higher than the Aaronic priesthood, so that Samuel and Elijah, men in whom God expressly dwelt, were mightier than the ordinary officiating priests of the sanctuary. He takes the lamb, puts it on the altar, offers it, and as it smokes to heaven he offers prayer. The voice of man is answered by the voice of God; a great thunder dismays the Philistines, and they are put to rout.

We, I think, have been in similar circumstances. Hear the parallel. The victory obtained was by the lamb. As soon as the lamb was slaughtered,

and the smoke went up to heaven, the blessing began to descend upon the Israelites, and the curse upon the foes. "They smote them"—note the words—they "smote them until they came under Betlicar," which, being interpreted, signifies "the house of the Lamb." At the offering of the lamb the Israelites began to fight the Philistines, and slew them even to the house of the lamb. Brethren, if we have done anything for Christ, if we have achieved any victories, if in this house any souls have been converted, any hearts sanctified, any drooping spirits comforted, bear witness that it has been all through the Lamb. When we have pictured Christ slaughtered, have described the agonies which he endured upon the cross, when we have tried to preach fully though feebly the great doctrine of his substitutionary sacrifice, have set him forth as the propitiation for sins, then it is that the victories have begun. And when we have preached Christ ascending up on high, leading captivity captive, and when we have glorified in the fact that he ever liveth to make intercession for us, and that he shall come to judge the quick and dead, if any good has been accomplished it has been through the Lamb—the Lamb slain, or else the Lamb exalted. Hark you, dear friends, as we pile our Ebenezer this morning, we do it honoring him. "Unto the Lamb once slain be glory for ever and ever." You have overcome your foes, you have slaughtered your sins, you have mastered your troubles. How has it been? From the altar of that bleeding lamb, onward to the throne of him who is to reign for ever and ever, the whole road has been stained with the crimson blood of your enemies: you have overcome through the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb shall overcome thee. He that rides on the white horse goeth before us; his name is the Lamb. And all the saints shall follow him on the white horses, going forth conquering and to conquer. "Ebenezer; hitherto the Lord hath helped us." But the help has always been through the Lamb, the bleeding, the living, the reigning Lamb.

As in this occurrence the sacrifice was exalted, so also was the power of prayer acknowledged. The Philistines were not routed except by prayer. Samuel prayed unto the Lord. They said, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us." Brethren, let us bear our witness this morning that, if aught of good has been accomplished here, it has been the result of prayer. Often have I solaced my heart by the recollection of the prayers offered in our former house of meeting at New Park-street. What supplications have I

heard there; what groans of wrestling spirits; times we have known when the minister has not had the heart to say a word, because your prayers to God have melted him—stopped his utterance, and he has been fain to pronounce a benediction and send you away, because the Spirit of God has been so present that it was hardly the time to speak to man, but only to speak to God. I do not think we always have the same spirit of prayer here, and yet in this I must and will rejoice—I know not where the spirit of prayer is to be found more in exercise than in this place. I know you hold up my hands, you that are like Aaron and Hur upon the mountains. I know that you intercede with God for the conversion of this neighborhood, and the evangelization of this great city. Young and old, you do strive together that the kingdom may come, and the Lord's will may be done. But, oh, we must not forget as we look upon this vast Church—two thousand and more members walking in the fear of God—we must not forget that this increase came as the result of prayer, and that it is in prayer still that our strength must be. I charge you before the Most High, never depend upon my ministry. What am I? What is there in me? I speak, and when God speaks through me I speak with a power unknown to men in whom the Spirit dwells not; but if He leave me, I am not only as weak as other men, but less than they, for I have no wisdom of years, I have no human learning, I have taken no degree in the university, and wear no titles of learned honor. If God speak by me, he must have all the glory; if he saves souls by such a frail being, he must have all the glory. Give unto the Lord glory and strength; lay every particle of the honor at his feet. But do continue to pray, do plead with God for me that his power may still be seen, his arm still put mightily to his work. Prayer honored must be recollected when we set up the Ebenezer and say, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

Again, as there was prayer and sacrifice, you must remember that in answer to the sweet savor of the lamb and the sweet perfume of Samuel's intercession, Jehovah came forth to rout his foes. I read not that Israel shouted a war-cry. No, their shouts would not have been heard amid those great thunders. I find that they dashed to battle; but it was not their bow, their spear, their sword, that gained the victory. Hearken, my brethren, the voice of God is heard! Crash—crash! Where are you now, ye sons of Anak! The heavens shake, the earth rocks, the everlasting hills do

bow, the birds of the air fly to the coverts of the forest to hide themselves, the timid goats upon the mountains seek the clefts of the rocks. Peal on peal the thunders roll till mountain answers mountain in loud uproar of affright. From crag to crag leaps the live lightning, and the Philistines are all but blinded by it, and stand aghast, and then take to their heels and fly. Quit yourselves like men, O Philistines, that ye be not servants to the Hebrews. Quit yourselves like men, but unless ye be gods ye must tremble now. Where are your bucklers and the bosses thereof? Where are your spears and the sheen thereof? Now let your swords flash from their scabbards; now send out your giants and their armor-bearers! Now let your Gohaths defy the Lord God of hosts! Aha! Aha! Ye become like women, ye quake! ye faint! See, see! they turn their backs and fly before the men of Israel, whom they counted but as slaves. They flee. The warrior fhes and the stout heart quails, and the mighty man fhes like a timid dove to his hiding-place. "Glory be unto the Lord God of Israel: his own right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory."

Beloved, if aught of good has been accomplished, or if you and I have routed sin, how hath it been? Not by our strength, not by our power, but by the glorious voice of God. When the gospel is truly preached it is God thundering. It may sound as feebly as a child's voice when we tell of Jesus crucified, but it is God thundering, and I tell you, sirs, the thunders of God never so smote the heart of the Philistines as the gospel of Christ does the heart of convinced sinners. When we preach and God blesses it, it is God's lightnings, it is God's flashes of divine fire, the glittering of his spear; for never were Philistines so smitten with the blaze of lightning in their faces as sinners are when God's law and gospel flash into their dark eyes. But to God be the glory—to God—to God—to God alone! Not a word for man, not a syllable for the son of man. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory." This is the song of perfect saints above; shall it not be the song of imperfect ones below? "Not unto us—not unto us," the seraphs cry as they veil their faces with their wings, and cast their crowns at Jehovah's feet. "Not unto us, not unto us," must we say while we exult in his power and magnify the God of our salvation.

III. This was the occasion then. I need not tarry longer, but turn at once

to THE INSCRIPTION UPON THE MEMORIAL, "Ebenezer, hitherto the Lord hath helped us." The inscription may be read in three ways.

You must read first of all its central word, the word on which all the sense depends, where the fullness of it gathers. "Hitherto the LORD hath helped us." Note, beloved, that they did not stand still and refuse to use their weapons, but while God was thundering they were fighting, and while the lightnings were dashing in the foeman's eyes they were making them feel the potency of their steel. So that while we glorify God we are not to deny or to discard human agency. We must fight because God fighteth for us. We must strike, but the power to strike and the result of striking must all come from him. You see they did not say, "Hitherto our sword hath helped us, hitherto Samuel has encouraged us." No, no — "hitherto the Lord has helped us." Now you must admit that everything truly great must be of the Lord. You cannot suppose a thing so great as the conversion of sinners, the revival of a Church can ever be man's work. You see the Thames when the tide is ebbing what a long reach of foul, putrid mud, but the tide returns. Poor unbeliever, you who thought the river would run out till it was all dry and the ships be left aground, see, the flood comes back again, joyfully filling up the stream once more. But you are quite certain that so large a river as the Thames is not to be flooded except by ocean's tides. So you cannot see great results and ascribe them to man. Where there is little work done men often take the credit themselves, but where there is great work done, they dare not. If Simon Peter had been angling over the side of his ship and had caught a fine fish, he might have said, "Well done fisherman!" But when the boat was full of fish, so that it began to sink, he could not think of himself then. No, down he goes with "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The greatness of our work compels us to confess that it must be of God, it must be of the Lord alone. And, dear friends, it must be so if we consider the little with which we began. Jacob said as he came over Jordan, "With my staff I crossed this Jordan, but now am I become two bands." Surely his becoming two bands must be of God, for he had nothing but his staff. And do you not remember some few of you here present one morning when we crossed this Jordan with a staff? Were we a hundred when first I addressed you? What hosts of empty pews, what a miserable handful of hearers. With the staff we crossed that Jordan. But

God has multiplied the people and multiplied the joy, till we have become not only two bands but many bands; and many this day are gathering to hear the gospel preached by the sons of this church, begotten of us, and sent forth by us to minister the word of life in many towns and villages throughout these three kingdoms. Glory be unto God, this cannot be man's work. What effort made by the unaided strength of man will equal this which has been accomplished by God. Let the name of the Lord, therefore, be inscribed upon the pillar of the memorial. I am always very jealous about this matter. If we do not as a Church and a congregation, if we do not as individuals, always give God the glory, it is utterly impossible that God should work by us. Many wonders I have seen, but I never saw yet a man who arrogated the honor of his work to himself, whom God did not leave sooner or later. Nebuchadnezzar said, "Behold this great Babylon that I have builded." Behold that poor lunatic whose hair has grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws—that is Nebuchadnezzar. And that must be you, and that must be me, each in our own way, unless we are content always to give all the glory unto God. Surely, brethren, we shall be a stench in the nostrils of the Most High, an offense, even like carrion, before the Lord of Hosts, if we arrogate to ourselves any honor. What doth God send his saints for? That they may be demigods? Did God make men strong that they may exalt themselves into his throne? What, doth the King of kings crown you with mercies that you may pretend to lord it over him? What, doth he dignify you that you may usurp the prerogatives of his throne? No; you must come with all the favors and honors that God has put upon you, and creep to the foot of his throne and say, What am I, and what is my father's house that thou hast remembered me. "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

I said this text might be read three ways. We have read it once by laying stress upon the center word. Now it ought to be read looking backward. The word "hitherto" seems like a hand pointing in that direction. Look back, look back. Twenty years—thirty—forty—fifty—sixty—seventy—eighty—"hitherto!" say that each of you. Through poverty—through wealth—through sickness—through health—at home—abroad—on the land—on the sea—in honor—in dishonor—in perplexity—in joy—in trial—in triumph—in prayer—in temptation—hitherto. Put the whole together. I like sometimes to look down a long avenue of trees. It is very delightful to

gaze from end to end of the long vista, a sort of leafy temple with its branching pillars and its arches of leaves. Cannot you look down the long aisles of your years, look at the green boughs of mercy overhead, and the strong pillars of lovingkindness and faithfulness which bear your joys? Are there no birds in yonder branches singing? Surely, there must be many. And the bright sunshine and the blue sky are yonder; and if you turn round in the far distance, you may see heaven's brightness and a throne of gold. "Hitherto! hitherto!"

Then the text may be read a third way,—looking forward. For when a man gets up to a certain mark and writes "hitherto," he looks back upon much that is past, but "hitherto" is not the end, there is yet a distance to be traversed. More trials, more joys; more temptations, more triumphs; more prayers, more answers; more toils, more strength; more fights, more victories; more slanders, more comforts; more honors and bears to be fought, more tearings of the honor for God's Davids, more deep waters, more high mountains; more troops of devils, more hosts of angels yet. And then come sickness, old age, disease, death. Is it over now? No, no, no! We will raise one stone more when we get into the river, we will shout Ebenezer there: "hitherto the Lord hath helped us," for there is more to come. An awakening in his likeness, climbing of starry spheres, harps, songs, palms, white raiment, the face of Jesus, the society of saints, the glory of God, the fullness of eternity, the infinity of bliss. Yes, as sure as God has helped so far as to-day, he will help us to the close. "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee; I have been with thee, and I will be with thee to the end." Courage, brethren, then; and as we pile the stones, saying, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us," let us just gird up the loins of our mind, and be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be revealed in us, for as it has been, so it shall be world without end.

I want some oil to pour on this pillar—I want some oil. Jacob poured oil upon it and called upon the name of the Lord. Where shall I get my oil. Grateful hearts, have ye any oil? Prayerful spirits, have ye any? Companions of Jesus, have ye any? Ye that commune with him day and night, have ye any? Pour it out, then. Break your alabaster boxes, oh ye Mary's. Pour out your prayers this morning with mine. Offer your thanksgivings with my grateful expressions of thanks. Come each of you,

pour this oil upon the top of this Ebenezer to-day. I want some oil, I wonder whether I shall get it from yonder heart. Oh, says one, my heart is as a flinty rock. I read in scripture that the Lord brought oil out of the flinty rock. Oh, if there should be a soul led to believe in Christ this morning, if some heart would give itself up to Christ to-day! Why not so? why not? The Holy Ghost can melt flint and move mountains. Young man, how long are we to preach to you, how long to invite you, how long to pain you, how long to entreat you, to implore you? Shall this be the day that you will yield? Dost thou say, "I am nothing?" Then Christ is everything. Take him, trust him. I know not a better way of celebrating this day of Ebenezer and thanksgiving, than by some hearts this day accepting the marriage ring of Christ's love, and being affianced unto the Son of God for ever and ever. God grant it may be so. It shall be so if you pray for it, O true hearts.

And unto God be glory for ever. Amen.

"Great God, we sing that mighty hand,
By which supported still we stand:
The opening year thy mercy shows;
Let mercy crown it till it close.

By day, by night, at home, abroad,
Still we are guarded by our God:
By his incessant bounty fed,
By his unerring counsel led.

With grateful hearts the past we own;
The future, all to us unknown,
We to thy guardian care commit,
And peaceful leave before thy feet.

In scenes exalted or depress'd,
Be thou our joy, and thou our rest;
Thy goodness all our hopes shall raise,
Adored through all our changing days.

When death shall interrupt these songs,
And seal in silence mortal tongues,
Our helper God, in whom we trust,
In better worlds our souls shall boast."

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Effectual Calling

When Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. - Luke 19:5

Notwithstanding our firm belief that you are in the main well instructed in the doctrines of the everlasting gospel, we are continually reminded in our conversation with young converts, how absolutely necessary it is to repeat our former lessons, and repeatedly assert and prove over and over again those doctrines which lie at the basis of our holy religion. Our friends, therefore, who have many years ago been taught the great doctrine of effectual calling, will believe that whilst I preach very simply this morning, the sermon is intended for those who are young in the fear of the Lord, that they may better understand this great starting point of God in the heart, the effectual calling of men by the Holy Spirit. I shall use the case of Zaccheus as a great illustration of the doctrine of effectual calling. You will remember the story. Zaccheus had a curiosity to see the wonderful man Jesus Christ, who was turning the world upside down, and causing an immense excitement in the minds of men. We sometimes find fault with curiosity and say it is sinful to come to the house of God from that motive; I am not quite sure that we should hazard such an assertion. The motive is not sinful, though certainly it is not virtuous; yet it has often been proved that curiosity is one of the best allies of grace. Zaccheus, moved by this motive, desired to see Christ; but there were two obstacles in the way: first, there was such a crowd of people that he could not get near the Savior; and again, he was so exceedingly short in stature

that there was no hope of his reaching over people's heads to catch a glimpse of him. What did he do? He did as the boys were doing-for the boys of old times were no doubt just like the boys of the present age, and were perched up in the boughs of the tree to look at Jesus as he passed along. Elderly man though he is, Zaccheus jumps up, and there he sits among the children. The boys are too much afraid of that stern old publican whom their fathers dreaded, to push him down or cause him any inconvenience. See him there. With what anxiety he is peeping down to see which is Christ-for the Savior had no pompous distinction; no beadle is walking before him with a silver mace; he did not hold a golden crozier in his hand: he had no pontifical dress; in fact, he was just dressed like those around him. He had a coat like that of a common peasant, made of one piece from top to bottom; and Zaccheus could scarcely distinguish him. However, before he has caught a sight of Christ, Christ has fixed his eye upon him, and standing under the tree, he looks up, and says "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." Down come. Zaccheus; Christ goes to his house; Zaccheus becomes Christ's follower, and enters into the kingdom of heaven.

I. Now, first, effectual calling is a very gracious truth. You may guess this from the fact that Zaccheus was a character whom we should suppose the last to be saved. He belonged to a bad city-Jericho-a city which had been cursed, and no one would suspect that any one would come out of Jericho to be saved. It was near Jericho that the man fell among thieves; we trust Zaccheus had no hand in it; but there are some who, while they are publicans, can be thieves also. We might as well expect converts from St. Giles's, or the lowest parts of London, from the worst and vilest dens of infamy, as from Jericho in those days. Ah! my brethren, it matters not where you come from; you may come from one of the dirtiest streets, one of the worst back slums in London but if effectual grace call you, it is an effectual call, which knoweth no distinction of place. Zaccheus also was of an exceedingly bad trade, and probably cheated the people in order to enrich himself. Indeed, when Christ went into his house, there was an universal murmur that he had gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner. But, my brethren, grace knows no distinction; it is no respecter of persons, but God calleth whom he wills, and he called this worst of publicans, in the worst of cities, from the worst of trades. Besides,

Zaccheus was one who was the least likely to be saved because he was rich. It is true, rich and poor are welcome; no one has the least excuse for despair because of his condition; yet it is a fact that "not many great men," after the flesh, "not many mighty," are called, but "God hath chosen the poor of this world-rich in faith." But grace knows no distinction here. The rich Zaccheus is called from the tree; down he comes, and he is saved. I have thought it one of the greatest instances of God's condescension that he can look down on man; but I will tell you there was a greater condescension than that, when Christ looked up to see Zaccheus. For God to look down on his creatures-that is mercy; but for Christ so to humble himself that he has to look up to one of his own creatures, that becomes mercy indeed. Ah! many of you have climbed up the tree of your own good works, and perched yourselves in the branches of your holy actions, and are trusting in the free will of the poor creature, or resting in some worldly maxim; nevertheless, Christ looks up even to proud sinners, and calls them down. "Come down," says he, "to-day I must abide in thy house." Had Zaccheus been a humble-minded man, sitting by the wayside, or at the feet of Christ, we should then have admired Christ's mercy; but here he is lifted up, and Christ looks up to him, and bids him come down.

2. Next it was a personal call. There were boys in the tree as well as Zaccheus but there was no mistake about the person who was called. It was, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down." There are other calls mentioned in Scripture. It is said especially, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Now that is not the effectual call which is intended by the apostle, when he said, "Whom he called, them he also justified." That is a general call which many men, yea, all men reject, unless there come after it the personal, particular call, which makes us Christians. You will bear me witness that it was a personal call that brought you to the Savior. It was some sermon which led you to feel that you were, no doubt, the person intended. The text, perhaps, was "Thou, God, seest me;" and the minister laid particular stress on the word "me," so that you thought God's eye was fixed upon you; and ere the sermon was concluded, you thought you saw God open the books to condemn you, and your heart whispered, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord." You might have been perched in the window, or stood

packed in the aisle; but you had a solemn conviction that the sermon was preached to you, and not to other people. God does not call his people in shoals but in units. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary; and she turned and said unto him Rabboni, which is to say, Master." Jesus seeth Peter and John fishing by the lake and he saith unto them, "Follow me." He seeth Matthew sitting at the table at the receipt of custom, and he saith unto him, "Arise, and follow me," and Matthew did so. When the Holy Ghost comes home to a man. God's arrow goes into his heart: it does not graze his helmet, or make some little mark upon his armor, but it penetrates between the joints of the harness, entering the marrow of the soul. Have you felt, dear friends, that personal call? Do you remember when a voice said, "Arise, he calleth thee." Can you look back to some time when you said, "My Lord, my God?" when you knew the Spirit was striving with you, and you said, Lord, I come to thee, for I know that thou callest me." I might call the whole of you through out eternity, but if God call one, there will be more effect through his personal call of one than my general call of multitudes.

3. Thirdly, it is a hastening call. "Zaccheus, make haste." The sinner, when he is called by the ordinary ministry, replies, "To-morrow." He hears a telling sermon, and he says, "I will turn to God by-and-bye." The tears roll down his cheek, but they are wiped away. Some goodness appears, but like the cloud of the morning it is dissipated by the sun of temptation. He says, "I solemnly vow from this time to be a reformed man. After I have once more indulged in my darling sin, I will renounce my lusts, and decide for God." Ah! that is only a minister's call, and is good for nothing. Hell, they say, is paved with good intentions. These good intentions are begotten by general calls. The road to perdition is laid all over with branches of the trees whereon men are sitting, for they often pull down branches from the trees but they do not come down themselves. The straw laid down before a sick man's door causes the wheels to roll more noiselessly. So there be some who strew their path with promises of repentance, and so go more easily and noiselessly down to perdition. But God's call is not a call for to-morrow. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts: as in the provocation, when your fathers tempted me "God's grace always comes with despatch; and if thou art drawn by God, thou wilt run after God, and not be talking about

delays. To-morrow-it is not written in the almanack of time. To-morrow-it is in Satan's calendar, and nowhere else. To-morrow-it is a rock whitened by the bones of mariners who have been wrecked upon it; it is the wrecker's light gleaming on the shore, luring poor ships to destruction. To-morrow-it is the idiot's cup which he fableth to lie at the foot of the rainbow, but which none hath ever found. To-morrow- it is the floating island of Loch Lomond, which none hath ever seen. To-morrow-it is a dream. To-morrow-it is a delusion. To-morrow, ay, to-morrow you may lift up your eyes in hell, being in torments. Yonder clock saith "to day;" thy pulse whispereth "to-day;" I hear my hears speak as it beats, and it says, "to-day; "everything crieth "to-day;" and the Holy Ghost is in union with these things, and saith, "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Sinners, are you inclined now to seek the Savior? are you breathing a prayer now? are you saying, "Now or never! I must be saved now?" If you are, then I hope it is an effectual call, for Christ, when he giveth an effectual call, says, "Zaccheus, make haste."

4. Next, it is a humbling call. "Zaccheus, make haste and come down." Many a time hath a minister called men to repentance with a call which has made them proud, exalted them in their own esteem, and led them to say, "I can turn to God when I like; I can do so without the influence of the Holy Ghost." They have been called to go up and not to come down. God always humbles a sinner. Can I not remember when God told me to come down? One of the first steps I had to take was to go right down from my good works; and oh! what a fall was that! Then I stood upon my own self- sufficiency, and Christ said, "Come down! I have pulled you down from your good works, and now I will pull you down from your self-sufficiency." Well, I had another fall, and I felt sure I had gained the bottom, but Christ said "Come down!" and he made me come down till I fell on some point at which I felt I was yet salvable. "Down, sir! come down, yet." And down I came until I had to let go every bough of the tree of my hopes in despair: and then I said, "I can do nothing; I am ruined." The waters were wrapped round my head, and I was shut out from the light of day, and thought myself a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel. "Come down lower yet, sir! thou hast too much pride to be sated. Then I was brought down to see my corruption, my wickedness, my filthiness. "Come down," says God, when he means to save. Now, proud

sinners, it is of no use for you to be proud, to stick yourselves up in the trees; Christ will have you down. Oh, thou that dwellest with the eagle on the craggy rock, thou shalt come down from thy elevation; thou shalt fall by grace, or thou shalt fall with a vengeance one day. He "hath cast down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek."

5. Next, it is an affectionate call. "To-day I must abide in thy house." You can easily conceive how the faces of the multitude change! They thought Christ to be the holiest and best of men, and were ready to make him a king. But he Says, "To-day I must abide in thy house." There was one poor Jew who had been inside Zaccheus's house; he had "been on the carpet," as they say in country villages when they are taken before the justice, and he recollected what sort of a house it was; he remembered how he was taken in there, and his conceptions of it were something like what a fly would have of a spider's den after he had once escaped. There was another who had been distrained of nearly all his property; and the idea he had of walking in there was like walking into a den of lions. "What!" said they, "Is this holy man going into such a den as that, where we poor wretches have been robbed and ill-treated. It was bad enough for Christ to speak to him up in the tree, but the idea of going into his house!" They all murmured at his going to be "a guest with a man who was a sinner." Well, I know what some of his disciples thought: they thought it very imprudent; it might injure his character, and he might offend the people. They thought he might have gone to see this man at night, like Nicodemus, and give him an audience when nobody saw him; but publicly to acknowledge such a man was the most imprudent act he could commit. But why did Christ do as he did? Because he would give Zaccheus an affectionate call. "I will not come and stand at thy threshold, or look in at thy window, but I will come into thine house-the same house where the cries of widows have come into thine ears, and thou hast disregarded them; I will come into thy parlour, where the weeping of the orphan has never moved thy compassion; I will come there, where thou, like a ravenous lion hast devoured thy prey; I will come there, where thou hast blackened thine house, and made is infamous; I will come into the place where cries have risen to high heaven, wrung from the lips of those whom thou hast oppressed; I will come into thy house and give thee a blessing." Oh! what affection there was in that! Poor sinner, my Master is

a very affectionate Master. He will come into your house. What kind of a house have you got? A house that you have made miserable with your drunkenness-a house you have defiled with your impurity-a house you have defiled with your cursing and swearing-a house where you are carrying on an ill-trade that you would be glad to get rid of. Christ says, "I will come into thine house." And I know some houses now that once were dens of sin, where Christ comes every morning; the husband and wife who once could quarrel and fight, bend their knees together in prayer. Christ comes there at dinner-time, when the workman comes home from his meals. Some of my hearers can scarce come for an hour to their meals but they must have word of prayer and reading of the Scriptures. Christ comes to them. Where the walls were plastered up with the lascivious song and idle picture, there is a Christian almanack in one place, there is a Bible on the chest of drawers; and though it is only one room they live in, if an angel should come in, and God should say, "What hast thou seen in that house?" he would say, "I have seen good furniture, for there is a Bible there; here and there a religious book; the filthy pictures are pulled down and burned; there are no cards in the man's cupboard now; Christ has come into his house." Oh! what a blessing that we have our household God as well as the Romans! Our God is a household God.

He comes to live with his people; he loves the tents of Jacob. Now, poor ragamuffin sinner, thou who livest in the filthiest den in London, if such an one be here, Jesus saith to thee, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide in thy house."

6. Again, it was not only an affectionate call, but it was an abiding call. To-day I must abide at thy house." A common call is like this "To-day I shall walk in at thy house at one door, and out at the other." The common call which is given by the gospel to all men is a call which operates upon them for a time, and then it is all over; but the saving call is an abiding call. When Christ speaks, he does not say, "Make haste, Zaccheus, and come down, for I am just coming to look in;" but "I must abide in thy house; I am coming to sit down to eat and drink with thee; I am coming to have a meal with thee; to-day I must abide in thy house." "Ah!" says one, "you cannot tell how many times I have been impressed, sir, I have often had a series of solemn convictions, and I thought I really was saved, but it all died away; like a dream, when one awaketh, all hath vanished

that he dreamed, so was it with me." Ah! but poor soul, do not despair. Dost thou feel the strivings of Almighty grace within thine heart bidding thee repent to-day? If thou dost, it will be an abiding call. If it is Jesus at work in thy soul, he will come and tarry in thine heart, and consecrate thee for his own for ever. He says, "I will come and dwell with thee, and that for ever. I will come and say,

Here I will make my settled rest,
No more will go and come;
No more a stranger or a guest,
But master of this home."

"Oh!" say you, "that is what I want; I want an abiding call, something that will last; I do not want a religion that will wash out, but a fast-color religion." Well, that is the kind of call Christ gives. His ministers cannot give it; but when Christ speaks, he speaks with power, and says, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

7. There is one thing, however, I cannot forget, and that is that it was a necessary call. Just read it over again. "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day must abide at thy house." It was not a thing that he might do, or might not do; but it was a necessary call. The salvation of a sinner is as much a matter of necessity with God as the fulfillment of his covenant that the rain shall no more drown the world. The salvation of every blood-bought child of God is a necessary-thing for three reasons; it is necessary because it is God's purpose; it is necessary because it is Christ's purchase; it is necessary because it is God's promise. It is necessary that the child of God should be saved. Some divines think it is very wrong to lay a stress on the word "must," especially in that passage where it is said "he must needs go through Samaria." "Why," they say, "he must needs go through Samaria, because there was no other way he could go, and therefore he was forced to go that way." Yes, gentlemen, we reply, no doubt; but then there might have been another way. Providence made it so that he must needs go through Samaria, and that Samaria should lie in the route he had chosen. So that we have you anyway. "He must needs go through Samaria." Providence directed man to build Samaria directly

in the road, and grace constrained the Savior to move in that direction. It was- not "Come down, Zaccheus, because I may abide at thy house," but "I must." The Savior felt a strong necessity. Just as much a necessity as there is that man should die, as stern a necessity as there is that the sun should give us light by day and the moon by night, just so much a necessity is there that every blood-bought child of God shall be saved. "To- day I must abide at thy house." And oh! when the Lord comes to this, that he must and he will, what a thing it is with the poor sinner then at other times we ask, "Shall I let him in at all? there is a stranger at the door; he is knocking now; he has knocked before; shall I let him in?" But this time it is, "I must abide at thy house." There was no knocking at the door, but smash went the door into atoms! and in he walked: I must, I shall, I will; I care not for your protecting your vileness, your unbelief; I must, I will; I must abide in thy house." "Ah!" says one, "I do not believe God would ever make me to believe as you believe, or become a Christian at all." Ah! but if he shall but say, "To-day I must abide at thy house," there will be no resistance in you. There are some of you who would scorn the very idea of being a canting methodist; "What, sir! do you suppose I would ever turn one of your religious people?" No, my friend, I don't suppose it; I know it for a certainty. If God says "I must," there is no standing against it. Let him say "must," and it must be.

I will just tell you an anecdote proving this. "A father was about sending his son to college; but as he knew the influence to which he would be exposed, he was not without a deep and anxious solicitude for the spiritual and eternal welfare of his favourite child. Fearing lest the principles of Christian faith, which he had endeavored to instil into his mind, would be rudely assailed, but trusting in the efficacy of that word which is quick and powerful, he purchased, unknown to his son, an elegant copy of the Bible, and deposited it at the bottom of his trunk. The young man entered upon his college career. The restraints of a pious education were soon broken off, and he proceeded from speculation to doubts, and from doubts to a denial of the reality of religion. After having become in his own estimation, wiser than his father, he discovered one day, while rummaging his trunk, with great surprise and indignation, the sacred deposit. He took it out, and while deliberating on the manner in which he should treat it, he determined that he would use it as waste

paper, on which to wipe his razor while shaving. Accordingly, every time he went to shave, he tore out a leaf or two of the holy book, and thus used it till nearly half the volume was destroyed. But while he was committing this outrage upon the sacred book, a text now and then met his eye, and was carried like a barbed arrow to his heart. At length, he heard a sermon, which discovered to him his own character, and his exposure to the wrath of God, and riveted upon his mind the impression which he had received from the last torn leaf of the blessed, yet insulted volume. Had worlds been at his disposal, he would freely have given them all, could they have availed, in enabling him to undo what he had done. At length he found forgiveness at the foot of the cross.

The torn leaves of that sacred volume brought healing to his soul; for they led him to repose on the mercy of God, which is sufficient for the chief of sinners." I tell you there is not a reprobate walking the streets and defiling the air with his blasphemies, there is not a creature abandoned so as to be well-nigh as bad as Satan himself, if he is a child of life, who is not within the reach of mercy. And if God says "To-day I must abide in thy house," he then assuredly will. Do you feel, my dear hearer, just now, something, in your mind which seems to say you have held out against the gospel a long while, but to-day you can hold out no longer? Do you feel that a strong hand has got hold of you, and do you hear a voice saying, "Sinner, I must abide in thy house; you have often scorned me, you have often laughed at me, you have often spit in the face of mercy, often blasphemed me, but sinner, I must abide in thy house; you banged the door yesterday in the missionary's face, you burned the tract, you laughed at the minister, you have cursed God's house, you have violated the Sabbath; but; sinner, I must abide in thy house, and I will," "What, Lord!" you say, "abide in my house! why it is covered all over with iniquity. Abide in my house! why there is not a chair or a table but would cry out against me. Abide in my house! why the joists and beams and flooring would all rise up and tell thee that I am not worthy to kiss the hem of thy garment. What, Lord! abide in my house!" "Yes," says he, "I must; there is a strong necessity, my powerful love constrains me, and whether thou wilt let me or no, I am determined to make thee willing, and thou shalt let me in." Does not this surprise you, poor trembler-you who thought that mercy's day was gone, and that the bell of your destruction had tolled your death-knell? Oh! does not this surprise you,

that Christ not only asks you to come to him, but invites himself to your table, and what is more, when you would put him away, kindly says, "I must, I will come in." Only think of Christ going after a sinner, crying after a sinner, begging a sinner to let him save him; and that is just what Jesus does to his chosen ones. The sinner runs away from him, but free-grace pursues him, and says, "Sinner, come to Christ;" and if our hearts be shut up, Christ puts his hand in at the door, and if we do not rise, but repulse him coldly, he says, "I must, I will come in;" he weeps over us till his tears win us; he cries after us till his cries prevail; and at last in his own well determined hour he enters into our heart, and there he dwells. "I must abide in thy house," said Jesus.

8. And now, lastly, this call was an effectual one, for we see the fruits it brought forth. Open was Zaccheus's door; spread was his table; generous was his heart; washed were his hands; unburdened was his conscience; joyful was his soul. Here, Lord," says he, "the half of my goods I give to the poor; I dare say I have robbed them of half my property-and now I restore it." "And if I have taken anything from any one by false accusation, I will restore it to him fourfold."-away goes another portion of his property. Ah! Zaccheus, you will go to bed to-night a great deal poorer than when you got up this morning-but infinitely richer, too- poor, very poor, in this world's goods, compared with what thou wert when thou first didst climb that sycamore tree; but richer-ininitely richer-in heavenly treasure. Sinner, we shall know whether; God calls you by this: if he calls, it will be an effectual call-not a call which you hear and then forget but one which produces good works. If God hath called thee this morning, down will go that drunken cup, up will go thy prayers; if God hath called thee this morning, there will not be one shutter up to-day in your shop, but all, and you will have a notice stuck up, "This house is closed on the Sabbath day, and will not again on that day, be opened." To-morrow, there will be such-and-such worldly amusement, but if God hath called you, you will not go. And if you have robbed anybody (and who knows but I may have a thief here?) If God call you, there will be a restoration of what you have stolen? you will give up all that you have, so that you will follow God with all your heart. We do not believe a man to be converted unless he doth renounce the error of his ways; unless, practically, he is brought to know that Christ himself is master of his

conscience, and his law is his delight. "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, I must abide at thy house." And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. "And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Now, one or two lessons. A lesson to the proud. Come down, proud heart, come down! Mercy runneth in valleys, but it goeth not to the mountain top. Come down, come down, lofty spirit! The lofty city, he layeth it low even to the ground, and then he buildeth it up. Again, a lesson to thee poor despairing soul: I am glad to see thee in God's house this morning; it is a good sign. I care not what you came for. You heard there was a strange kind of man that preached here, perhaps. Never mind about that. You are all quite as strange as he is. It is necessary that there should be strange men to gather in other strange men. Now, I have a mass of people here; and if I might use a figure, I should compare you to A great heap of ashes, mingled with which are a few steel filings. Now, my sermon if it be attended with divine grace, will be a sort of magnet: it will not attract any of the ashes- they will keep just where they are-but it will draw out the steel filings. I have got a Zaccheus there; there is a Mary up there, a John down there, a Sarah, or a William, or a Thomas, there-God's chosen ones-they are steel filings in the congregation of ashes, and my gospel, the gospel of the blessed God, like a great magnet, draws them out of the heap. There they come, there they come. Why? because there was a magnetic power between the gospel and their hearts. Ah! poor sinner, come to Jesus, believe his love, trust his mercy. If thou hast a desire to come, if thou art forcing thy way through the ashes to get to Christ, then it is because Christ is calling thee. Oh! all of you who know yourselves to be sinners-every man, woman, and child of you-yea, ye little children (for God has given me some of you to be my wages), do you feel yourselves sinners? then believe on Jesus and be saved. You have come here from curiosity, many of you. Oh! that you might be met with and saved. I am distressed for you lest you should sink into hell-fire. Oh! listen to Christ while he speaks to you. Christ says, "Come down," this morning Go home

and humble yourselves in the sight of God: go and confess your iniquities that you have sinned against him; go home and tell him that you are a wretch, undone without his sovereign grace; and then look to him, for rest assured he has first looked to you. You say, "Sir, oh! I am willing enough to be saved, but I am afraid he is not willing." Stay! stay! no more of that! Do you know that is part blasphemy-not quite. If you were not ignorant, I would tell you that it was part blasphemy. You cannot look to Christ before he has looked to you. If you are willing to be saved, he gave you that will. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved. I trust the Holy Spirit is calling you. Young man up there, young man in the window, make haste! come down! Old man, sitting in these pews, come down. Merchant in yonder aisle, make haste. Matron and youth, not knowing Christ, oh, may he look at you. Old grandmother, hear the gracious call; and thou, young lad, Christ may be looking at thee- I trust he is -and saying to thee, "Make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house."

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Effective Prayer

Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. - Job 23:3-4

In Job's uttermost extremity he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God is once more to see his Father's face. His first prayer is not, "Oh that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body!" nor even, "Oh that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler!" but the first and uppermost cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM—who is my God! that I might come even to his seat!" God's children run home when the storm comes on. It is the heaven-born instinct of a gracious soul to seek shelter from all ills

beneath the wings of Jehovah. "He that hath made his refuge God," might serve as the title of a true believer. A hypocrite, when he feels that he has been afflicted by God, resents the infliction, and, like a slave, would run from the master who has scourged him; but not so the true heir of heaven, he kisses the hand which smote him, and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of that very God who frowned upon him. You will observe that the desire to commune with God is intensified by the failure of all other sources of consolation.

When Job first saw his friends at a distance, he may have entertained a hope that their kindly counsel and compassionate tenderness would blunt the edge of his grief; but they had not long spoken before he cried out in bitterness, "Miserable comforters are ye all." They put salt into his wounds, they heaped fuel upon the flame of his sorrow, they added the gall of their upbraidings to the wormwood of his griefs. In the sunshine of his smile they once had longed to sun themselves, and now they dare to cast shadows upon his reputation, most ungenerous and undeserved. Alas for a man when his wine-cup mocks him with vinegar, and his pillow pricks him with thorns! The patriarch turned away from his sorry friends and looked up to the celestial throne, just as a traveller turns from his empty skin bottle and betakes himself with all speed to the well. He bids farewell to earthborn hopes, and cries, "Oh that I knew where I might find my God!" My brethren, nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator as when we learn the emptiness of all besides. When you have been pierced through and through with the sentence, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," then will you suck unutterable sweetness from the divine assurance, "Blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Turning away with bitter scorn from earth's hives, where you found no honey, but many sharp stings, you will rejoice in him whose faithful word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb.

It is further observable that though a good man hastens to God in his trouble, and runs with all the more speed because of the unkindness of his fellow men, yet sometimes the gracious soul is left without the comfortable presence of God. This is the worst of all griefs; the text is one of Job's deep groans, far deeper than any which came from him on

account of the loss of his children and his property: "Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!" The worst of all losses is to lose the smile of my God. He now had a foretaste of the bitterness of his Redeemer's cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God's presence is always with his people in one sense, so far as secretly sustaining them is concerned, but his manifest presence they do not always enjoy. Like the spouse in the song, they seek their beloved by night upon their bed, they seek him but they find him not; and though they wake and roam through the city they may not discover him, and the question may be sadly asked again and again, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?"

You may be beloved of God, and yet have no consciousness of that love in your soul. You may be as dear to his heart as Jesus Christ himself, and yet for a small moment he may forsake you, and in a little wrath he may hide himself from you. But, dear friends, at such times the desire of the believing soul gathers yet greater intensity from the fact of God's light being withheld. Instead of saying with proud lip, "Well, if he leaveth me I must do without him; if I cannot have his comfortable presence I must fight on as best may be," the soul saith, "No, it is my very life; I must have my God. I perish, I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, and nothing but the arm of God can deliver me."

The gracious soul addresseth itself with a double zeal to find out God, and sends up its groans, its entreaties, its sobs and sighs to heaven more frequently and fervently. "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" Distance or labour are as nothing; if the soul only knew where to go she would soon overleap the distance. She makes no stipulation about mountains or rivers, but vows that if she knew where, she would come even to his seat. My soul in her hunger would break through stone walls, or scale the battlements of heaven to reach her God, and though there were seven hells between me and him, yet would I face the flame if I might reach him, nothing daunted if I had but the prospect of at last standing in his presence and feeling the delight of his love. That seems to me to be the state of mind in which Job pronounced the words before us.

But we cannot stop upon this point, for the object of this morning's discourse beckons us onward. It appears that Job's end, in desiring the

presence of God, was that he might pray to him. He had prayed, but he wanted to pray as in God's presence. He desired to plead as before one whom he knew would hear and help him. He longed to state his own case before the seat of the impartial judge, before the very face of the all-wise God; he would appeal from the lower courts, where his friends judged unrighteous judgment, to the Court of King's Bench—the High Court of heaven—here, saith he, "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments."

In this latter verse Job teaches us how he meant to plead and intercede with God. He does, as it were, reveal the secrets of his closet, and unveils the art of prayer. We are here admitted into the guild of suppliants; we are shown the art and mystery of pleading; we have here taught to us the blessed handicraft and science of prayer, and if we can be bound apprentice to Job this morning, for the next hour, and can have a lesson from Job's Master, we may acquire no little skill in interceding with God. There are two things here set forth as necessary in prayer—ordering of our cause, and filling our mouth with arguments. We shall speak of those two things, and then if we have rightly learned the lesson, a blessed result will follow.

I. First, IT IS NEEDFUL THAT OUR SUIT BE ORDERED BEFORE GOD.

There is a vulgar notion that prayer is a very easy thing, a kind of common business that may be done anyhow, without care or effort. Some think that you have only to reach a book down and get through a certain number of very excellent words, and you have prayed and may put the book up again; others suppose that to use a book is superstitious, and that you ought rather to repeat extemporaneous sentences, sentences which come to your mind with a rush, like a herd of swine or a pack of hounds, and that when you have uttered them with some little attention to what you have said, you have prayed. Now neither of these modes of prayer were adopted by ancient saints. They appear to have thought a great deal more seriously of prayer than many do now-a-days. It seems to have been a mighty business with them, a long-practised exercise, in which some of them attained great eminence, and were thereby singularly blest. They reaped great harvests in the field of prayer, and found the

mercy seat to be a mine of untold treasures.

The ancient saints were wont, with Job, to order their cause before God; that is to say, as a petitioner coming into Court does not come there without thought to state his case on the spur of the moment, but enters into the audience chamber with his suit well prepared, having moreover learned how he ought to behave himself in the presence of the great One to whom he is appealing. It is well to approach the seat of the King of kings as much as possible with pre-meditation and preparation, knowing what we are about, where we are standing, and what it is which we desire to obtain. In times of peril and distress we may fly to God just as we are, as the dove enters the cleft of the rock, even though her plumes are ruffled; but in ordinary times we should not come with an unprepared spirit, even as a child comes not to his father in the morning till he has washed his face.

See yonder priest; he has a sacrifice to offer, but he does not rush into the court of the priests and hack at the bullock with the first pole-axe upon which he can lay his hand, but when he rises he washes his feet at the brazen laver, he puts on his garments, and adorns himself with his priestly vestments; then he comes to the altar with his victim properly divided according to the law, and is careful to do according to the command, even to such a simple matter as the placing of the fat, and the liver, and the kidneys, and he taketh the blood in a bowl and poureth it in an appropriate place at the foot of the altar, not throwing it just as may occur to him, and kindles the fire not with common flame, but with the sacred fire from off the altar. Now this ritual is all superseded, but the truth which it taught remains the same; our spiritual sacrifices should be offered with holy carefulness. God forbid that our prayer should be a mere leaping out of one's bed and kneeling down, and saying anything that comes first to hand; on the contrary, may we wait upon the Lord with holy fear and sacred awe. See how David prayed when God had blessed him—he went in before the Lord. Understand that; he did not stand outside at a distance, but he went in before the Lord and he sat down—for sitting is not a bad posture for prayer, let who will speak against it—and sitting down quietly and calmly before the Lord he then began to pray, but not until first he had thought over the divine goodness, and so

attained to the spirit of prayer. Then by the assistance of the Holy Ghost did he open his mouth. Oh that we oftener sought the Lord in this style!

Abraham may serve us as a pattern; he rose up early—here was his willingness; he went three days journey—here was his zeal; he left his servants at the foot of the hill—here was his privacy; he carried the wood and the fire with him—here was his preparation; and lastly, he built the altar and laid the wood in order, and then took the knife—here was the devout carefulness of his worship. David puts it, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up"; which I have frequently explained to you to mean that he marshalled his thoughts like men of war, or that he aimed his prayers like arrows. He did not take the arrow and put it on the bowstring and shoot, and shoot, and shoot anywhere; but after he had taken out the chosen shaft, and fitted it to the string, he took deliberate aim. He looked—looked well—at the white of the target; kept his eye fixed on it, directing his prayer, and then drew his bow with all his strength and let the arrow fly; and then, when the shaft had left his hand, what does he say? "I will look up." He looked up to see where the arrow went, to see what effect it had; for he expected an answer to his prayers, and was not as many who scarcely think of their prayers after they have uttered them. David knew that he had an engagement before him which required all his mental powers; he marshalled up his faculties and went about the work in a workmanlike manner, as one who believed in it and meant to succeed. We should plough carefully and pray carefully. The better the work the more attention it deserves. To be anxious in the shop and thoughtless in the closet is little less than blasphemy, for it is an insinuation that anything will do for God, but the world must have our best.

If any ask what order should be observed in prayer, I am not about to give you a scheme such as many have drawn out, in which adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and ascription are arranged in succession. I am not persuaded that any such order is of divine authority. It is to no mere mechanical order I have been referring, for our prayers will be equally acceptable, and possibly equally proper, in any form; for there are specimens of prayers, in all shapes, in the Old and New Testament. The true spiritual order of prayer seems to me to consist in

something more than mere arrangement. It is most fitting for us first to feel that we are now doing something that is real; that we are about to address ourselves to God, whom we cannot see, but who is really present; whom we can neither touch nor hear, nor by our senses can apprehend, but who, nevertheless, is as truly with us as though we were speaking to a friend of flesh and blood like ourselves. Feeling the reality of God's presence, our mind will be led by divine grace into an humble state; we shall feel like Abraham, when he said, "I have taken upon myself to speak unto God, I that am but dust and ashes."

Consequently we shall not deliver ourselves of our prayer as boys repeating their lessons, as a mere matter of rote, much less shall we speak as if we were rabbis instructing our pupils, or as I have heard some do, with the coarseness of a highway-man stopping a person on the road and demanding his purse of him; but we shall be humble yet bold petitioners, humbly importuning mercy through the Saviour's blood. We shall not have the reserve of a slave but the loving reverence of a child, yet not an impudent, impertinent child, but a teachable obedient child, honouring his Father, and therefore asking earnestly, but with deferential submission to his Father's will. When I feel that I am in the presence of God, and take my rightful position in that presence, the next thing I shall want to recognize will be that I have no right to what I am seeking, and cannot expect to obtain it except as a gift of grace, and I must recollect that God limits the channel through which he will give me mercy—he will give it to me through his dear Son. Let me put myself then under the patronage of the great Redeemer. Let me feel that now it is no longer I that speak but Christ that speaketh with me, and that while I plead, I plead his wounds, his life, his death, his blood, himself. This is truly getting into order.

The next thing is to consider what I am to ask for? It is most proper in prayer, to aim at great distinctness of supplication. There is much reason to complain of some public prayers, that those who offer them do not really ask God for anything. I must acknowledge I fear to having so prayed myself, and certainly to having heard many prayers of the kind in which I did not feel that anything was sought for from God—a great deal of very excellent doctrinal and experimental matter uttered, but little real

petitioning, and that little in a nebulous kind of state, chaotic and unformed. But it seems to me that prayer should be distinct, the asking for something definitely and distinctly because the mind has realized its distinct need of such a thing, and therefore must plead for it. It is well not to beat round the bush in prayer, but to come directly to the point. I like that prayer of Abraham's, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" There is the name and the person prayed for, and the blessing desired, all put in a few words,— "Ishmael might live before thee!" Many persons would have used a roundabout expression of this kind, "Oh that our beloved offspring might be regarded with the favour which thou bearest to those who," etc. Say "Ishmael," if you mean "Ishmael"; put it in plain words before the Lord.

Some people cannot even pray for the minister without using such circular descriptives that you might think it were the parish beadle, or somebody whom it did not do to mention to particularly. Why not be distinct, and say what we mean as well as mean what we say? Ordering our cause would bring us to greater distinctness of mind. It is not necessary, my dear brethren, in the closet to ask for every supposable good thing, it is not necessary to rehearse the catalogue of every want that you may have had, can have, or shall have. Ask for what you now need, and, as a rule, keep to present need; ask for your daily bread—what you want now—ask for that. Ask for it plainly, as before God, who does not regard your fine expressions, and to whom your eloquence and oratory will be less than nothing and vanity Thou art before the Lord; let thy words be few, but let thy heart be fervent.

You have not quite completed the ordering when you have asked for what you want through Jesus Christ. There should be a looking round the blessing in which you desire, to see whether it is assuredly a fitting thing to ask; for some prayers would never be offered if men did but think. A little reflection would show to us that some things which we desire were better let alone. We may, moreover, have a motive at the bottom of our desire which is not Christ-like, a selfish motive, which forgets God's glory and caters only for our own case and comfort. Now although we may ask for things which are for our profit, yet still we must never let our profit interfere in any way with the glory of God. There must be mingled with acceptable prayer the holy salt of submission to the divine will. I like

Luther's saying, "Lord, I will have my will of thee at this time." "What!" say you, "Like such an expression as that?" I do, because of the next clause, which was, "I will have my will, for I know that my will is thy will." That is well spoken, Luther; but without the last words it would have been wicked presumption. When we are sure that what we ask for is for God's glory, then, if we have power in prayer, we may say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me": we may come to close dealings with God, and like Jacob with the angel we may even put it to the wrestle and seek to give the angel the fall sooner than be sent away without the benediction. But we must be quite clear, before we come to such terms as those, that what we are seeking is really for the Master's honour.

Put these three things together, the deep spirituality which recognises prayer as being real conversation with the invisible God—much distinctness which is the reality of prayer, asking for what we know we want—and withal much fervency, believing the thing to be necessary, and therefore resolving to obtain it if it can be had by prayer, and above all these complete submission, leaving it still with the Master's will;—commingle all these, and you have a clear idea of what it is to order your cause before the Lord.

Still prayer itself is an art which only the Holy Ghost can teach us. He is the giver of all prayer. Pray for prayer—pray till you can pray; pray to be helped to pray, and give not up praying because thou canst not pray, for it is when thou thinkest thou canst not pray that thou art most praying; and sometimes when thou hast no sort of comfort in thy supplications, it is then that thy heart all broken and cast down is really wrestling and truly prevailing with the Most High.

II. The second part of prayer is FILLING THE MOUTH WITH ARGUMENTS—not filling the mouth with words nor good phrases, nor pretty expressions, but filling the mouth with arguments are the knocks of the rapper by which the gate is opened.

Why are arguments to be used at all? is the first enquiry; the reply being, Certainly not because God is slow to give, not because we can change the divine purpose, not because God needeth to be informed of any circumstance with regard to ourselves or of anything in connection with the mercy asked: the arguments to be used are for our own benefit, not

for his. He requires for us to plead with him, and to bring forth our strong reasons, as Isaiah saith, because this will show that we feel the value of the mercy. When a man searches for arguments for a thing it is because he attaches importance to that which he is seeking. Again, our use of arguments teaches us the ground upon which we obtain the blessing. If a man should come with the argument of his own merit, he would never succeed; the successful argument is always founded upon grace, and hence the soul so pleading is made to understand intensely that it is by grace and by grace alone that a sinner obtaineth anything of the Lord.

Besides, the use of arguments is intended to stir up our fervency. The man who uses one argument with God will get more force in using the next, and will use the next with still greater power, and the next with more force still. The best prayers I have ever heard in our prayer meetings have been those which have been fullest of argument. Sometimes my soul has been fairly melted down when I have listened to brethren who have come before God feeling the mercy to be really needed, and that they must have it, for they first pleaded with God to give it for this reason, and then for a second, and then for a third, and then for a fourth and a fifth, until they have awakened the fervency of the entire assembly. My brethren, there is no need for prayer at all as far as God is concerned, but what a need there is for it on our own account! If we were not constrained to pray, I question whether we could even live as Christians. If God's mercies came to us unasked, they would not be half so useful as they now are, when they have to be sought for; for now we get a double blessing, a blessing in the obtaining, and a blessing in the seeking.

The very act of prayer is a blessing. To pray is as it were to bathe one's-self in a cool purling stream, and so to escape from the heats of earth's summer sun. To pray is to mount on eagle's wings above the clouds and get into the clear heaven where God dwelleth. To pray is to enter the treasure-house of God and to enrich one's-self out of an inexhaustible storehouse. To pray is to grasp heaven in one's arms, to embrace the Deity within one's soul, and to feel one's body made a temple of the Holy Ghost. Apart from the answer prayer is in itself a benediction. To pray, my brethren, is to cast off your burdens, it is to tear away your rags, it is

to shake off your diseases, it is to be filled with spiritual vigour, it is to reach the highest point of Christian health. God give us to be much in the holy art of arguing with God in prayer.

The most interesting part of our subject remains; it is a very rapid summary and catalogue of a few of the arguments which have been used with great success with God. I cannot give you a full list; that would require a treatise such as Master John Owen might produce. It is well in prayer to plead with Jehovah his attributes. Abraham did so when he laid hold upon God's justice. Sodom was to be pleaded for, and Abraham begins, "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? that be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Here the wrestling begins. It was a powerful argument by which the patriarch grasped the Lord's left hand, and arrested it just when the thunderbolt was about to fall. But there came a reply to it. It was intimated to him that this would not spare the city, and you notice how the good man, when sorely pressed, retreated by inches; and at last, when he could no longer lay hold upon justice, grasped God's right hand of mercy, and that gave him a wondrous hold when he asked that if there were but ten righteous there the city might be spared.

So you and I may take hold at any time upon the justice, the mercy, the faithfulness, the wisdom, the long-suffering, the tenderness of God, and we shall find every attribute of the Most High to be, as it were, a great battering-ram, with which we may open the gates of heaven.

Another mighty piece of ordinance in the battle of prayer is God's promise. When Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabbok, and his brother Esau was coming with armed men, he pleaded with God not to suffer Esau to destroy the mother and the children, and as a master reason he pleaded, "And thou saidst, surely I will do thee good." Oh the force of that plea! He was holding God to his word: "Thou saidst." The attribute is a splendid hom of the altar to lay hold upon; but the promise, which has in it the attribute and something more, is yet a mightier

holdfast. "Thou saidst." Remember how David put it. After Nathan had spoken the promise, David said at the close of his prayer, "Do as thou hast said." That is a legitimate argument with every honest man, and has he said, and shall he not do it? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Shall not he be true? Shall he not keep his word? Shall not every word that cometh out of his lips stand fast and be fulfilled?

Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleads with God to remember the word which he had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place. When a man gives a promissory note his honour is engaged. He signs his hand, and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonours his bills. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be. He is punctual to the moment; he never is before his time, but he never is behind it. You shall search this Book through, and you shall compare it with the experience of God's people, and the two tally from the first to the last, and many a hoary patriarch has said with Joshua in his old age, "Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised: all hath come to pass." My brother, if you have a divine promise, you need not plead it with an "if" in it; you may plead with a certainty. If for the mercy which you are now asking, you have God's solemnly pledged word, there will scarce be any room for the caution about submission to his will. You know his will: that will is in the promise; plead it. Do not give him rest until he fulfil it. He meant to fulfil it, or else he would not have given it. God does not give his words merely to quiet our noise, and to keep us hopeful for awhile, with the intention of putting us off at last; but when he speaks, he speaks because he means to act.

A third argument to be used is that employed by Moses, the great name of God. How mightily did he argue with God on one occasion upon this ground! "What wilt thou do for thy great name? The Egyptians will say, "Because the Lord could not bring them into the land, therefore he slew them in the wilderness." There are some occasions when the name of God is very closely tied up with the history of his people. Sometimes in reliance upon a divine promise, a believer will be led to take a certain course of action. Now, if the Lord should not be as good as his promise,

not only is the believer deceived, but the wicked world looking on would say, "Aha! aha! Where is your God?" Take the case of our respected brother, Mr. Mueller, of Bristol. These many years he has declared that God hears prayer, and firm in that conviction, he has gone on to build house after house for the maintenance of orphans. Now, I can very well conceive that, if he were driven to a point of want of means for the maintenance of those thousand or two thousand children, he might very well use the plea, "What wilt thou do for thy great name?" And you, in some severe trouble, when you have fairly received the promise, may say, "Lord, thou hast said, 'In six troubles I will be with thee, and in seven I will not forsake thee.' I have told my friends and neighbours that I put my trust in thee, and if thou do not deliver me now, where is thy name? Arise, O God, and do this thing, lest thy honour be cast into the dust."

Coupled with this, we may employ the further argument of the hard things said by the revilers. It was well done of Hezekiah, when he took Rabshakeh's letter and spread it before the Lord. Will that help him? It is full of blasphemy, will that help him? "Where are the gods of Arphad and Sepharvaim? Where are the gods of the cities which I have overthrown? Let not Hezekiah deceive you, saying that Jehovah will deliver you." Does that have any effect? Oh! yes, it was a blessed thing that Rabshakeh wrote that letter, for it provoked the Lord to help his people. Sometimes the child of God can rejoice when he sees his enemies get thoroughly out of temper and take to reviling. "Now," he says, "they have reviled the Lord himself; not me alone have they assailed, but the Most High himself. Now it is no longer the poor insignificant Hezekiah with his little band of soldiers, but it is Jehovah, the King of angels, who has come to fight against Rabshakeh. Now what wilt thou do, O boastful soldier of proud Sennacherib? Shalt not thou be utterly destroyed, since Jehovah himself has come into the fray?"

All the progress that is made by Popery, all the wrong things said by speculative atheists and so on, should be by Christians used as an argument with God, why he should help the gospel. Lord; see how they reproach the gospel of Jesus! Pluck thy right hand out of thy bosom! O God, they defy thee! Anti-christ thrusts itself into the place where thy Son once was honoured, and from the very pulpits where the gospel was once

preached Popery is now declared. Arise, O God, wake up thy zeal, let thy sacred passions burn! Thine ancient foe again prevails. Behold the harlot of Babylon once more upon her scarlet-coloured beast rides forth in triumph! Come, Jehovah, come, Jehovah, and once again show what thy bare arm can do! This is a legitimate mode of pleading with God, for his great name's sake.

So also may we plead the sorrows of his people. This is frequently done. Jeremiah is the great master of this art. He says, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: their visage is blacker than a coal." "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" He talks of all their griefs and straitnesses in the siege. He calls upon the Lord to look upon his suffering Zion; and ere long his plaintive cries are heard. Nothing so eloquent with the father as his child's cry; yes, there is one thing more mighty still, and that is a moan,—when the child is so sick that it is past crying, and lies moaning with that kind of moan which indicates extreme suffering and intense weakness. Who can resist that moan? Ah! and when God's Israel shall be brought very low so that they can scarcely cry but only their moans are heard, then comes the Lord's time of deliverance, and he is sure to show that he loveth his people. Dear friends, whenever you also are brought into the same condition you may plead your moanings, and when you see a church brought very low you may use her griefs as an argument why God should return and save the remnant of his people.

Brethren, it is good to plead with God the past. Ah, you experienced people of God, you know how to do this. Here is David's specimen of it: "Thou hast been my help. Leave me not, neither forsake me." He pleads God's mercy to him from his youth up. He speaks of being cast upon his God from his very birth, and then he pleads, "Now also, when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not." Moses also, speaking with God, says, "Thou didst bring this people up out of Egypt." As if he would say, "Do not leave thy work unfinished; thou hast begun to build, complete it. Thou hast fought the first battle; Lord, end the campaign! Go on till thou gettest a complete victory." How often have we cried in our trouble,

"Lord, thou didst deliver me in such and such a sharp trial, when it seemed as if no help were near; thou hast never forsaken me yet. I have set up my Ebenezer in thy name. If thou hadst intended to leave me why hast thou showed me such things? Hast thou brought thy servant to this place to put him to shame?" Brethren, we have to deal with an unchanging God, who will do in the future what he has done in the past, because he never turns from his purpose, and cannot be thwarted in his design; the past thus becomes a very mighty means of winning blessings from him.

We may even use our own unworthiness as an argument with God. "Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness." David in one place pleads thus: "Lord, have mercy upon mine iniquity, for it is great." That is a very singular mode of reasoning; but being interpreted it means, "Lord, why shouldest thou go about doing little things? Thou art a great God, and here is a great sinner. Here is a fitness in me for the display of thy grace. The greatness of my sin makes me a platform for the greatness of thy mercy. Let the greatness of thy love be seen in me." Moses seems to have the same on his mind when he asks God to show his great power in sparing his sinful people. The power with which God restrains himself is great indeed. O brothers and sisters, there is such a thing as creeping down at the foot of the throne, crouching low and crying, "O God, break me not—I am a bruised reed. Oh! tread not on my little life, it is now but as the smoking flax. Wilt thou hunt me? Wilt thou come out, as David said, 'after a dead dog, after a flea?' Wilt thou pursue me as a leaf that is blown in the tempest? Wilt thou watch me, as Job saith, 'as though I were a vast sea, or a great whale?' Nay, but because I am so little, and because the greatness of thy mercy can be shown in one so insignificant and yet so vile, therefore, O God, have mercy upon me."

There was once an occasion when the very Godhead of Jehovah made a triumphant plea for the prophet Elijah. On that august occasion, when he had bidden his adversaries see whether their god could answer them by fire, you can little guess the excitement there must have been that day in the prophet's mind. With what stern sarcasm did he say, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened." And as they cut

themselves with knives, and leaped upon the altar, oh the scorn with which that man of God must have looked down upon their impotent exertions, and their earnest but useless cries! But think of how his heart must have palpitated, if it had not been for the strength of his faith, when he repaired the altar of God that was broken down, and laid the wood in order, and killed the bullock. Hear him cry, "Pour water on it. You shall not suspect me of concealing fire; pour water on the victim." When they had done so, he bids them, "Do it a second time"; and they did it a second time; and then he says, "Do it a third time." And when it was all covered with water, soaked and saturated through, then he stands up and cries to God, "O God, let it be known that thou only art God." Here everything was put to the test. Jehovah's own existence was now put, as it were, at stake, before the eyes of men by this bold prophet. But how well the prophet was heard! Down came the fire and devoured not only the sacrifice, but even the wood, and the stones, and even the very water that was in the trenches, for Jehovah God had answered his servant's prayer. We sometimes may do the same, and say unto him, "Oh, by thy Deity, by thine existence, if indeed thou be God, now show thyself for the help of thy people!"

Lastly, the grand Christian argument is the sufferings, the death, the merit, the intercession of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I am afraid we do not understand what it is that we have at our command when we are allowed to plead with God for Christ's sake. I met with this thought the other day: it was somewhat new to me, but I believe it ought not to have been. When we ask God to hear us, pleading Christ's name, we usually mean, "O Lord, thy dear Son deserves this of thee; do this unto me because of what he merits." But if we knew it we might go in the city, "Sir, call at my office, and use my name, and say that they are to give you such a thing." I should go in and use your name, and I should obtain my request as a matter of right and a matter of necessity. This is virtually what Jesus Christ says to us. "If you need anything of God, all that the Father has belongs to me; go and use my name." Suppose you should give a man your cheque-book signed with your own name and left blank, to be filled up as he chose; that would be very nearly what Jesus has done in these words, "If ye ask anything in my name, I will give it you." If I had a good name at the bottom of the cheque, I should be sure that I should get it cashed when I

went to the banker with it; so when you have got Christ's name, to whom the very justice of God hath become a debtor, and whose merits have claims with the Most High, when you have Christ's name there is no need to speak with fear and trembling and bated breath. Oh, waver not and let not faith stagger! When thou pleadest the name of Christ thou pleadest that which shakes the gates of hell, and which the hosts of heaven obey, and God himself feels the sacred power of that divine plea.

Brethren, you would do better if you sometimes thought more in your prayers of Christ's griefs and groans. Bring before the Lord his wounds, tell the Lord of his cries, make the groans of Jesus cry again from Gethsemane, and his blood speak again from that frozen Calvary. Speak out and tell the Lord that with such griefs, and cries, and groans to plead, thou canst not take a denial: such arguments as these will speed you.

III. If the Holy Ghost shall teach us how to order our cause, and how to fill our mouth with arguments, the result shall be that **WE SHALL HAVE OUR MOUTH FILLED WITH PRAISES**. The man who has his mouth full of arguments in prayer shall soon have his mouth full of benedictions in answer to prayer. Dear friend, thou hast thy mouth full this morning, has thou? What of? Full of complaining? Pray the Lord to rinse thy mouth out of that black stuff, for it will little avail thee, and it will be bitter in thy bowels one of these days. Oh, have thy mouth full of prayer, full of it, full of arguments so that there is room for nothing else. Then come with this blessed mouthful, and you shall soon go away with whatsoever you have asked of God. Only delight thou thyself in him, and he will give thee the desire of thy heart.

It is said—I know not how truly—that the explanation of the text, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," may be found in a very singular Oriental custom. It is said that not many years ago—I remember the circumstance being reported—the King of Persia ordered the chief of his nobility, who had done something or other which greatly gratified him, to open his mouth, and when he had done so he began to put into his mouth pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, till he had filled it as full as it could hold, and then he bade him go his way. This is said to have been occasionally done in Oriental Courts towards great favourites. Now certainly whether that be an explanation of the text or not it is an

illustration of it. God says, "Open thy mouth with arguments," and then he will fill it with mercies priceless, gems unspeakably valuable. Would not a man open his mouth wide when he had to have it filled in such a style? Surely the most simple-minded among you would be wise enough for that. Oh! let us then open wide our mouth when we have to plead with God. Our needs are great, let our askings be great, and the supply shall be great too. You are not straitened in him; you are straitened in your own bowels. The Lord give you large mouths in prayer, great potency, not in the use of language, but in employing arguments.

What I have been speaking to the Christian is applicable in great measure to the unconverted man. God give thee to see the force of it, and to fly in humble prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to find eternal life in him.

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Election

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. - 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

If there were no other text in the sacred word except this one, I think we should all be bound to receive and acknowledge the truthfulness of the great and glorious doctrine of God's ancient choice of his family. But there seems to be an inveterate prejudice in the human mind against this doctrine; and although most other doctrines will be received by professing Christians, some with caution, others with pleasure, yet this one seems to be most frequently disregarded and discarded. In many of our pulpits it would be reckoned a high sin and treason to preach a sermon upon election, because they could not make it what they call a "practical" discourse. I believe they have erred from the truth therein. Whatever God has revealed, he has revealed for a purpose. There is

nothing in Scripture which may not, under the influence of God's Spirit, be turned into a practical discourse: "for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable" for some purpose of spiritual usefulness. It is true, it may not be turned into a free-will discourse-that we know right well-but it can be turned into a practical free-grace discourse: and free-grace practice is the best practice, when the true doctrines of God's immutable love are brought to bear upon the hearts of saints and sinners. Now, I trust this morning some of you who are startled at the very sound of this word, will say, "I will give it a fair hearing; I will lay aside my prejudices, I will just hear what this man has to say." Do not shut your ears and say at once, "It is high doctrine." Who has authorized you to call it high or low? Why should you oppose yourself to God's doctrine? Remember what became of the children who found fault with God's prophet, and exclaimed "Go up, thou bald-head; go up, thou bald-head." Say nothing against God's doctrines, lest haply some evil beast should come out of the forest and devour you also. There are other woes beside the open judgment of heaven-take heed that these fall not on your head. Lay aside your prejudices: listen calmly, listen dispassionately: hear what Scripture says; and when you receive the truth, if God should be pleased to reveal and manifest it to your souls, do not be ashamed to confess it. To confess you were wrong yesterday, is only to acknowledge that you are a little wiser to-day and instead of being a reflection on yourself, it is an honor to your judgment, and shows that you are improving in the knowledge of the truth. Do not be ashamed to learn, and to cast aside your old doctrines and views, but to take up that which you may more plainly see to be in the Word of God. But if you do not see it to be here in the Bible, whatever I may say, or whatever authorities I may plead, I beseech you, as you love your souls, reject it, and if from this pulpit you ever hear things contrary to this Sacred Word, remember that the Bible must be the first and God's minister must lie underneath it. We must not stand on the Bible to preach, but we must preach with the Bible above our heads. After all; ye have preached, we are well aware that the mountain of truth is higher than our eyes can discern; clouds and darkness are round about its summit, and we cannot discern its topmost pinnacle; yet we will try to preach it as well as we can. But since we are mortal, and liable to err, exercise your judgment; "Try the spirits, whether they are of God;" and if on mature reflection on your bended

knees, you are led to disregard election—a thing which I consider to be utterly impossible—then forsake it; do not hear it preached, but believe and confess whatever you see to be God's Word. I can say no more than that by way of exordium.

Now, first. I shall speak a little concerning the truthfulness of this doctrine: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Secondly, I shall try to prove that this election is absolute: "He hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation," not for sanctification, but "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Thirdly, this election is eternal because the text says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you." Fourthly, it is personal: "He hath chosen you." Then we will look at the effects of the doctrine—see what it does; and lastly, as God may enable us, we will try and look at its tendencies, and see whether it is indeed a terrible and licentious doctrine. We will take the flower, and like true beer, see whether there be any honey whatever in it; whether any good can come of it, or whether it is an unmixed, undiluted evil.

I. First, I must try and prove that the doctrine is TRUE. And let me begin with an argumentum ad hominem; I will speak to you according to your different positions and stations. There are some of you who belong to the Church of England, and I am happy to see so many of you here. Though now and then I certainly say some very hard things about Church and State, yet I love the old Church, for she has in her communion many godly ministers and eminent saints. Now, I know you are great believers in what the Articles declare to be sound doctrine. I will give you a specimen of what they utter concerning election, so that if you believe them, you cannot avoid receiving election. I will read a portion of the 17th Article upon Predestination and Election:-

"Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath continually decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor. Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the

calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity."

Now, I think any churchman, if he be a sincere and honest believer in Mother Church, must be a thorough believer in election. True, if he turns to certain other portions of the Prayer Book, he will find things contrary to the doctrines of free-grace, and altogether apart from scriptural teaching; but if he looks at the Articles, he must see that God hath chosen his people unto eternal life. I am not so desperately enamoured, however, of that book as you may be; and I have only used this Article to show you that if you belong to the Establishment of England you should at least offer no objection to this doctrine of predestination.

Another human authority whereby I would confirm the doctrine of election, is the old Waldensian creed. If you read the creed of the old Waldenses, emanating from them in the midst of the burning heat of persecution, you will see that these renowned professors and confessors of the Christian faith did most firmly receive and embrace this doctrine, as being a portion of the truth of God. I have copied from an old book one of the Articles of their faith:-

That God saves from corruption and damnation those whom he has chosen from, the foundations of the world, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness that before saw in them, but of his mere mercy in Christ Jesus his Son, passing by all the rest according to the irreprehensible reason of his own free-will and justice."

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, which are called by nickname Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus. By this truth I make a pilgrimage into the past, and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me. Were I a Pelagian, or a believer in the doctrine of free-will, I should have to walk for centuries all alone. Here and there a heretic of no very honorable character might rise

up and call me brother. But taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brethren-I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do, and acknowledge that this is the religion of God's own church.

I also give you an extract from the old Baptist Confession. We are Baptists in this congregation-the greater part of us at any rate-and we like to see what our own forefathers wrote. Some two hundred years ago the Baptists assembled together, and published their articles of faith, to put an end to certain reports against their orthodoxy which had gone forth to the world I turn to this old book-which I have just published Baptist Confession of Faith. Paper covers, -- 4d. -- Cloth, 8d. -- Roan, gilt edges, 1s. London: Alabaster & Passmore, Paternoster Row; and J. Paul, Chapter-House Court, St. Paul's. -and I find the following as the 3rd Article: "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ to the praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory out of his mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as condition or cause moving him "hereunto."

As for these human authorities, I care not one rush for all three of them. I care not what they say, pro or con, as to this doctrine. I have only used them as a kind of confirmation to your faith, to show you that whilst I may be railed upon as a heretic and as a hyper-Calvinist, after all I am backed up by antiquity. All the past stands by me. I do not care for the present.

Give me the past and I will hope for the future. Let the present rise up in my teeth, I will not care. What though a host of the churches of London may have forsaken the great cardinal doctrines of God, it matters not. If a

handful of us stand alone in an unflinching maintenance of the sovereignty of our God, if we are beset by enemies, ay, and even by our own brethren, who ought to be our friends and helpers, it matters not, if we can but count upon the past; the noble army of martyrs, the glorious host of confessors, are our friends; the witnesses of truth stand by us. With these for us, we will not say that we stand alone, but we may exclaim, "Lo, God hath reserved unto himself seven thousand that have not bowed the knee unto Baal." But the best of all is, God is with us.

The great truth is always the Bible, and the Bible alone. My hearers, you do not believe in any other book than the Bible, do you? If I could prove this from all the books in Christendom; if I could fetch back the Alexandrian library, and prove it thence, you would not believe it any more; but you surely will believe what is in God's Word.

I have selected a few texts to read to you. I love to give you a whole volley of texts when I am afraid you will distrust a truth, so that you may be too astonished to doubt, if you do not in reality believe. Just let me run through a catalogue of passages where the people of God are called elect. Of course if the people are called elect, there must be election. If Jesus Christ and his apostles were accustomed to style believers by the title of elect, we must certainly believe that they were so, otherwise the term does not mean anything. Jesus Christ says, "Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." "False Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." "Then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."-Mark 13:20, 22, 27, "Shall not God avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"-Luke 18:7. Together with many other passages which might be selected, wherein either the word "elect," or "chosen," or "foreordained," or "appointed," is mentioned; or the phrase "my sheep," or some similar designation, showing that Christ's people are distinguished from the rest of mankind.

But you have concordances, and I will not trouble you with texts.

Throughout the epistles, the saints are constantly called "the elect." In the Colossians we find Paul saying, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies. When he writes to Titus, he calls himself, "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect." Peter says "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Then if you turn to John, you will find he is very fond of the word. He says, "The elder to the elect lady;" and he speaks of our "elect sister." And we know where it is written "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you." They were not ashamed of the word in those days; they were not afraid to talk about it.

Now-a-days the word has been dressed up with diversities of meaning, and persons have mutilated and marred the doctrine, so that they have made it a very doctrine of devils, I do confess; and many who calls themselves believers, have gone to rank Antinomianism. But not withstanding this, why should I be ashamed of it, if men do wrest it? We love God's truth on the rack, as well as when it is walking upright. If there were a martyr whom we loved before he came on the rack, we should love him more still when he was stretched there. When God's truth is stretched on the rack, we do not call it falsehood. We love not to see it racked but we love it even when racked, because we can discern what its proper proportions ought to have been if it had not been racked and tortured by the cruelty and inventions of men. If you will read many of the epistles of the ancient fathers, you will find them always writing to the people of God as the "elect." Indeed the common conversational term used among many of the churches by the primitive Christians to one another was that of the "elect." They would often use the term to one another, showing that it was generally believed that all God's people were manifestly "elect."

But now for the verses that will positive prove the doctrine. Open your Bibles and turn to John 15:16, and there you will see that Jesus Christ has chosen his people, for he says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you, "Then in the 19th verse, "If ye were of the

world, the world would love his owns but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Then in the 17th chapter and the 8th and 9th verses, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me for they are thine." Turn to Acts 13:48: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." They may try to split that passage into hairs if they like; but it says, "ordained to eternal life "in the original as plainly as it possibly can; and we do not care about all the different commentaries thereupon. You scarcely need to be reminded of Romans 8, because I trust you are all well acquainted with that chapter and understand it by this time. In the 29th and following verses, it says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" It would also be unnecessary to repeat the whole of the 9th chapter of Romans. As long as that remains in the Bible, no man shall be able to prove Arminianism; so long as that is written there, not the most violent contortions of the passage will ever be able to exterminate the doctrine of election from the Scriptures. Let us read such verses as these-"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." Then read the 22nd verse, "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory," Then go on to Romans 11:7- "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded," In the 6th verse of the same

chapter, we read-"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." You, no doubt, all recollect the passage in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." Again, remember the passage in 1 Thessalonians 5:9; - God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ;" and then you have my text, which methinks would be quite enough. But, if you need any more, you can find them at your leisure, if we have not quite removed your suspicions as to the doctrine not being true.

Methinks, my friends, that this overwhelming mass of Scripture testimony must stagger those who dare to laugh at this doctrine. What shall we say of those who have so often despised it, and denied its divinity; who have railed at its justice, and dared to defy God and call him an Almighty tyrant, when they have heard of his having elected so many to eternal life? Canst thou, O rejector! cast it out of the Bible? Canst thou take the penknife of Jehudi and cut it out of the Word of God? Wouldst thou be like the women at the feet of Solomon, and have the child rent in halves, that thou mightest have thy half? Is it not here in Scripture?

And is it not thy duty to bow before it, and meekly acknowledge what thou understandest not-to receive it as the truth even though thou couldst not understand its meaning? I will not attempt to prove the justice of God in having thus elected some and left others. It is not for me to vindicate my Master. He will speak for himself, and he does so:-"Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" Who is he that shall say unto his father, "What hast thou begotten?" or unto his mother, "What hast thou brought forth?" "I am the Lord-I form the light and create darkness. I, the

Lord, do all these things.

Who art thou that repliest against God? Tremble and kiss his rod; bow down and submit to his scepter; impugn not his justice, and arraign not his acts before thy bar, O man!

But there are some who say, "It is hard for God to choose some and leave others." Now, I will ask you one question. Is there any of you here this morning who wishes to be holy, who wishes to be regenerate, to leave off sin and walk in holiness? "Yes, there is," says some one, "I do." Then God has elected you. But another says, "No; I don't want to be holy; I don't want to give up my lusts and my vices." Why should you grumble, then, that God has not elected you to it? For if you were elected you would not like it, according to your own confession. If God this morning had chosen you to holiness, you say you would not care for it. Do you not acknowledge that you prefer drunkenness to sobriety, dishonesty to honesty? You love this world's pleasures better than religion; then why should you grumble that God has not chosen you to religion? If you love religion, he has chosen you to it. If you desire it, he has chosen you to it. If you do not, what right have you to say that God ought to have given you what you do not wish for? Supposing I had in my hand something which you do not value, and I said I shall give it to such-and-such a person, you would have no right to grumble that I did not give to you. You could not be so foolish as to grumble that the other has got what you do not care about. According to your own confession, many of you do not want religion, do not want a new heart and a right spirit, do not want the forgiveness of sins, do not want sanctification; you do not want to be elected to these things: then why should you grumble? You count these things but as husks, and why should you complain of God who has given them to those whom he has chosen? If you believe them to be good and desire them, they are there for thee. God gives liberally to all those who desire; and first of all, he makes them desire, otherwise they never would.

If you love these things, he has elected you to them, and you may have them; but if you do not, who are you that you should find fault with God, when it is your own desperate will that keeps you from loving these things- your own simple self that makes you hate them? Suppose a man

in the street should say, "What a shame it is I cannot have a seat in the chapel to hear what this man has to say." And suppose he says, "I hate the preacher; I can't bear his doctrine; but still it's a shame I have not a seat." Would you expect a man to say so? No: you would at once say, "That man does not care for it. Why should he trouble himself about other people having what they value and he despises?" You do not like holiness, you do not like righteousness; if God has elected me to these things, has he hurt you by it?

"Ah! but," say some, "I thought it meant that God elected some to heaven and some to hell. "That is every different matter from the gospel doctrine.

He has elected men to holiness and to righteousness and through that to heaven. You must not say that he has elected these simply to heaven, and others only to hell. He has elected you to holiness, if you love holiness. If any of you love to be saved by Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ elected you to be saved. If any of you desire to have salvation, you are elected to have it, if you desire it sincerely and earnestly. But, if you don't desire it, why on earth should you be so preposterously foolish as to grumble because God gives that which you do not like to other people?

II. Thus I have tried to say something with regard to the truth of the doctrine of election. And now, briefly, let me say that election is ABSOLUTE: that is, it does not depend upon what we are. The text says, "God hath from the beginning chosen us unto salvation;" but our opponents say that God chooses people because they are good, that he chooses them on account of sundry works which they have done. Now, we ask in reply to this, what works are those on account of which God elects his people? Are they what we commonly call "works of law,"-works of obedience which the creature can render? If so, we reply to you-If men cannot be justified by the works of the law, it seems to us pretty clear that they cannot be elected by the works of the law: if they cannot be justified by their good deeds, they cannot be saved by them. Then the decree of election could not have been formed upon good works. "But," say others, "God elected them on the foresight of their faith." Now, God gives faith, therefore he could not have elected them on account of faith, which he foresaw. There shall be twenty beggars in the street, and I determine to give one of them a shilling; but will any one say that I determined to give

that one a shilling, that I elected him to have the shilling, because I foresaw that he would have it? That would be talking nonsense. In like manner to say that God elected men because he foresaw they would have faith, which is salvation in the germ, would be too absurd for us to listen to for a moment. Faith is the gift of God. Every virtue comes from him. Therefore it cannot have caused him to elect men, because it is his gift. Election, we are sure, is absolute, and altogether apart from the virtues which the saints have afterwards. What though a saint should be as holy and devout as Paul, what though he should be as bold as Peter, or as loving as John, yet he would claim nothing from his Maker. I never knew a saint yet of any denomination, who thought that God saved him because he foresaw that he would have these virtues and merits. Now, my brethren, the best jewels that the saint ever wears, if they be jewels of his own fashioning, are not of the first water. There is something of earth mixed with them. The highest grace we ever possess has something of earthliness about it. We feel this when we are most refined, when we are most sanctified, and our language must always be -

"I the chief of sinners am;
Jesus died for me."

Our only hope, our only plea, still hangs on grace as exhibited in the person of Jesus Christ. And I am sure we must utterly reject and disregard all thought that our graces, which are gifts of our Lord, which are his right-hand planting, could have ever caused his love. And we ever must sing-

"What was there in us that could merit esteem
Or give the Creator delight?"

"Twas even so Father we ever must sing,
Because it seemed good in thy sight."

"He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy:" he saves because he will save. And if you ask me why he saves me, I can only say, because he would do it. Is there anything in me that should recommend me to God?

No; I lay aside everything, I had nothing to recommend me. When God saved me I was the most abject, lost, and ruined of the race. I lay before him as an infant in my blood. Verily, I had no power to help myself. O how wretched did I feel and know myself to be! If you had something to recommend you to God, I never had. I will be content to be saved by grace, unalloyed, pure grace I can boast of no merits. If you can do so, I cannot. I must sing-

"Free grace alone from the first to the last
Hath won my affection and held my soul fast."

III. Then, thirdly, this election is ETERNAL. "God hath from the beginning chose you unto eternal life. Can any man tell me when the beginning was? Years ago we thought the beginning of this world was when Adam came upon it; but we have discovered that thousands of years before that God was preparing chaotic matter to make it a fit abode for man, putting races of creatures upon it, who might die and leave behind the marks of his handiwork and marvellous skill, before he tried his hand on man. But that was not the beginning, for revelation points us to a period long ere this world was fashioned, to the days when the morning stars were begotten when, like drops of dew, from the fingers of the morning, stars and constellations fell trickling from the hand of God; when, by his own lips, he launched forth ponderous orbs; when with his own hand he sent comets, like thunderbolts, wandering through the sky, to find one day their proper sphere. We go back to years gone by, when worlds were made and systems fashioned, but we have not even approached the beginning yet. Until we go to the time when all the universe slept in the mind of God as yet unborn, until we enter the eternity where God the Creator lived alone, everything sleeping within him, all creation resting in his mighty gigantic thought, we have not guessed the beginning. We may go back, back, back, ages upon ages. We may go back, if we might use such strange words, whole eternities, and yet never arrive at the beginning. Our wing might be tired, our imagination would die away; could it outstrip the lightnings flashing in majesty, power, and rapidity, it would soon weary itself ere it could get to the beginning. But God from the beginning chose his people; when the unnavigated ether was yet unfanned by the wing of a single angel, when

space was shoreless, or else unborn when universal silence reigned, and not a voice or whisper shocked the solemnity of silence, when there was no being and no motion, no time, and nought but God himself, alone in his eternity; when without the song of an angel, without the attendance of even the cherubim, long ere the living creatures were born, or the wheels of the chariot of Jehovah were fashioned, even then, "in the beginning was the Word," and in the beginning God's people were one with the Word, and "in the beginning he chose them into eternal life "Our election then is eternal. I will not stop to prove it, I only just run over these thoughts for the benefit of young beginners, that they may understand what we mean by eternal, absolute election.

IV. And, next, the election is PERSONAL. Here again, our opponents have tried to overthrow election by telling us that it is an election of nations; and not of people. But here the Apostle says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you." It is the most miserable shift on earth to make out that God hath not chosen persons but nations, because the very same objection that lies against the choice of persons, lies against the choice of a nation. If it were not just to choose a person, it would be far more unjust to choose a nation, since nations are but the union of multitudes of persons, and to choose a nation seems to be a more gigantic crime-if election be a crime-than to choose one person. Surely to choose ten thousand would be reckoned to be worse than choosing one; to distinguish a whole nation from the rest of mankind, does seem to be a greater extravaganza in the acts; divine sovereignty than the election of one poor mortal and leaving out another. But what are nations but men? What are whole peoples but combinations of different units? A nation is made up of that individual, and that, and that. And if you tell me that God chose the Jews, I say then, he chose that Jew, and that Jew, and that Jew. And if you say he chooses Britain, then I say he chooses that British, man, and that British man, and that British man. So that is the same thing after all.

Election then is personal: it must be so. Every one who reads this text, and others like it, will see that Scripture continually speaks of God's people one by one and speaks of them as having been the special subjects of election.

"Sons we are through God's election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe;
By eternal destination
Sovereign grace we here receive."

We know it is personal election

V. The other thought is-for my time flies too swiftly to enable me to dwell at length upon these points-that election produces GOOD RESULTS, "He hath from the beginning chosen you unto sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth." How many men mistake the doctrine of election altogether! and how my soul burns and boils at the recollection of the terrible evils that have accrued from the spoiling and the wresting of that glorious portion of God's glorious truth! How many are there who have said to themselves, "I am elect," and have sat down in sloth, and worse than that! They have said, "I am the elect of God," and with both hands they have done wickedness. They have swiftly run to every unclean thing, because they have said, "I am the chosen child of God, irrespective of my works, therefore I may live as I list, and do what I like." O, beloved! let me solemnly warn every one of you not to carry the truth too far; or, rather not to turn the truth into error, for we cannot carry it too far. We may overstep the truth; we can make that which was meant to be sweet for our

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comfort, a terrible mixture for our destruction. I tell you there have been thousands of men who have been ruined by misunderstanding election; who have said, "God has elected me to heaven, and to eternal life;" but they have forgotten that it is written, God has elected them "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." This is God's election-election to sanctification and to faith. God chooses his people to be holy, and to be believers. How many of you here then are believers? How many of my congregation can put their hands upon their hearts and say, "I trust in God that I am sanctified?" Is there one of you who says, "I am elect"-I remind that you swore last week. One of you says, "I trust I am elect"-but I jog your memory about some vicious act that you committed during the last six days. Another of you says, "I am elect"-but I would look you in the face and say, "Elect! thou art a most cursed hypocritical and that is all thou

art." Others would say, "I am elect "-but I would remind them that they neglect the mercy-seat and do not pray. Oh, beloved! never think you are elect unless you are holy. You may come to Christ as a sinner, but you may not come to Christ as an elect person until you can see your holiness. Do not misconstrue what I say-do not say "I am elect," and yet think you can be living in sin. That is impossible. The elect of God are holy. They are not pure, they are not perfect, they are not spotless; but, taking their life as a whole, they are holy persons. They are marked, and distinct from others: and no man has a right to conclude himself elect except in his holiness. He may be elect, and yet lying in darkness, but he has no right to believe it; no one can see it, there is no evidence of it. The man may live one day, but he is dead at present. If you are walking in the fear of God, trying to please him, and to obey his commandments, doubt not that your name has been written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world.

And, lest this should be too high for you, note the other mark of election, which is faith, "belief of the truth "Whoever believes God's truth, and believes on Jesus Christ, is elect. I frequently meet with poor souls, who are fretting and worrying themselves about this thought-"How, if I should not be elect!" "Oh, sir," they say, "I know I put my trust in Jesus; I know I believe in his name and trust in his blood; but how if I should not be elect?" Poor dear creature! you do not know much about the gospel, or you would never talk so, for he that believes is elect. Those who are elect, are elect unto sanctification and unto faith; and if you have faith you are one of God's elect; you may know it and ought to know it, for it is an absolute certainty. If you, as a sinner, look to Jesus Christ this morning, and say -

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling,"

you are elect. I am not afraid of election frightening poor saints or sinners. There are many divines who tell the enquirer "election has nothing to do with you." That is very bad, because the poor soul is not to be silenced like that. If you could silence him so, it might be well, but he will think of it, he can't help it. Say to him then, if you believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ you are elect. If you will cast yourself on Jesus, you are elect. I tell you-the chief of sinners-this morning, I tell you in his name, if you will come to God without any works of your own, cast yourself on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ; if you will come now and trust in him, you are elect-you were loved of God from before the foundation of the world, for you could not do that unless God had given you the power, and had chosen you to do it. Now you are safe and secure if you do but come and cast yourself on Jesus Christ, and wish to be saved and to be loved by him.

But think not that any man will be saved without faith and without holiness. Do not conceive, my hearers, that some decree, passed in the dark ages of eternity, will save your souls, unless you believe in Christ. Do not sit down and fancy that you are to be saved without faith and holiness.

That is a most abominable and accursed heresy, and has ruined thousands. Lay not election as a pillow for you to sleep on, or you may be ruined. God forbid that I should be sewing pillows under armholes that you may rest comfortably in your sins. Sinner! there is nothing in the Bible to palliate your sins. But if thou art condemned O man! if thou art lost O woman! thou wilt not find in this Bible one drop to cool thy tongue, or one doctrine to palliate thy guilt; your damnation will be entirely your own fault, and your sin will richly merit it, because ye believe not ye are condemned. "Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep." Ye wilt not come to me that ye might have life." Do not fancy that election excuses sin-do not dream of it-do not rock yourself in sweet complacency in the thought of your irresponsibility. You are responsible. We must give you both things. We must have divine sovereignty, and we must have man's responsibility. We must have election, but we must ply your hearts, we must send God's truth at you; we must speak to you, and remind you of this, that while it is written, "In me is thy help;" yet it is also written, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

VI. Now, lastly, what are the true and legitimate tendencies of right conceptions concerning the doctrine of election. First, I will tell you what the doctrine of election will make saints do under the blessing of God; and, secondly what it will do for sinners if God blesses it to them.

"First, I think election, to a saint, is one of the most stripping doctrines in all the world-to take away all trust in the flesh, or all reliance upon anything except Jesus Christ. How often do we wrap ourselves up in our own righteousness, and array ourselves with the false pearls and gems of our own works and doings. We begin to say "Now I shall be saved, because I have this and that evidence." Instead of that, it is naked faith that saves; that faith and that alone unites to the Lamb irrespective of works, although it is productive of them. How often do we lean on some work, other than that of our own Beloved, and trust in some might, other than that which comes from on high. Now if we would have this might taken from us, we must consider election. Pause my soul, and consider this. God loved thee before thou hadst a being. He loved thee when thou wast dead in trespasses and sins, and sent his Son to die for thee. He purchased thee with his precious blood ere thou couldst lisp his name. Canst thou then be proud? I know nothing, nothing again, that is more humbling for us than this doctrine of election. I have sometimes fallen prostrate before it, when endeavoring to understand it. I have stretched my wings, and, eagle-like, I have soared towards the sun. Steady has been my eye, and true my wing, for a season; but, when I came near it, and the one thought possessed me,- "God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation," I was lost in its lustre, I was staggered with the mighty thought; and from the dizzy elevation down came my soul, prostrate and broken, saying, "Lord, I am nothing, I am less than nothing. Why me? Why me?" Friends, if you want to-be humbled, study election, for it will make you humble under the influence of God's Spirit. He who is proud of his election is not elect; and he who is humbled under a sense of it may believe that he is. He has every reason to believe that he is, for it is one of the most blessed effects of election that it helps us to humble ourselves before God.

Once again. Election in the Christian should make him very fearless and very bold No man will be so bold as he who believes that he is elect of God. What cares he for man if he is chosen of his Maker? What will he care for the pitiful chirpings of some tiny sparrows when he knoweth that he is an eagle of a royal race? Will he care when the beggar pointeth at him, when the blood royal of heaven runs in his veins? Will he fear if all

the world stand against him? If earth be all in arms abroad, he dwells in perfect peace, for he is in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, in the great pavillion of the Almighty. "I am God's," says he, "I am distinct from other men. They are of an inferior race. Am not I noble? Am not I one of the aristocrats of heaven? Is not my name written in God's book?" Does he care for the world? Nay: like the lion that careth not for the barking of the dog, he smileth at all his enemies; and when they come too near him, he moveth himself and dasheth them to pieces. What careth he for them? He walks about them like a colossus; while little men walk under him and understand him not." His brow is made of iron, his heart is of flint- what doth he care for man? Nay; if one universal hiss came up from the wide world, he would smile at it, for he would say,-

"He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode."

"I am one of his elect. I am chosen of God and precious; and though the world cast me out, I fear not. Ah! ye time-serving professors, some of you ear bend like the willows. There are few oaken-Christians now-a-days, that can stand the storm; and I will tell you the reason. It is because you do not believe yourselves to be elect. The man who knows he is elect will be too proud to sin; he will not humble himself to commit the acts of common people. The believer in this truth will say "I compromise my principles? I change my doctrines? I lay aside my views? I hide what I believe to be true? No' since I know I am one of God's elect, in the very teeth of all men I shall speak God's truth, whatever man may say." Nothing makes a man so truly bold as to feel that he is God's elect. He shall not quiver, he shall not shake, who knows that God has chosen him.

Moreover, election will make us holy. Nothing under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit can make a Christian more holy than the thought that he is chosen. "Shall I sin," he says, "after God hath chosen me? Shall I transgress after such love? Shall I go astray after so much loving kindness and tender mercy? Nay, my God; since thou hast chosen me, I will love thee; I will live to thee-

"Since thou, the everlasting God,

My Father art become;

I will give myself to thee to be thine for ever, by election and by redemption, casting myself on thee, and solemnly consecrating myself to thy service."

And now, lastly, to the ungodly. What says election to you? First, ye ungodly ones, I will excuse you for a moment. There are many of you who do not like election, and I cannot blame you for it, for I have heard those preach election, who have sat down, and said, "I have not one word to say to the sinner." Now, I say you ought to dislike such preaching as that, and I do not blame you for it. But, I say, take courage, take hope, O thou sinner, that there is election. So far from dispiriting and discouraging thee, it is a very hopeful and joyous thing that there is an election. What if I told thee perhaps none can be saved, none are ordained to eternal life; wouldst thou not tremble and fold thy hands in hopelessness, and say, "Then how can I be saved, since none are elect?" But, I say, there is a multitude elect, beyond all counting—a host that no mortal can number. Therefore, take heart, thou poor sinner! Cast away thy despondency—mayest thou not be elect as well as any other? for there is a host innumerable chosen. There is joy and comfort for thee! Then, not only take heart, but go and try the Master. Remember, if you were not elect, you would lose nothing by it.

What did the four Syrians say? "Let us fall unto the host of the Syrians, for if we stay here we must die, and if we go to them we can but die." O sinner! come to the throne of electing mercy, Thou mayest die where thou art. Go to God; and, even supposing he should spurn thee, suppose his uplifted hand should drive thee away—a thing impossible—yet thou wilt not lose anything; thou wilt not be more damned for that. Besides, supposing thou be damned, thou wouldst have the satisfaction at least of being able to lift up thine eyes in hell, and say, "God, I asked mercy of thee and thou wouldst not grant it; I sought it, but thou didst refuse it." That thou never shalt say, O sinner! If thou goest to him, and askest him, thou shalt receive; for he never has spurned one yet! Is not that hope for you? What though there is an allotted number, yet it is true that all who seek belong to that number. Go thou and seek; and if thou shouldst be the first one to

go to hell, tell the devils that thou didst perish thus-tell the demons that thou art a castaway, after having come as a guilty sinner to Jesus. I tell thee it would disgrace the Eternal-with reverence to his name-and he would not allow such a thing. He is jealous of his honor, and he could not allow a sinner to say that.

But ah, poor soul! not only think thus, that thou canst not lose anything by coming; there is yet one more thought-dost thou love the thought of election this morning? Art thou willing to admit its justice? Dost thou say, "I feel that I am lost I deserve it, and that if my brother is saved I cannot murmur. If God destroy me, I deserve it, but if he saves the person sitting beside me, he has a right to do what he will with his own; and I have lost nothing by it." Can you say that honestly from your heart? If so, then the doctrine of election has had its right effect on your spirit, and you are not far from the kingdom of heaven. You are brought where you ought to be, where the Spirit wants you to be; and being do this morning, depart in peace; God has- forgiven your sins. You would not feel that if you were not pardoned, you would not feel that if the Spirit of God were not working in you. Rejoice, then, in this. Let your hope rest on the cross of Christ. Think not on election, but on Christ Jesus. Rest on Jesus - Jesus first, midst, and without end.

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Election And Holiness

Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. - Deuteronomy 10:14-16

He who preaches the whole truth as it is in Jesus will labor under continual disadvantages; albeit, that the grand advantage of having the presence and blessing of God will more than compensate the greatest loss. It has been my earnest endeavor ever since I have preached the Word, never to keep back a single doctrine which I believe to be taught of God. It is time that we had done with the old and rusty systems that have so long curbed the freeness of religious speech. The Arminian trembles to go an inch beyond Arminius or Wesley, and many a Calvinist refers to John Gill or John Calvin, as any ultimate authority. It is time that the systems were broken up, and that there was sufficient grace in all our hearts to believe everything taught in God's Word, whether it was taught by either of these men or not. I have frequently found when I have preached what is called high doctrine, because I found it in my text, that some people have been offended; they could not enjoy it, could not endure it, and went away. They were generally people who were best gone; I have never regretted their absence. On the other hand, when I have taken for my text some sweet invitation, and have preached the freeness of Christ's love to man; when I have warned sinners that they are responsible while they hear the gospel, and that if they reject Christ their blood will be upon their own heads, I find another class of doubtless excellent individuals who cannot see how these two things agree. And therefore, they also turn aside, and wade into the deceptive miry bogs of Antinomianism. I can only say with regard to them, that I had rather also that they should go to their own sort, than that they should remain with my congregation. We seek to hold the truth. We know no difference between high doctrine and low doctrine. If God teaches it, it is enough. If

it is not in the Word, away with it! away with it! but if it be in the Word, agreeable or disagreeable, systematic or disorderly, I believe it. It may seem to us as if one truth stood in opposition to another, but we are fully convinced that it cannot be so, that it is a mistake in our judgment. That the two things do agree we are quite clear, though where they meet we do not know as yet, but hope to know hereafter. That God has a people whom he has chosen for himself, and who shall show forth his praise, we do believe to be a doctrine legible in the Word of God to every man who cares to read that Book with an honest and candid judgment. That, at the same time, Christ is freely presented to every creature under heaven, and that the invitations and exhortations of the gospel are honest and true invitations—not fictions or myths, not tantalisations and mockeries, but realities and facts—we do also unfeignedly believe. We subscribe to both truths with our hearty assent and consent.

Now, this morning it may be that some of you will not approve of what I have to say. You will remember, however, that I do not seek your approbation, that it will be sufficient for me if I have cleared my conscience concerning a grand truth and have preached the gospel faithfully. I am not accountable to you, nor you to me. You are accountable to God, if you reject a truth; I am accountable to Him if I preach an error. I am not afraid to stand before His bar with regard to the great doctrines which I shall preach to you this day.

Now, two things this morning. First, I shall attempt to set forth God's Election; secondly, to show in practical bearings. You have both in the text. "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." And, then, in the second place, its practical bearings, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."

I. In SETTING FORTH ELECTION, I must have you observe, first of all, its extraordinary singularity. God has chosen to himself a people whom no man can number, out of the children of Adam—out of the fallen and apostate race who sprang from the loins of a rebellious man. Now, this is

a wonder of wonders, when we come to consider that the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's. If God must have a chosen race, why did he not select one from the majestic orders of angels, or from the flaming cherubim and seraphim who stand around his throne? Why was not Gabriel fixed upon? Why was he not so constituted that from his loins there might spring a, mighty race of angels, and why were not these chosen of God from before the foundations of the world! What could there be in man, a creature lower than the angels, that God should select him rather than the angelic spirits? Why were not the cherubim and seraphim given to Christ? Why did he not take up angels? Why did he not assume their nature, and take them into union with himself? An angelic body might be more in keeping with the person of Deity, than a body of weak and suffering flesh and blood. There were something congruous if he had said unto the angels, "Ye shall be my sons." But, no! though all these were his own, he passes by the hierarchy of angels, and stoops to man. He takes up an apostate worm, and says unto him, "Thou shalt be my son," and to myriads of the same race he cries, "ye shall be my sons and daughters, by a covenant for ever." "But," saith one, "It seems that God intended to choose a fallen people that he might in them show forth his grace. Now, the angels of course would be unsuitable for this, since they have not fallen." I reply, there are angels that have fallen; there were angels that kept not the first estate, but fell from their dignity. And how is it that these are consigned to blackness of darkness for ever! Answer me, ye that deny God's sovereignty, and hate his election—how is it that angels are condemned to everlasting fire, while to you, the children of Adam, the gospel of Christ is freely preached? The only answer that can possibly be given is this: God wills to do it. He has a right to do as he pleases with his own mercy. Angels deserve no mercy: we deserve none. Nevertheless, he gave it to us, and he denied it them. They are bound in chains, reserved for everlasting fire to the last great day, but we are saved. Before thy sovereignty, I bow, great God, and acknowledge that thou doest as thou wisest, and that thou givest no account of thy matters. Why, if there were any reason to move God in his creatures, he would certainly have chosen devils rather than men. The sin of the first of the fallen angels was not greater than that of Adam. It is not the time to enter into that question. I could, if opportunity were needed, prove it to be rather less than greater, if there were degrees in sin. Had the angels been

reclaimed, they could have glorified God more than we; they could have sang his praises louder than we can, clogged as we are with flesh and blood. But passing by the greater, he chose the less, that he might show forth his sovereignty, which is the brightest jewel in the crown of his divinity. Our Arminian antagonists always leave the fallen angels out of the question: for it is not convenient to them to recollect this ancient instance of Election. They call it unjust, that God should choose one man and not another. By what reasoning can this be unjust when they will admit that it was righteous enough in God to choose one race—the race of men, and leave another race—the race of angels, to be sunk into misery on account of sin. Brethren, let us have done with arraiging God at our poor fallible judgment seat. He is good and doeth righteousness. Whatever he doth we may know to be right, whether we can see the righteousness or no.

I have given you, then, some reasons at starting, why we should regard God's Election as being singular. But I have to offer to you others. Observe, the text not only says, "Behold, the heaven, even the heaven of the heavens is the Lord's," but it adds, "the earth also, with all that therein is." Now, when we think that God has chosen us, when you, my brethren, who by grace have put your trust in Christ, read your "title clear to mansions in the skies," you may well pause and say in the language of that hymn—

"Pause, my soul I adore, and wonder!
Ask, 'O why such love to me?'"

Kings passed by and beggars chosen; wise men left, but fools made to know the wonders of his redeeming love; publicans and harlots sweetly compelled to come to the feast of mercy; while proud Pharisees are suffered to trust in their own righteousness and perish in their vain boastings. God's choice will ever seem in the eyes of unrenewed men to be a very strange one. He has passed over those whom we should have selected, and he has chosen just the odds and ends of the universe, the men who thought themselves the least likely ever to taste of his grace. Why were we chosen as a people to have the privilege of the gospel? Are there not other nations as great as we have been? Sinful a people as this

English nation has manifested itself to be, why has God selected the Anglo-Saxon race to receive the pure truth, while nations who might have received the light with even greater joy than ourselves, still lie shrouded in darkness, and the sun of the gospel has never risen on them? Why, again, I say, in the case of each individual, why is the man chosen who is chosen? Can any answer be given but just the answer of our Savior—"Even so, Father, for it seemeth good in thy sight!"

Yet one other thought, to make God's Election marvellous indeed. God had unlimited power of creation. Now, if he willed to make a people who should be his favourites, who should be united to the person of his Son, and who should reign with him, why did he not make a new race? When Adam sinned, it would have been easy enough to strike the world out of existence. He had but to speak and this round earth would have been dissolved, as the bubble dies into the wave that bears it. There would have been no trace of Adam's sin left, the whole might have died away and have been forgotten for ever. But no! Instead of making a new people, a pure people who could not sin, instead of taking to himself creatures that were pure, unsullied, without spot, he takes a depraved and fallen people, and lifts these up, and that, too, by costly means; by the death of his own Son by the work of his own Spirit; that these must be the jewels in his crown to reflect his glory for ever. Oh, singular choice! Oh, strange Election, My soul is lost in thy depths, and I can only pause and cry, "Oh, the goodness, oh, the mercy, oh, the sovereignty of God's grace."

Having thus spoken about its singularity, I turn to another subject. Observe the unconstrained freeness of electing love. In our text this is hinted at by the word "ONLY." Why did God love their fathers? Why, only because he did so. There is no other reason. "Only, the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above an people, as it is this day." There was doubtless some wise reason for the Lord's acts, for he doeth all things after the counsel of his will, but there certainly could not be any reason in the excellence or virtue of the creature whom he chose. Now, just dwell upon that for a moment. Let us remark that there is no original goodness in those whom God selects. What was there in Abraham that God chose him? He came out of an idolatrous people, and it is said of his posterity—a Syrian ready to perish

was thy father. As if God would show that it was not the goodness of Abraham, he says, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." There was nothing more in Abraham than in anyone of us why God should have selected him, for whatever good was in Abraham God put there. Now, if God put it there, the motive for his putting it there could not be the fact of his putting it there. You cannot find a motive for a fact in itself, there must be some motive lying higher than anything which can be found in the mere act of God. If God chose a man to make that man holy, righteous, and good, he cannot have chosen him because he was to be good and righteous. It were absurd to reason thus. It were drawing a cause for an effect, and making an effect a cause. If I were to plead that the rose bud were the author of the root, well! I might, indeed, be laughed at. But were I to urge that any goodness in man is the ground of God's choice, when I call to recollection that that goodness is the effect of God's choice, I should be foolish indeed. That which is the elect cannot be the cause. But what original good is there in any man? If God chose us for anything good in ourselves, we must all be left unchosen. Have we not all an evil heart of unbelief? Have we not all departed from his ways? Are we not all by nature corrupt, enemies to God by wicked works? If he chooses us it cannot be because of any original goodness in us. "But," saith one, "perhaps it may be because of goodness foreseen, God has chosen his people, because he foresees that they will believe and be saved." A singular idea, indeed! Here are a certain number of poor persons, and a prince comes into the place. To some ninety out of the hundred he distributes gold. Some one asks the question, "Why did the prince give this gold to those ninety?" A madman in a corner, whose face ought never to be seen, replies, "He gave it to them because he foresaw that they would have it." But how could he foresee that they would have it apart from the fact that he gave it to them? Now, you say that God gives faith, repentance, salvation, because he foresaw that men would have it. He did not foresee it apart from the fact that he intended to give it them. He foresaw that he would give them grace. But what was the reason that he gave it to them? Certainly, not his foresight. That were absurd, indeed! and none but a madman would reason thus. Oh, Father, if thou hast given me life, and light, and joy, and peace, the reason is known only to thyself;

for reasons in myself I ne'er can find, for I am still a wanderer from thee, and often does my faith flicker, and my love grow dim. There is nothing in me to merit esteem or give thee delight. It is all by thy grace, thy grace alone that I am what I am. So will every Christian say; so must every Christian indeed confess.

But is it not all idle talk, even to controvert for a single moment, with the absurd idea that man can fetter his Maker. Shall the purpose of the Eternal be left contingent on the will of man? Shall man be really his Maker's master? Shall free-will take the place of the divine energy? Shall man take the throne of God, and set aside as he pleases all the purposes of Jehovah—compelling him by merit to choose him? Shall there be something that man can do that shall control the motions of Jehovah? It is said by some one that men give free-will to every one but God, and speak as if God must be the slave of men. Ay, we believe that God has given to man a free-will—that we do not deny, but we will have it that God has a free-will also—that, moreover, he has a right to exercise it, and does exercise it; and that no merit of man can have any compulsion with the Creator. Merit, on the one hand, is impossible; and even if we did possess it, it could not be possible that we could possess it in such a degree as to merit the gift of Christ. Remember, if we deserve salvation, man must have virtue enough to merit heaven, to merit union with Jesus, to merit, in fact, everlasting glory. You go back to the old Romish idea, if you once slip your anchor and cut your cable, and talk about anything in man that could have moved the mercy of God. "Well," saith one, "this is vile Calvinism." Be it so, if you choose to call it so. Calvin found his doctrine in the Scriptures. Doubtless he may have also received some instruction from the works of Augustine, but that mighty doctor of grace learned it from the writings of St. Paul; and St. Paul, the apostle of grace, received it by inspiration from Jesus the Lord. We can trace our pedigree direct to Christ himself. Therefore, we are not ashamed of any title that may be appended to a glorious truth of God. Election is free, and has nothing to do with any original goodness in man, or goodness foreseen, or any merit that man can possibly bring before God.

I come to the hardest part of my task this morning—Election in its justice. Now, I shall defend this great fact, that God has chosen men to himself,

and I shall regard it from rather a different point of view from that which is usually taken. My defense is just this. You tell me, if God has chosen some men to eternal life, that he has been unjust. I ask you to prove it. The burden of the proof lies with you. For I would have you remember that none merited this at all. Is there one man in the whole world who would have the impertinence to say that he merits anything of his Maker? If so, be it known unto you that he shall have all he merits; and his reward will be the flames of hell for ever, for that is the utmost that any man ever merited of God. God is in debt to no man, and at the last great day every man shall have as much love as much pity, and as much goodness, as he deserves. Even the lost in hell shall have all they deserve, ay, and woe worth the day for them when they shall have the wrath of God, which will be the summit of their deservings. If God gives to every man as much as he merits, is he therefore to be accused of injustice because he gives to some infinitely more than they merit? Where is the injustice of a man doing as he wills with his own? Has he not a right to give what he pleases? If God is in debt to any, then there would be injustice. But he is indebted to none and if he gives his favors according to his own sovereign will, who is he that shall find fault? Thou hast not been injured; God has not wronged thee. Bring up thy claims, and he will fulfill them to the last jot. If thou art righteous and canst claim something of thy Maker stand up and plead thy virtues, and he will answer thee. Though thou gird up thy loins like a man, and stand before him, and plead thy own righteousness, he will make thee tremble, and abhor thyself, and roll in dust and ashes; for thy righteousness is a lie, and thy best performance but as filthy rags. God injures no man in blessing some. Strange is it that there should be any accusation brought against God, as though he were unjust.

I defend it again on another ground. To which of you has God ever refused his mercy and love, when you have sought his face? Has he not freely proclaimed the gospel to you all? Doth not his Word bid you come to Jesus? and doth it not solemnly say, "Whosoever will, let him come?" Are you not every Sabbath invited to come and put your trust in Christ? If you will not do it, but will destroy your own souls, who is to blame? If you put your trust in Christ you shall be saved; God will not run back from his promise. Prove him, try him. The moment you renounce sin, and trust in

Christ, that moment you may know yourself to be one of his chosen ones, but if you will wickedly put from you the gospel which is daily preached, if you will not be saved, then on your own head be your blood. The only reason why you can be lost is because you would continue in sin and would not cry to be saved therefrom. You have rejected you have put him far from you, and left to yourselves, you will not receive him. "Well, but," saith one, "I cannot come to God." Your powerlessness to come lies in the fact that you have no will to come. If thou wert but once willing thou wouldst lack no power. Thou canst not come, because thou art so wedded to thy lusts, so fond of thy sin. That is why thou canst not come. That very inability of thine is thy crime, thy guilt. Thou couldst come if thy love to evil and self were broken. The inability lies not in thy physical nature but in thy depraved moral nature. Oh! if thou wert willing to be saved! There is the point—there is the point! Thou art not willing, nor wilt thou ever be, till grace make thee willing. But who is to blame because thou art not willing to be saved? None but thyself; thou hast the whole blame. If thou refusest eternal life, if thou wilt not look to Christ, if thou wilt not trust to him, remember thy own will damns thee. Was there ever a man who had a sincere will to be saved in God's way who was denied salvation? No, no, a thousand times NO, for such a man is already taught of God. He who gives will, will not deny power. Inability lies mainly in the will. When once a man is made willing in the day of God's power, he is made able also. Therefore, your destruction lies at your own door.

Then let me ask another question. You say it is unjust that some should be lost while others are saved. Who makes those to be lost that are lost? Did God cause you to sin? Has the Spirit of God ever persuaded you to do a wrong thing? Has the Word of God ever bolstered you up in your own self-righteousness? No; God has never exercised any influence upon you to make you go the wrong way. The whole tendency of his Word, the whole tendency of the preaching of the gospel. is to persuade you to turn from sin unto righteousness, from your wicked ways to Jehovah. I say again, God is just. If you reject the Savior proclaimed to you, if you refuse to trust him, if you will not come to him and be saved, if you are lost, God is supremely just in your being lost, but if he chooses to exert the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon some of you, he is surely just in giving the mercy which no man can claim, and so just that through

eternal ages there shall never be found anew in his acts but the "Holy, Holy, Holy " God shall be hymned by the redeemed, and by cherubim and seraphim, and even the lost in hell shall be compelled to utter an involuntary bass to that dread song, "Holy Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabaoth."

Having thus tried to defend the justice of Election, I now turn to notice the truth of it. I may possibly have here some godly men who cannot receive this doctrine. Well, my friend, I am not angry with you for not being able to receive it, because no man can receive it unless it is given him from God; no Christian will ever rejoice in it unless he has been taught of the Spirit. But, after all, my brother, if you are a renewed man, you believe it. You are coming up-stairs to controvert with me. Come along, and I will allow you to controvert with yourself, and before five minutes have passed you will out of your own mouth prove my point. Come, my dear brother, you do not believe that God can justly give to some men more grace than to others. Very well. Let us kneel down and pray together; and you shall pray first. You no sooner begin to pray than you say, "O Lord, be pleased, in thy infinite mercy, to send thy Holy Spirit to save this congregation, and be pleased to bless my relatives according to the flesh." Stop! stop! you are asking God to do something which, according to your theory, is not right. You are asking him to give them more grace than they have got; you are asking him to do something special. Positively, you are pleading with God that he would give grace to your relatives and friends, and to this congregation. How do you make that to be light in your theory? If it would be unjust in God to give more grace to one man than to another, how very unjust in you to ask him to do it! If it is all left to man's free-will why do you beg the Lord to interfere? You cry, " Lord, draw them Lord, break their hearts, renew their spirits." Now, I very heartily use this prayer, but how can you do it, if you think it unrighteous in the Lord to endow this people with more grace than he does the rest of the human race. "Oh!" but you say, "I feel that it is right, and I will ask him." Very well; then, if it is right in you to ask, it must be right in him to give, it must be right in him to give mercy to men, and to some men such mercy that they may be constrained to be saved. You have thus proved my point, and I do not want a better proof. And now, my brother, we will have a song together, and we will see how we can get on

there. Open your hymn book, and you sing in the language of your Wesleyan hymn-book,

"Oh, yes, I do love Jesus
Because he first loved me."

There, brother, that is Calvinism. You have let it out again. You love Jesus because he first loved you. Well, how is it you come to love him while others are left not loving him? Is that to your honor or to his honor? You say, "It is to the praise of grace; let grace have the praise." Very well, brother; we shall get on very well, after all, for, although we may not agree in preaching, yet we agree, you see, in praying and praising. Preaching a few months ago in the midst of a large congregation of Methodists, the brethren were all alive, giving all kinds of answers to my sermon, nodding their heads and erring, "Amen!" "Hallelujah!" "Glory be to God!" and the like. They completely woke me up. My spirit was stirred, and I preached away with an unusual force and vigor; and the more I preached the more they cried, "Amen!" "Hallelujah!" "Glory be to God!" At last, a part of text led me to what is styled high doctrine. So I said, this brings me to the doctrine of Election. There was a deep drawing of breath. "Now, my friends, you believe it," they seemed to say. "No, we don't." But you do, and I will make you sing "Hallelujah!" over it. I will so preach it to you that you will acknowledge it and believe it. So I put it thus: Is there no difference between you and other men? "Yes, yes; glory be to God, glory!" There is a difference between what you were and what you are now? "Oh, yes! oh, yes!" There is sitting by your side a man who has been to the same chapel as you have, heard the same gospel, he is unconverted, and you are converted. Who has made the difference, yourself or God? "The Lord!" said they, "the Lord! glory! hallelujah!" Yes, cried I, and that is the doctrine of Election; that is all I contend for, that if there be a difference the Lord made the difference. Some good man came up to me and said, "Thou'rt right, lad! thou'rt right. I believe thy doctrine of Election; I do not believe it as it is preached by some people, but I believe that we must give the glory to God, we must put the crown on the right head." After all, there is an instinct in every Christian heart, that makes him receive the substance of this doctrine, even if he will not receive it in the peculiar form in which we put it. That is enough for me. I

do not care about the words or the phraseology, or the form of creed in which I may be in the habit of stating the doctrine. I do not want you to subscribe to my creed, but I do want you to subscribe to a creed that gives God the glory of His salvation. Every saint in heaven sings, "Grace has done it;" and I want every saint on earth to sing the same song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, to him be the glory for ever and ever." The prayers, the praises, the experience of those who do not believe this doctrine prove the doctrine better than anything I can say. I do not care to prove it better, and I leave it as it is.

II. We now turn to ELECTION IN ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES.

You will see that the precept is annexed to the doctrine: God has loved you above all people that are upon the face of the earth, therefore, "circumcise the foreskin of your hearts and be no more stiffnecked." It is whispered that Election is a licentious doctrine. Say it out loud, and then I will answer you. Election is a licentious doctrine! How do you prove it? It is my business to prove to you that it is the very reverse. "Well but," cries one, "I know a man that believes in Election and yet lives in sin." Yes, and I suppose that disproves it. So that if I can go through London and find any ragged drunken fellow, who believes a doctrine and lives in sin, the fact of his believing it disproves it. Singular logic, that! I will undertake to disprove any truth in the world if you only give me that to be my rule. Why, I can bring up some filthy, scurvy creature, that doubts the universal bounty of God. Then, I suppose that will disprove it. I might bring up to you some wretch that is lying in sin, who yet believes that if he were to cry "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner," from his heart, he would be saved, even though he was on his dying bed; I suppose his believing that, disproves it—does it? No! You know very well, though you use such logic as that against us, you would not use it against yourself. The fact is, that the bad lives or the good lives of some individuals cannot be taken as a proof either for or against any set of doctrines. There are holy men that are mistaken; there are unholy men who receive truth. That may be seen any day by any man who will candidly make the observation. If, however, any one sect were peculiarly full of ungodly professors and hypocrites, then would I admit the force of your argument. But I defy you to the proof. The men that have believed this

doctrine have been the wide world over—though perhaps, it is not my place to say it, except that I will glory in it as Paul did—have been the most zealous, most earnest, most holy men. Remember, sirs, ye that scoff at this doctrine. that ye owe your liberties to men who held it. Who carved out for England its liberties? I do not hesitate to give the palm to the strong arms of the Ironsides and the mighty will of Oliver Cromwell. But what made them dash to battle as they did but a firm belief that they were God's chosen ones, and could sweep everything before them, because the Lord their God was with them? It was said in Charles the Second's time that if you wanted to find believers in Arminianism, you could find them in every pot-house; but if you wanted to find those who believed the doctrine of grace you must no into the dungeons where the saints of God were shut up, because of the rigidity of their lives and the peculiar straitness of their conversation. Never were men more heavenly-minded than the Puritans; and what Puritan can you find that holds my other doctrine than that which I preach today? You may find some modern doctor who teaches the reverse, but march through centuries, and with few exceptions, where are the saints who denied the Election of God? The banner has been passed from one hand to the other. Martyrs died for it! they sealed the truth with their blood. And this truth shall stand when rolling years shall cease to move; this truth which shall be believed when every error and superstition shall crumble to the dust from which they sprang.

But I come back to my proof. It is laid down as a matter of theory that this doctrine is licentious. We oppose that theory. The fitness of things proves that it is not so. Election teaches that God hath chosen some to be kings and priests to God. When a man believes that he is chosen to be a king, would it be a legitimate inference to draw from it—"I am chosen to be a king, therefore I will be a beggar; I am chosen to sit upon a throne, therefore I will wear rags." Why, you would say, "There would be no argument, no sense in it." But there is quite as much sense in that as in your supposition, that God has chosen his people to be holy, and yet that a knowledge of this fact will make them unholy. No! the man, knowing that a peculiar dignity has been put upon him by God, feels working in his bosom a desire to live up to his dignity. "God has loved me more than others, says he; "then, will I love him more than others. He has put me

above the rest of mankind by his sovereign grace, let me live above them: let me be more holy: let me be more eminent in grace than any of them." If there be a man that can misuse the dignity of grace which Christ has given him, and pervert that into an argument for licentiousness, he is not to be found among us. He must be something less than man, fallen though man be, who would infer, from the fact that he has become a Son of God by God's free grace, that therefore he ought to live like a son of the devil; or, who should say, "Because God has ordained me to be holy, therefore I will be unholy." That were the strangest, oddest, most perverted most abominable reasoning that ever could be used. I do not believe there is a creature living that could be capable of using it.

Again, not only the fitness of things, but the thing itself proves that it is not so. Election is a separation. God has set apart him that is godly for himself, has separated a people out of the mass of mankind. Does that separation allow us to draw the inference thus:—"God has separated me, therefore, I will live as other men live." No! if I believe that God has distinguished me by his discriminating love, and separated me, then I hear the cry, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you." It were strange if the decree of separation should engender an unholy union. It cannot be. I deny, once for all in the name of all who hold the truth—I deny solemnly, as in the presence of God, that we have any thought that because God has separated us, therefore we ought to go and live as others live. No, God forbid. Our separation is a ground and motive for our separating altogether from sinners. I heard a man say once, "Sir, if I believed that doctrine I should live in sin." My reply to him was this, "I dare say YOU would! I dare say YOU would! " "And why," said he, "should I more than you?" Simply because you are a man, and I trust I am a new man in Christ Jesus. To man that is renewed by grace, there is no doctrine that could make him love sin. If a man by nature be as a swine that wallows in the mire, turn him into a sheep, and there IS no doctrine you can teach that can make him go and wallow in the mire again. His nature is changed. There is a raven transformed into a dove. I will give the dove to you, and you may teach it whatever you like, but that dove will not eat carrion any more. It cannot endure it: its nature is entirely changed. Here is a lion roaring for its prey. I will change it into a lamb; and I defy you to make

that lamb, by any doctrine, go and redden its lips with blood. It cannot do it—its nature is changed. A friend on board the steamboat, when we were coming across from Ireland, asked one of the sailors, "Would you like a nigger song?" "No," said he, "I do not like such things." "Would you like a dance?" "No," said he, "I have a religion that allows me to swear and be drunk as often as ever I please, and that is never: for I hate all such things with perfect hatred." Christian men keep from sin because their nature abhors sin. Do not imagine we are kept back from sin because we are terrified with threats of damnation, we have no fear, except the fear of offending our loving Father But we do not want to sin—our thirst is for holiness and not for vice. But if you have a kind of religion that always keeps you in restraint, so that you say, "I should like to go to the theater to-night if I dare,"—if that is what you say, depend upon it, your religion is not of much value. You must have a religion that makes you hate the thing you once loved, and love that which you once hated—a religion that draws you out of your old life and puts you into a new life. Now, if a man has a new nature, what doctrine of Election can make that new nature act contrary to its instincts? Teach the man what you will, that man will not turn again to vanity. The Election of God gives a new nature: so, even if the doctrine were dangerous, the new nature would keep it in check.

But once more, bring me hither the man—man shall I call him?—bring me the beast or devil that would say, "God has set his love upon me from before all worlds; my name is on Jesus' heart; he bought me with his blood; my sins are all forgiven; I shall see God's face with joy and acceptance, therefore, I hate God, therefore I live in sin." Bring me up the monster, I say, and when you have brought up such-an-one, even then I will not admit that there is reason in that vile lie, that damnable calumny, which you have cast upon this doctrine, that it makes men live in licentiousness. There is no truth that can so nerve a man to piety as the fact that he was chosen of God ere time begun. Loved by thee with an unlimited love that never moves, and that endures to the end—O my God! I desire to spend myself in thy service,

"Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all,"

and gratitude to God, for this rich mercy constrains us, compels us to walk in the fear of God, and to love and serve him all our lives.

Now, two lessons, and then I will send you away.

The first lesson is this: Christian men and women, chosen of God and ordained unto salvation, recollect that this is a doctrine everywhere spoken against. Do not hide it, do not conceal it, for remember Christ has said, "He that is ashamed of my words, of him will I be ashamed." But take care that you do not dishonor it. Be ye holy, even as he is holy. he has called you; stand by your calling, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Put on as the elect of God, bowels of compassion, holiness and love, and let the world see that God's chosen ones are made by grace the choicest of men, who live nearer to Christ, and are more like Christ, than and other people upon the face of the earth. And let me add to you, if the world sneers at you, you can look your enemy in the face and never tremble. For this is a degree of nobility, a patent of divine dignity which you never need blush for but which will keep you from ever being a coward, or bowing your knee before pomp and station, when they are associated with vice. This doctrine has never been liked, because it is a hammer against tyrants. Men have chosen their own elect ones, their kings, dukes, and earls, and God's election interferes with them. There are some that will not bow the knee to Baal, who hold themselves to be God's true aristocracy, who will not resign their consciences to the dictation of another. Men rail, and rave, and rage because this doctrine makes a good man strong in his loins, and will not let him bend his knee, or turn back and be a coward. Those Ironsides were made mighty because they held themselves to be no mean men. They bowed before God, but before men they, could not and would not bow. Stand fast, therefore, in this your liberty, and be not moved from the hope of your calling.

One other word of exhortation; it is the second lesson. There are some of you who are making an excuse out of the doctrine of Election, an excuse, an apology for your own unbelieving and wicked hearts. Now remember the doctrine of Election exercises no constraint whatever upon you. If you are wicked you are so because you will be so. If you reject the Savior you do so because you will do so. The doctrine does not make you reject him.

You may make it an excuse, but it is an idle one; it is a cobweb garment that will be rent away at the last day. I beseech you lay it aside, and remember that the truth with which you have to do is this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." If you believe, you are saved. If you trust Christ, be you who you may, or what you may, the wide world over, you are a saved man. Do not say, "I will not believe because I do not know whether I am elected." You cannot know that until you have believed. Your business is with believing. "Whosoever"—there is no limitation in it—"Whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved." You, as well as any other man. If you trust Christ, your sins shall be forgiven, your iniquities blotted out. O may the Holy Spirit breathe the new life into you. Bowing the knee, I beseech you, kiss the Son lest he be angry. Receive his mercy now, steel not your hearts against the gracious influence of his love; but yield to him, and you shall then find that you yielded because he made you yield; that you come to him because he drew you; and that he drew you because he had loved you with an everlasting love.

May God command his blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Election No Discouragement To Seeking Souls

I will be gracious upon whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy upon whom I will show mercy. - Exodus 33:19

Because God is the maker, and creator, and sustainer of all things, he has a right to do as he wills with all his works. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" God's absolute supremacy and unlimited sovereignty naturally flow from his omnipotence, and if it were not so, the superlative excellence of the divine character would entitle him to

absolute dominion. He should be chief who is best. He who cannot err, being perfect in wisdom; he who will not err, being as perfect in holiness; he who can do no wrong, being supremely just; he who must act in accordance with the principles of kindness, seeing he is essentially love, is the most fitting person to rule. Tell me not of the creatures ruling themselves: what a chaos were this! Talk not of a supposed republic of all created existences, controlling and guiding themselves. All the creatures put together, with their combined wisdom and goodness—if, indeed, it were not combined folly and wickedness—all these, I say, with all the excellencies of knowledge, judgment, and love, which the most fervid imagination can suppose them to possess, could not make the equal of that great God whose name is holiness, whose essence is love, to whom all power belongeth, and to whom alone wisdom is to be ascribed. Let him reign supreme, for he is infinitely superior to all other existences. Even if he did not actually reign, the suffrages of all wise men would choose the Lord Jehovah to be absolute monarch of the universe; and if he were not already King of kings and Lord of lords, doing as he wills among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of this lower world, it were the path of wisdom to lift him up to that throne. Since men have sinned, there becomes a yet further reason, or, rather a wider scope for the display of sovereignty. The creature, as a creature, may be supposed to have some claim upon the Creator; at least, it may expect that he shall not make it intentionally and despotically to put it to pain; that he shall not arbitrarily and without cause or necessity, cause its existence to be one of misery. I will not venture to judge the Lord, but I do think it is altogether incompatible with his goodness that he should have made a creature, and, as a creature, have condemned it to misery. Justice seems to demand that there shall be no punishment where there is no sin. But man has lost all his rights as a creature. If he ever had any, he has sinned them away. Our first parents have sinned, and we, their children, have attained ourselves, by high treason against our liege lord and sovereign. All that a just God owes to any one of us on the footing of our own claim, is wrath and displeasure. If he should give to us our due, we should not longer remain on praying ground, breathing the air of mercy. The creature, before its Creator, must now be silent as to any demands upon him; it cannot require anything of him as a matter of right. If the Lord willeth to show mercy, it shall be so; but, if he withholds it, who can call

him to account? "Can I not do as I will with mine own?" is a fit reply to all such arrogant enquiries; for man has sinned himself out of court, and there remains no right of appeal from the sentence of the Most High. Man is now in the position of a condemned criminal, whose only right is to be taken to the place of execution, and justly to suffer the due reward of his sins. Whatever difference of opinion, then, there might have been about the sovereignty of God as exercised upon creatures in the pure mass, there should be none, and there will be none, except in rebellious spirits, concerning the sovereignty of God over rebels who have sinned themselves into eternal ruin, and have lost all claim even to the mercy, much more the love of their offended Creator.

However, whether we all of us agree to the doctrine that God is sovereign or not, is a very little matter to him, for he is so. *De jure*, by right, he should be so; *de facto*, as matter of fact, he is so. It is a fact, concerning which you have only to open your eyes and see that God acts as a sovereign in the dispensation of his grace. Our Saviour, when he wished to quote instances of this, spake on this wise: many widows there were in Israel in the time of Elias the prophet, but unto none of these was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman who was a widow. Here was election! Elias is not sent to nourish and to be nourished by an Israelitish widow, but to a poor idolatress across the border, the blessing of the prophet's company is graciously granted. Again our Saviour says, "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, save only Naaman the Syrian"—not an Israelite at all, but one who bowed in the house of Rimmon. See how distinguishing grace finds out strange objects! Although our Saviour only gave these two instances, and no more, because they sufficed for his purpose, there are thousands of such cases on record. Look at man and the fallen angels. How is it that fallen angels are condemned to endless fire, and reserved in chains of darkness unto the great day? There is no Saviour for angels; no precious blood was ever shed for Satan. Lucifer falls, and falls for ever, never to hope again. There is no dispensation of mercy to those nobler spirits; but man who was made lower than the angels, is selected to be the object of divine redemption. What a great deep is here! This is a most illustrious and indisputable instance of the exercise of the prerogatives of divine sovereignty. Look again at the nations of the earth. Why is the

gospel preached today, to us Englishmen? We have committed as many offenses—I will even venture to say we have perpetrated as many political crimes as other nations. Our eye is always prejudiced toward everything which is English; but if we read our history fairly, we can discover in the past, and detect in the present, grave and serious faults which disgrace our national banner. To pass by as minor offenses the late barbarities in Japan, and our frequent wars of extermination in New Zealand, and at the Cape, let it crimson the cheek of every inhabitant of the British Isles when we do but hint at the opium traffic with China. Yet to us the gospel is graciously sent, so that few nations enjoy it so fully as we do. It is true that Prussia and Holland hear the Word, and that Sweden and Denmark are comforted by the truth, but their candle burns but dimly; it is a poor flickering lamp which cheers their darkness, while in our own dear land, partly from the fact of our religious liberty, and yet more graciously through the late revival, the sun of the gospel shines brightly, and men rejoice in the light of day. Why this? Why no grace for the Japanese? Why no gospel preached to the inhabitants of Central Africa? Why was not the truth of God displayed in the Cathedral of Santiago, instead of the mummeries and follies which disgraced both dupes and deceivers, and were the incidental cause of the horrible burnings of that modern Tophet? Why today is not Rome, instead of being the seat of the beast, become the throne of Jesus Christ? I cannot tell you. But assuredly, divine sovereignty passing by many races of men, has been pleased to pitch upon the Anglo-Saxon family, that they may be as the Jews were aforetime, the custodians of divine truth, and the favorites of mighty grace.

We need not further speak upon national elections, for the principle is plainly carried out in individuals. See ye anything, my brethren, in that rich publican whose coffers are gorged with the results of his extortion, when he climbs the sycamore-tree, that his short stature may not prevent his seeing the Saviour—see ye anything in him why the Lord of glory should halt beneath that sycamore-tree and say, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house?" Can you find me a reason why yonder adulterous woman, who has had five husbands, and who is now living with a man who is not her husband, should constrain the Saviour to journey through Samaria that he might tell her of the water

of life? If you can see anything, I cannot. Look at that bloodthirsty Pharisee, hurrying to Damascus with authority to hail men and women to prison, and shed their blood. The heat of midday cannot stop him, for his heart is hotter with religious rage than the sun with noontide rays. But see, he is arrested in his career, a brightness shines round about him; Jesus speaks from heaven the words of tender rebuke; and Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul, the apostle of God. Why? Wherefore? What answer can we give but this? "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Read the "Life of John Newton;" had he not ripened into the grossest of all villains? Turn to the history of John Bunyan, by his own confession the lowest of all blackguards, and tell me, can you find in either of these offenders any sort of reason why the Lord should have chosen them to be among the most distinguished heralds of the cross? No man in his senses will venture to assert that there was anything in Newton or Bunyan why they should engross the regard of the Most High. It was sovereignty, and nothing but sovereignty. Take your own case, dear friends, and that shall be the most convincing of all to you. If you know anything of your own heart, if you have formed a right estimate of your own character, if you have seriously considered your own position before the Most High, the reflection that God loveth you with an everlasting love, and that, therefore, with the bands of his kindness he has drawn you, will draw forth from you at once the exclamation, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for truth's sake." Brethren! the whole world is full of instances of divine sovereignty, for in every conversion some beam of the absolute dominion of God shines forth upon mankind.

When a sinner is anxiously disturbed about his soul's affairs, his chief and main thought should not be upon this subject; when a man would escape from wrath and attain to heaven, his first, his last, his middle thought should be the cross of Christ. As an awakened sinner, I have vastly less to do with the secret purposes of God, than with his revealed commands. For a man to say, "Thou commandest all men to repent, yet will I not repent, because I do not know that I am chosen to eternal life," is not only unreasonable, but exceedingly wicked. That it is unreasonable you will clearly see on a moment's reflection. I know that bread does not of itself nourish my body, "For man shall not live by bread alone, but by every

word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It depends, therefore, upon God's decree whether that bread shall nourish my body or not; for if he has not purposed that it shall, it may even choke me, and so become rather the cause of my death than the staff of my life. Do I therefore, when I am hungry, thrust my hands into my pockets and stand still, and refuse to help myself from the well-loaded table, because I do not know whether God has decreed that the bread shall nourish me or not? If I did, I should be an idiot or madman; or if in my senses, I should starve myself on such a pretence, I should richly deserve the burial of a suicide. I am not absolutely sure that there will be a harvest upon my field next year: unless God has ordained that the corn shall spring up and shall ripen, all my husbandry will be labor lost. There are worms in the earth, frosts in the air, birds in the sky, mildews in the winds—all of which may destroy my corn, and I may lose every single grain of the handful which I throw into my furrows. Shall I, therefore, leave my farm to be one perpetual fallow, because I do not know whether God has decreed that there shall be a harvest or not next year? If I become a bankrupt—if I am unable to pay my rent—if the thorn and the thistle grow taller and higher, and if at last, my landlord thrusts me from my tenancy, all that men will say, will be, "It serves him right!"—because I was such a fool as to make the secret purposes of God a matter of paramount consideration, instead of performing my known duty. I am ill and sick: a physician comes to me with medicine. I am not clear that his medicine will heal me; it has healed a great many others, but if God has decreed that I shall die, I shall die, let me take any quantity of physic, or take none at all. My arm mortifies, but I will not have it cut off, because I do not know whether God has decreed that I shall die of mortification or not. Who but a crazed idiot, or raving maniac, would talk thus? When I put the case in that light, you all reply, "Nobody ever talks in that way; it is too absurd." Of course, nobody does. And the fact is, even in the things of God, nobody really does argue in that way. A man may say, "I will not believe in Christ, because I am afraid I am not elected;" but the thing is so stupid, so absurd, that I do not believe that any man, not absolutely demented, can be so grossly foolish as to believe in his own reasoning. I am far rather inclined to think that is a wicked and perverse method of endeavoring to stultify conscience, on the theory that a bad excuse is better than none, and that even a foolish argument is better than having one's mouth shut in speechless confusion.

But since men will everlastingly be getting to his point, and there are so many who are always giving this as a reason why they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, because, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," I shall try, this morning, to talk with these people on their own ground; and I shall endeavor, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to show that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, so far from discouraging anybody, has not in it, if regarded aright, any sort of discouragement whatever, for any souls believing in Jesus Christ.

For one moment let me detain you from my object, while I reply to a very common method of misrepresenting the doctrine. It may be as well to start with a clear idea of what the doctrine really is. Our opponents put the case thus: suppose a father should condemn some of his children to extreme misery, and make others supremely happy, out of his own arbitrary will, would it be right and just? Would it not be brutal and detestable? My answer is, of course, it would; it would be execrable in the highest degree, and far, very far be it from us to impute such a course of action to the Judge of all the earth. But the case stated is not at all the one under consideration, but one as opposite from it as light from darkness. Sinful man is not now in the position of a well-deserving or innocent child, neither does God occupy the place of a complacent parent. We will suppose another case far nearer the mark, indeed, it is no supposition, but an exact description of the whole matter. A number of criminals, guilty of the most aggravated and detestable crimes, are righteously condemned to die, and die they must, unless the king shall exercise the prerogative vested in him, and give them a free pardon. If for good and sufficient reasons, known only to himself, the king chooses to forgive a certain number, and to leave the rest for execution, is there anything cruel or unrighteous here? If, by some wise means, the ends of justice can be even better answered by the sparing of the pardoned ones, than by their condemnation, while at the same time, the punishment of some tends to honor the justice of the lawgiver, who shall dare to find fault? None, I venture to say, but those who are the enemies of the state and of the king. And so may we well ask, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his

power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" Who is he that shall impugn the mingled mercy and severity of heaven, or make the eternal God an offender, because "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy?" Let us now proceed to our proper subject, and endeavor to clear this truth from the terrors supposed to cluster around it.

I. Let us begin with this assertion, which we are absolutely sure is correct: **THIS DOCTRINE DOES NOT OPPOSE ANY COMFORT DERIVED FROM OTHER SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS.**

This doctrine, stern as it may seem to be, does not oppose the consolation which may be rightly derived from any other truth of revelation. Those who hold the free-will theory, say that our doctrine, that salvation is of the Lord alone, and that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, takes away from man the comfort derivable from God's goodness. God is good, infinitely good in his nature. God is love; he willeth not the death of any, but had rather that all should come to repentance. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." Our friends very properly insist upon it that God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; that the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy; let me assure them that we shall never quarrel on these points, for we also rejoice in the same facts. Some of you have listened to my voice for these ten years: I ask you whether you have heard me utter a single sentence which at all contradicts the doctrine of God's great goodness? You may have so construed it by mistake, but no such teaching has passed my lip. Do I not, again and again, assert the universal benevolence of God—the infinite and overflowing goodness of the heart of the Most High? If any man can preach upon the great text, "God is love," though I may not be able to preach with the same eloquence, I will venture to view with him in the decision, heartiness, delight, earnestness, and plainness, with which he may expound his theme, be he who he may, or what he may. There is not the slightest shadow of a conflict between

God's sovereignty and God's goodness. He may be a sovereign, and yet it may be absolutely certain that he will always act in the way of goodness and love. It is true that he will do as he wills; and yet it is quite certain that he always wills to do that which, in the widest view of it, is good and gracious. If the sons of sorrow fetch any comfort from the goodness of God, the doctrine of election will never stand in their way. Only mark, it does with a two-edged sword cut to pieces that false confidence in God's goodness which sends so many souls to hell. We have heard dying men singing themselves into the bottomless pit with this lullaby, "Yes, sir, I am a sinner, but God is merciful; God is good." Ah! dear friends, let such remember that God is just as well as good, and that he will by no means spare the guilty, except through the great atonement of his Son Jesus Christ. The doctrine of election, in a most blessedly honest manner does come in, and breaks the neck, once for all, of all this false and groundless confidence in the uncovenanted mercy of God. Sinner, you have no right to trust to the goodness of God out of Christ. There is no word in the whole Book of Inspiration, which gives the shadow of a hope to the man who will not believe in Jesus Christ. It says of him, "He that believeth not shall be damned." It declares of you, who are resting upon such a poor confidence as the unpromised favor of heaven, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the righteous." If this be an evil to rob you of a false refuge, the doctrine of election certainly does this; but from the comfort properly derivable from the largest view of God's bounteous goodness and unlimited love, election does not detract a single grain.

Much comfort, too, flows to a troubled conscience from the promise that God will hear prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you, for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." If you ask anything of God in the name of Jesus Christ, you shall receive it. Now, there are some who imagine that they must not pray because they do not know whether they are God's chosen people. If you refuse to pray on the ground of such bad reasoning as this, you must do so at your own expense; but do mark our solemn assurance, for which we have God's warrant, that there is nothing in the sovereignty of God which at all militates against the great truth, that every sincerely seeking soul,

craving divine grace by humble prayer through Jesus Christ, shall be a finder. There may be an Arminian brother here who would like to get into this pulpit and preach the cheering truth, that God hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain. We not only accord him full liberty to preach this doctrine, but we will go as far as he can, and perhaps a little further, in the enunciation of that truth. We cannot perceive any discrepancy between personal election and the prevalence of prayer. Let those who can, vex their brains with the task of reconciling them; to us the wonder is how a man can believe the one without the other. Firmly must I believe that the Lord God will show mercy to whom he will show mercy, and have compassion on whom he will have compassion; but I know as assuredly that wherever there is a genuine prayer, God gave it; that wherever there is a seeker, God made him seek; consequently if God has made the man seek and made the man pray, there is evidence at once of divine election; and the fact stands true that none seek who shall not find.

Very much comfort also is supposed to be derived, and naturally so, from the free invitations of the gospel. "Ah," cries one, "what a sweet thing it is that the Saviour cried, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' How delightful to read such a word as this, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,' Sir, my heart is encouraged when I find it written, 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' But, sir, I dare not come because of the doctrine of election." My dear hearer, I would not say anything harshly to you, but I must express my conviction that this is nothing but an idle excuse for not doing what you have no mind to do; because invitations of the most general character, nay, invitations which shall be universal in their scope, are perfectly consistent with the election of God. I have preached here, you know it, invitations as free as those which proceeded from the lips of Master John Wesley. Van Armin himself, the founder of the Arminian school, could not more honestly have pleaded with the very vilest of the vile to come to Jesus than I have done. Have I therefore felt in my mind that there was a contradiction here? No, nothing of the kind; because I know it to be my duty to sow beside all waters, and like the sower in the parable, to scatter

the seed upon the stony ground, as well as upon the good land, knowing that election does not narrow the gospel call which is universal, but only affects the effectual call, which is and must be from the Spirit of God. My business is to give the general call, the Holy Spirit will see to its application to the chosen. O my dear hearers, God's invitations are honest invitations to every one of you. He invites you; in the words of the parable he addresses, "All things are ready; come ye to the supper, my oxen and my fatlings are killed." Nay, he saith to his ministers, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." Though he foreknows who will come in, and has before all worlds ordained who shall taste of that supper, yet the invitation in its widest possible range, is a true and honest one; and if you accept it you shall find it so.

Furthermore, if we understand the gospel at all, the gospel lies in a nutshell. It is this:—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Or, to use Christ's words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." This promise is the gospel. Now, the gospel is true, whatever else may be false. Whatever doctrine may or may not be of God, the gospel certainly is. The doctrine of sovereign grace is not contrary to the gospel, but perfectly consonant therewith. God has a people whom no man shall number, whom he hath ordained unto eternal life. This is, by no means, in conflict with the great declaration, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." If any man who ever lived, or ever shall live, believes in Jesus Christ, he hath eternal life. Election or no election, if you are resting upon the rock of ages you are saved. If you, as a guilty sinner, take the righteousness of Christ—if all black, and foul, and filthy, you come to wash in the fountain filled with blood, sovereignty or no sovereignty, rest assured of this, that you are redeemed from the wrath to come. O my dear friends, when you say, "I will not believe in Christ because of election," I can only say as Job did to his wife, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh." How dare you, because God reveals to you two things, which two things you cannot make square with one another—how dare you charge either the one or the other with being false? If I believe God, I am not only to believe what I can understand, but what I cannot understand; and if there were a revelation which I could comprehend and sum up as I may count five upon my fingers, I should be sure it did not come from God. But if it has

some depths vastly too deep for me—some knots which I cannot untie—some mysteries which I cannot solve—I receive it with the greater confidence, because it now gives me swimming-room for my faith, and my soul bathes herself in the great sea of God's wisdom, praying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Let it be said over and over again, that there shall be no doubt about this matter, that if there be any comfort derivable from the gospel; if there be any sweet consolation flowing from the free invitations and the universal commands of divine truth, all those may be received and enjoyed by you, while you hold this doctrine of divine sovereignty as much as if you did not hold it, and received some wider scheme. Methinks I hear one voice say, "Sir, the only comfort I can ever have lies in the infinite value of the precious blood of Christ; O sir, it seems to me such a sweet thing that there is no sinner so black that Christ cannot wash away his sins, and no sinner so old that the meritorious virtue of that atonement cannot meet his case—not one in any rank or in any condition whom that blood cannot cleanse from all sin. Now, sir, if that be true, how can the doctrine of election be true?" My dear friend, you know in your own heart that the two things are not opposed to each other at all. For what does the doctrine of election say? It says that God has chosen and has saved some of the greatest sinners who ever lived, has cleansed some of the foulest sins ever committed, and that he is doing and will do the same to the world's end. So that the two things exactly tally. And I will venture to say that if in the fulness of a man's heart he shall say, "There is no sin except the one excepted sin, which cannot be forgiven," if he boldly announce that "All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto men," and if he shall plead with power and earnestness that souls would now come to Christ and lay hold upon eternal life, he may go back to his Bible, and he may read every text teaching the sovereignty of God, and every passage upholding divine election; and he may feel that all these texts look him in the face, and say, "Well done, our spirit and your spirit are precisely the same; we have no conflict together; we are two great truths which came from the same God; we are alike the revelation of the Holy Ghost." But we leave that point. If there be any comfort, sinner, which you can truthfully and rightly get from any passage of Scripture, from any promise of God, from any invitation, from any open door of mercy, you may have it, for the doctrine

of election does not rob you of one atom of the consolation which the truth of God can afford you.

II. But now will take another point for a moment. Our second head is, that THIS DOCTRINE HAS A MOST SALUTARY EFFECT UPON SINNERS. These may be divided into two classes: those who are awakened, and those who are hardened and incorrigible.

To the awakened sinner, next to the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of distinguishing grace is perhaps the most fraught with blessings and comfort. In the first place, the doctrine of election, applied by the Holy Ghost, strikes dead for ever all the efforts of the flesh. It is the end of Arminian preaching to make men active, to excite them to do what they can; but the very end and object of gospel preaching is to make men feel that they have no power of their own, and to lay them as dead, at the foot of God's throne. We seek, under God, to make them feel that all their strength must lie in the Strong One who is mighty to save. If I can convince a man that, let him do what he may, he cannot save himself; if I can show him that his own prayers and tears can never save him apart from the Spirit of God; if I can convince him that he must be born again from above; if I lead him to see that all which is born of the flesh is flesh, and only that which is born of the spirit is spirit, brethren! three parts of the great battle are already won. "I kill and I make alive," saith God: "when a man is killed the work is half done." "I wound and I heal: when a man is wounded his salvation is commenced." What! am I to set a sinner industriously to labor after eternal life by his own works? Then, indeed, am I an ambassador of hell. Am I to teach him that there is a goodness in him which he is to evolve, to polish, and educate and perfect, and so to save himself? Then I am a teacher of the beggarly elements of the law and not the gospel of Christ. Are we to set forth man's prayers, repentings, and humblings as the way of salvation; if so, let us renounce the righteousness of Christ at once, for the two will never stand together! I am a mischief-maker if I excite the activities of the flesh instead of pointing to the arms of the Redeemer! But if the potent hammer of electing sovereignty dashes out the brains of all a man's works, merits, doings, and willings, while it pronounces over the dead carcass this sentence: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of

God that showeth mercy;" then, the best thing is done for a sinner that can be done as a stepping-stone to the act of faith. When a man is weaned from self, and totally delivered from looking to the flesh for help, there is hope for him: and this the doctrine of divine sovereignty does through the Holy Spirit's power.

Again, this doctrine gives the greatest hope to the really awakened sinner. You know how the case stands. We are all prisoners condemned to die. God, as sovereign, has a right to pardon whom he pleases. Now, imagine a number of us shut up in a condemned cell, all guilty. One of the murderers says within himself: "I know that I have no reason to expect to be delivered. I am not rich: if I had some rich relations, like George Townley, I might be found insane, and delivered. But I am very poor; I am not educated. If I had the education of some men I might expect some consideration. I am not a man of rank and position; I am a man without merit or influence, therefore I cannot expect that I should be selected as one to be saved." No, I believe that if the present authorities of our land were the persons to be taken into consideration, a man who was poor might have a very poor chance of expecting any gratuitous deliverance. But when God is the great sovereign the case is different. For then, we argue thus: "Here am I; my salvation depends entirely upon the will of God: is there a chance for me? We take down a list of those whom he has saved, and we find that he saves the poor, the illiterate, the wicked, the godless, and the worst of the worst, the base things, and things that are despised. Well, what do we say? Then, why may he not choose me? Why not save me? If I am to look for some reason in myself why I should be saved, I shall never find any, and consequently never shall have a hope. But if I am to be saved for no reason at all but that God wills to save me, ah! then there is hope for me. I will to the gracious King approach, I will do as he bids me, I will trust in his dear Son, and I shall be saved." So that this doctrine opens the door of hope to the worst of the worst, and the only persons it discourages are the Pharisees, who say: "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are"—those proud, haughty spirits who say: "No! if I am not to be saved for something good in myself, then I will be damned!" as damned they will be with a vengeance, too.

Moreover, do not you see, dear friends, how the doctrine of election

comforts the sinner in the matter of power. His complaint is, "I find I have no power to believe; I have no spiritual power of any kind." Election stoops down and whispers in his ear—"But if God wills to save you, he gives the power, gives the life, and gives the grace; and therefore since he has given that power and might to others as weak as you, why not to you? Have courage, look to the cross of Christ and live." And oh! what emotions of gratitude, what throbbings of love does this doctrine cause in human hearts. "Why," saith the man, "I am saved simply because God would save me, not because I deserved it, but because his loving heart would save me; then, I will love him, I will live to him, I will spend and be spent for him." Such a man cannot be proud, I mean not consistently with the doctrine. He lies humbly at God's feet. Other men may boast of what they are, and how they have own eternal life by their own goodness, but I cannot. If God had left me, I had been in hell with others; and if I go to heaven, I must cast my crown at the feet of the grace which brought me there. Such a man will become kind to others. He will hold his opinions, but he will not hold them savagely, nor teach them bitterly, because he will say, "If I have light, and others have not, my light was given me from God, therefore, I have no cause to plume myself upon it. I will try to spread that light, but not by anger and abuse. For why should I blame those who cannot see, for could I have seen if God had not opened my blind eyes?" Every virtue this doctrine fosters, and every vice it kills, when the Holy Spirit so uses it. Pride it treads under foot, and humble, trustful confidence in the mercy of God in Christ, it cherishes as a darling child.

My time is gone; but I wanted to have said a word as to the effect of this gospel upon incorrigible sinners. I will just say this: I know what the effect of it ought to be. What do you say who have made up your minds not to repent, you who care not for God? Why, you believe that any day you like you can turn to God, since God is merciful, and will save you; and therefore, you walk about the world as comfortably as possible, thinking it all depends upon you, and that you will get into heaven just at the eleventh hour. Ah! man, that is not your case. See where you are. Do you see that moth fluttering in my hand! Imagine it to be there. With this finger of mine I can crush it—in a moment. Whether it shall live or not depends absolutely upon whether I choose to crush it or let it go. That is

precisely your position at the present moment. God can damn you now. Nay, let us say to you, "Yours is a worse position than that." There are some seven persons now doomed for murder and piracy on the high seas. You can clearly say that their lives depend upon Her Majesty's pleasure. If Her Majesty chooses to pardon them she can. If not, when the fatal morning comes, the bolt will be drawn and they will be launched into eternity. That is your case, sinner. You are condemned already. This world is but one huge condemned cell in which you are kept, until the execution morning comes. If you are ever to be pardoned, God must do it. You cannot escape from him by flight; you cannot bribe him by actions of your own. You are absolutely in the hand of God, and if he leaves you where you are and as you are, your eternal ruin is as certain as your existence. Now, does not this make some sort of trembling come upon you? Perhaps not; it makes you angry. Well, if it does, that will not frighten me, because there are some of you who will never be good for anything until you are angry. I believe it is no ill sign when some persons are angry with the truth. It shows that the truth has pierced them. If an arrow penetrates my flesh, I do not like the arrow, and if you kick and struggle against this truth, it will not alarm me; I shall have some hope that a wound is made. If this truth should provoke you to think, it will have done for some of you one of the greatest things in the world. It is not your perverse thinking which frightens me; it is the utterly thoughtless way in which you go on. If you had sense enough to consider these things and fight against them, I should then have some faint hope of you. But alas! many of you have not sense enough, you say, "Yes, yes, it is all true," you accept it, but then it has no effect upon you. The gospel rolls over you, like oil adown a slab of marble, and produces no effect.

If you are at all right in heart, you will begin to see what your state is, and the next thing that will startle your mind will be the reflection: "Is it so? am I absolutely in God's hands? can he save me or damn me as he will? Then, I will cry to him, 'O God, save me from the wrath to come—from eternal torment—from banishment from thy presence. Save me, O God! What wouldst thou have me to do? Oh! what wouldst thou have me to do, that I may find thy favor and live?'" Then comes the answer to you:—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved;" for "whosoever believeth in him shall never perish, but shall have eternal

life."

O that God might bless this divine doctrine to you. I have never preached this doctrine without conversions, and I believe I never shall. At this moment God will cause his truth to attract your hearts to Jesus, or to affright you to him. May you be drawn as the bird is drawn by the lure, or may you be driven as a dove is hunted by the hawk into the clefts of the rock. Only may you be sweetly compelled to come. May my Lord fulfill this desire of my heart. O that God may grant me your souls for my hire; and to him shall be the glory, world without end. Amen.

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Elijah's Appeal To The Undecided

How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him. - 1 Kings 18:21

It was a day to be remembered, when the multitudes of Israel were assembled at the foot of Carmel and when the solitary prophet of the Lord came forth to defy the four hundred and fifty priests of the false god. We might look upon that scene with the eye of historical curiosity, and we should find it rich with interest. Instead of doing so, however, we shall look upon it with the eye of attentive consideration, and see whether we can not improve by its teachings. We have upon that hill of Carmel, and along the plain, three kinds of persons. We have first the devoted servant of Jehovah, a solitary prophet; we have, on the other hand, the decided servants of the evil one, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal; but the vast mass of that day belonged to a third class—they were those who had not fully determined whether fully to worship Jehovah, the God of their fathers, or Baal, the god of Jezebel. On the one hand, their ancient traditions led them to fear Jehovah, and on the other hand, their interest at court led them to bow before Baal. Many of them therefore, were secret and half-hearted followers of Jehovah, while they were the public

worshippers of Baal. The whole of them at this juncture were halting between two opinions. Elijah does not address his sermon to the priests of Baal; he will have something to say to them by-and-by, he will preach them horrible sermons in deeds of blood. Nor has he aught to say to those who are the thorough servants of Jehovah, for they are not there; but his discourse is alone directed to those who are halting between two opinions.

Now, we have these three classes here this morning. We have, I hope, a very large number who are on Jehovah's side, who fear God and serve him; we have a number who are on the side of the evil one, who make no profession of religion, and do not observe even the outward symptoms of it; because they are both inwardly and outwardly the servants of the evil one. But the great mass of my hearers belong to the third class—the waverers. Like empty clouds they are driven hither and thither by the wind; like painted beauties, they lack the freshness of life; they have a name to live and are dead. Procrastinators, double-minded men, undecided persons, to you I speak this morning—"How long halt ye between two opinions?" May the question be answered by God's Spirit in your hearts, and may you be led to say, "No longer, Lord, do I halt; but this day I decide for thee, and am thy servant for ever!"

Let us proceed at once to the text. Instead of giving the divisions at the commencement, I will mention them one by one as I proceed.

I. First, you will note that the prophet insisted upon the distinction which existed between the worship Baal and the worship of Jehovah. Most of the people who were before him thought that Jehovah was God, and that Baal was God too; and that for this reason the worship of both was quite consistent. The great mass of them did not reject the God of their fathers wholly, nor did they bow before Baal wholly; but as polytheists, believing in many gods, they thought both Gods might be worshiped, and each of them have a share in their hearts. "No," said the prophet when he began, "this will not do, these are two opinions; you can never make them one, they are two contradictory things which can not be combined. I tell you that instead of combining the two, which is impossible, you are halting between the two, which makes a vast difference." "I will build in my

house," said one of them, "an altar for Jehovah here, and an altar for Baal there. I am of one opinion; I believe them both to be God." "No, no," said Elijah, "it can not be so; they are two, and must be two. These things are not one opinion, but two opinions No, you can not unite them." Have I not many here who say, "I am worldly, but I am religious too; I can go to the Music Hall to worship God on Sunday; I went to the Derby races the other day: I go, on the one hand, to the place where I can serve my lusts; I am to be met with in every dancing room of every description, and yet at the same time I say my prayers most devoutly. May I not be a good churchman, or a right good dissenter, and a man of the world too? May I not, after all, hold with the hounds as well as run with the hare? May I not love God and serve the devil too—take the pleasure of each of them, and give my heart to neither? We answer—Not so, they are two opinions; you can not do it, they are distinct and separate. Mark Anthony yoked two lions to his chariot; but there are two lions no man ever yoked together yet—the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the pit. These can never go together. Two opinions you may hold in politics, perhaps, but then you will be despised by every body, unless you are of one opinion or the other, and act as an independent man. But two opinions in the matter of soul-religion you can not hold. If God be God, serve him, and do it thoroughly; but if this world be God, serve it, and make no profession of religion. If you are a worldling, and think the things of the world the best, serve them; devote yourself to them, do not be kept back by conscience; spite your conscience, and run into sin. But remember, if the Lord be your God, you can not have Baal too; you must have one thing or else the other. "No man can serve two masters." If God be served, he will be a master; and if the devil be served he will not be long before he will be a master; and "ye can not serve two masters." O! be wise, and think not that the two can be mingled together. How many a respectable deacon thinks that he can be covetous, and grasping in business, and grind the faces of the poor, and yet be a saint! O! liar to God and to man! He is no saint; he is the very chief of sinners! How many a very excellent woman, who is received into church fellowship among the people of God, and thinks herself one of the elect, is to be found full of wrath and bitterness, a slave of mischief and of sin, a tattler, a slanderer, a busybody; entering into other people's houses, and turning every thing like comfort out of the minds of those with whom she comes in contact—and yet she is the

servant of God and of the devil too! Nay, my lady this will never answer; the two never can be served thoroughly. Serve your master, whoever he be. If you do profess to be religious, be so thoroughly; if you make any profession to be a Christian, be one; but if you are no Christian, do not pretend to be. If you love the world, then love it; but cast off the mask, and do not be a hypocrite. The double-minded man is of all men the most despicable; the follower of Janus, who wears two faces, and who can look with one eye upon the (so-called) Christian world with great delight, and give his subscription to the Tract Society, the Bible Society, and the Missionary Society, but who has another eye over there, with which he looks at the Casino, the Coal-hole, and other pleasures, which I do not care to mention, but which some of you may know more of than I wish to know. Such a man, I say, is worse than the most reprobate of men, in the opinion of any one who knows how to judge. Not worse in his open character, but worse really, because he is not honest enough to go through with that he professes. And how many such are there in London, in England; everywhere else! They try to serve both masters; but it can not be; the two things can not be reconciled; God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, these never can meet; there never can be an agreement between them, they never can be brought into unity, and why should you seek to do it? "Two opinions," said the prophet. He would not allow any of his hearers to profess to worship both. "No," said he, "these are two opinions, and you are halting between the two."

II. In the second place, the prophet calls these waverers to an account for the amount of time which they had consumed in making their choice. Some of them might have replied, "We have not had yet an opportunity of judging between God and Baal; we have not yet had time enough to make up our minds;" but the prophet puts away that objection, and he says, "How long halt ye between two opinions? How long? For three years and a half not a drop of rain has fallen at the command of Jehovah; is not that proof enough? Ye have been all this time, three years and a half expecting, till I should come, Jehovah's servant, and give you rain; and yet, though you yourselves are starving, your cattle dead, your fields parched, and your meadows covered with dust, like the very deserts, yet all this time of judgment, and trial and affliction, has not been enough for you to make up your minds. "How long then," said he, "halt ye between

two opinions?"

I speak not, this morning, to the thoroughly worldly; with them I have now nothing to do; another time I may address them. But I am now speaking to you who are seeking to serve God and to serve Satan; you who are trying to be Christian worldlings, trying to be members of that extraordinary corporation, called the "religious world," which is a thing that never had an existence except in title. You are endeavoring, if you can, to make up your mind which it shall be; you know you can not serve both, and you are coming now to the period when you are saying, "Which shall it be? Shall I go thoroughly into sin, and revel in the pleasures of the earth, or become a servant of God?" Now, I say to you this morning, as the prophet did, "How long halt ye?" Some of you have been halting until your hair has grown gray; the sixtieth year of some of you is drawing nigh. Is not sixty years long enough to make up your choice? "How long halt ye?" Perhaps one of you may have tottered into this place, leaning on his staff, and you have been undecided up till now. Your eightieth year has come; you have been a religious character outwardly, but a worldling truly; you are still up to this date halting, saying, "I know not on which side to be." How long, sirs, in the name of reason, in the name of mortality, in the name of death, in the name of eternity, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Ye middle-aged men, ye said when ye were youths, "When we are out of our apprenticeship we will become religious; let us sow our wild oats in our youth, and let us then begin to be diligent servants of the Lord." Lo! ye have come to middle age, and are waiting till that quiet villa shall be built, and ye shall retire from business, and then ye think ye will serve God. Sirs, ye said that same when ye came of age, and when your business began to increase. I therefore solemnly demand of you, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" How much time do you want? O! young man, thou saidst in thine early childhood, when a mother's prayer followed thee, "I will seek God when I come to manhood;" and thou hast passed that day; thou art a man, and more than that, and yet thou art halting still. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" How many of you have been churchgoers and chapel-goers for years! Ye have been impressed, too, many a time, but ye have wiped the tears from your eyes, and have said, "I will seek God and turn to him with full purpose of heart;" and you are now just where you were. How many

sermons do you want? How many more Sundays must roll away wasted? How many warnings, how many sicknesses, how many tollings of the bell to warn you that you must die? How many graves must be dug for your family before you will be impressed? How many plagues and pestilences must ravage this city before you will turn to God in truth? "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Would God ye could answer this question, and not allow the sands of life to drop, drop, drop from the glass saying, "When the next goes I will repent," and yet that next one findeth you impenitent. You say, "When the glass is just so low, I will turn to God." No, sir, no; it will not answer for you to talk so; for thou mayest find thy glass empty before thou thoughtest it bad begun to run low, and thou mayest find thyself in eternity when thou didst but think of repenting and turning to God. How long, ye gray heads, how long, ye men of ripe years, how long, ye youths and maidens, how long will ye be in this undecided, unhappy state? "How long halt ye between two opinions?"

Thus we have brought you so far. We have noted that there are two opinions, and we have asked the question, How long time you want to decide? One would think the question would require very little time, if time were all; if the will were not biassed to evil and contrary to good, it would require no more time than the decision of a man who has to choose a halter or life, wealth or poverty; and if we were wise, it would take no time at all; if we understood the things of God, we should not hesitate, but say at once, "Now God is my God, and that for ever."

III. But the prophet charges these people with the absurdity of their position. Some of them said, "What! prophet, may we not continue to halt between two opinions? We are not desperately irreligious, so we are better than the profane, certainly we are not thoroughly pious; but, at any rate, a little piety is better than none, and the mere profession of it keeps us decent, let us try both!" "Now," says the prophet, "how long halt ye?" or, if you like to read it so, "how long limp ye between two opinions?" (How long wriggle ye between two opinions? would be a good word, if I might employ it.) He represents them as like a man whose legs are entirely out of joint; he first goes on one side, and then on the other, and can not go far either way. I could not describe it without putting myself into a most ludicrous posture. "How long limp ye between two opinions?"

The prophet laughs at them, as it were. And is it not true, that a man who is neither one thing or another is in a most absurd position? Let him go among the worldlings; they laugh under their sleeve, and say, "This is one of the Exeter Hall saints," or, "That is one of the elect." Let him go among the Christian people, those that are saints, and they say, "How a man can be so inconsistent, how he can come into our midst one day, and the next be found in such and such society, we can not tell." Methinks even the devil himself must laugh at such a man in scorn. "There," says he, "I am every thing that is bad; I do sometimes pretend to be an angel of light, and put on that garb; but you do really excell me in every respect, for I do it to get something by it, but you do not get any thing by it. You do not have the pleasures of this world, and you do not have the pleasures of religion either; you have the fears of religion without its hopes; you are afraid to do wrong, and yet you have no hope of heaven; you have the duties of religion without the joys; you have to do just as religious people do, and yet there is no heart in the matter; you have to sit down, and see the table all spread before you, and then you have not power to eat a single morsel of the precious dainties of the gospel." It is just the same with the world; you dare not go into this or that mischief that brings joy to the wicked man's heart; you think of what society would say. We do not know what to make of you. I might describe you, if I might speak as the Americans do but I will not. Ye are half one thing, and half the other. You come into the society of the saints, and try to talk as they talk; but you are like a man who has been taught French in some day-school in England; he makes a queer sort of Frenchified English, and Englishized French, and every one laughs at him. The English laugh at him for trying to do it, and the French laugh at him for failing in it. If you spoke your own language, if you just spoke out as a sinner, if you professed to be what you are, you would at least get the respect of one side; but now you are rejected by one class, and equally rejected by the other. You come into our midst, we can not receive you; you go amongst worldlings, they reject you too; you are too good for them, and too bad for us. Where are you to be put? If there were a purgatory, that would be the place for you; where you might be tossed on the one side into ice, and on the other into the burning fire, and that for ever. But as there is no such place as purgatory, and as you really are a servant of Satan, and not a child of God, take heed, take heed, how long you stay in a position so absurdly ridiculous. At the

day of judgment, wavering men will be the scoff and the laughter even of hell. The angels will look down in scorn upon the man who was ashamed to own his Master thoroughly, while hell itself will ring with laughter. When that grand hypocrite shall come there—that undecided man, they will say, "Aha! we have to drink the dregs, but above them there were sweets; you have only the dregs. You dare not go into the riotous and boisterous mirth of our youthful days, and now you have come here with us to drink the same dregs; you have the punishment without the pleasure." O! how foolish will even the damned call you, to think that you halted between two opinions! "How long limp ye, wriggle ye, walk ye in an absurd manner, between two opinions?" In adopting either opinion, you would at least be consistent; but in trying to hold both, to seek to be both one and the other, and not knowing which to decide upon, you are limping between two opinions. I think a good translation is a very different one from that of the authorized version—"How long hop ye upon two sprays?" So the Hebrew has it. Like a bird, which perpetually flies from bough to bough, and is never still. If it keeps on doing this, it will never have a nest. And so with you: you keep leaping between two boughs, from one opinion to the other; and so between the two, you get no rest for the sole of your foot, no peace, no joy, no comfort, but are just a poor miserable thing all your life long.

IV. We have brought you thus far, then; we have shown you the absurdity of this halting. Now, very briefly, the next point in my text is this. The multitude who had worshiped Jehovah and Baal, and who were now undecided, might reply, "But how do you know that we do not believe that Jehovah is God? How do you know we are not decided in opinion?" The prophet meets this objection by saying, "I know you are not decided in opinion, because you are not decided in practice. If God be God, follow him; if Baal, follow him. You are not decided in practice." Men's opinions are not such things as we imagine. It is generally said now-a-days, that all opinions are right, and if a man shall honestly hold his convictions, he is, without doubt, right. Not so; truth is not changed by our opinions; a thing is either true or false of itself, and it is neither made true nor false by our views of it. It is for us, therefore, to judge carefully, and not to think that any opinion will do. Besides, opinions have influence upon the conduct, and if a man have a wrong opinion, he will, most likely, in some way or

other, have wrong conduct, for the two usually go together. "Now," said Elijah, "that you are not the servants of God, is quite evident, for you do not follow him; that you are not thoroughly servants of Baal either, is quite evident, for you do not follow him." Now I address myself to you again. Many of you are not the servants of God; you do not follow him; you follow him a certain distance in the form, but not in the spirit; you follow him on Sundays; but what do you do on Mondays? You follow him in religious company, in evangelical drawing-rooms, and so on; but what do you do in other society? You do not follow him. And, on the other hand, you do not follow Baal; you go a little way with the world, but there is a place to which you dare not go; you are too respectable to sin as others sin or to go the whole way of the world. Ye dare not go to the utmost lengths of evil. "Now," says the prophet, twithing them upon this—"if the Lord be God, follow him. Let your conduct be consistent with your opinions; if you believe the Lord to be God, carry it out in your daily life; be holy, be prayerful, trust in Christ, be faithful, be upright, be loving; give your heart to God, and follow him. If Baal be God, then follow him; but do not pretend to follow the other." Let your conduct back up your opinion; if you really think that the follies of this world are the best, and believe that a fine fashionable life, a life of frivolity and gayety, flying from flower to flower, getting honey from none, is the most desirable, carry it out. If you think the life of the debauchee is so very desirable, if you think his end is to be much wished for, if you think his pleasures are right, follow them. Go the whole way with them. If you believe that to cheat in business is right, put it up over your door—"I sell trickery goods here;" or if you do not say it to the public, tell your conscience so; but do not deceive the public; do not call the people to prayers when you are opening a "British Bank." If you mean to be religious, follow out your determination thoroughly; but if you mean to be worldly, go the whole way with the world. Let your conduct follow out your opinions. Make your life tally with your profession. Carry out your opinions whatever they be. But you dare not; you are too cowardly to sin as others do, honestly before God's sun; your conscience will not let you do it—and yet you are just so fond of Satan, that you dare not leave him wholly and become thoroughly the servants of God. O do not let your character be like your profession; either keep up your profession, or give it up: do be one thing or the other.

V. And now the prophet cries, "If the Lord be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him," and in so doing, he states the ground of his practical claim. Let your conduct be consistent with your opinions. There is another objection raised by the crowd. "Prophet," says one, "then comest to demand a practical proof of our affection; then sayest, Follow God. Now, if I believe God to be God, and that is my opinion, yet I do not see what claim he has to my opinions." Now, mark how the prophet puts it: he says, "If God be God, follow him." The reason why I claim that you should follow out your opinion concerning God is, that God is God; God has a claim upon you, as creatures, for your devout obedience. One person replies, "What profit should I have, if I served God thoroughly? Should I be more happy? Should I get on better in this world? Should I have more peace of mind?" Nay, nay, that is a secondary consideration. The only question for you is, "If God be God follow him." Not if it be more advantageous to you; but, "if God be God, follow him." The secularist would plead for religion on the ground that religion might be the best for this world, and best for the world to come. Not so with the prophet; he says, "I do not put it on that ground, I insist that it is your bounden duty, if you believe in God, simply because he is God, to serve him and obey him. I do not tell you it is for your advantage—it may be, I believe it is—but that I put aside from the question; I demand of you that you follow God, if you believe him to be God. If you do not think he is God; if you really think that the devil is God, then follow him; his pretended godhead shall be your plea, and you shall be consistent; but if God be God, if he made you, I demand that you serve him; if it is he who puts the breath into your nostrils, I demand that you obey him. If God be really worthy of your worship, and you really think so, I demand that you either follow him, or else deny that he is God at all." Now, professor, if thou sayest that Christ's gospel is the gospel, if thou believest in the divinity of the gospel, and puttest thy trust in Christ, I demand of thee to follow out the gospel, not merely because it will be to thy advantage, but because the gospel is divine. If thou makest a profession of being a child of God, if thou art a believer, and thinkest and believest religion is the best, the service of God the most desirable, I do not come to plead with thee because of any advantage thou wouldst get by being holy; it is on this ground that I put it, that the Lord is God; and if he be God, it is thy business to serve him. If

his gospel be true, and thou believest it to be true, it is thy duty to carry it out. If thou sayest Christ is not the Son of God, carry out thy Jewish or thy infidel convictions, and see whether it will end well. If thou dost not believe Christ to be the Son of God, if thou art a Mohammedan, be consistent, carry out thy Mohammedan convictions, and see whether it will end well. But, take heed, take heed! If, however, thou sayest God is God, and Christ the Saviour, and the gospel true; I demand of thee, only on this account, that thou carry it out. What a strong plea some would think the prophet might have had, if he had said, "God is your fathers, God, therefore follow him!" But no, he did not come down to that; he said, "If God be God—I do not care whether he be your fathers' God or not—follow him." "Why do you go to chapel?" says one, "and not to church?" "Because my father and grandfather were dissenters." Ask a churchman, very often, why he attends the establishment. "Well, our family were always brought up to it; that is why I go." Now, I do think that the worst of all reasons for a particular religion, is that of our being brought up to it. I never could see that at all. I have attended the house of God with my father and my grandfather; but I thought, when I read the Scriptures, that it was my business to judge for myself. I knew that my father and my grandfather took little children in their arms, and put drops of water on their faces, and they were baptized. I took up my Bible, and I could not see any thing about babes being baptized. I picked up a little Greek; and I could not discover that the word "baptized" meant to sprinkle; so I said to myself, "Suppose they are good men, they may be wrong; and though I love and revere them, yet it is no reason why I should imitate them." And therefore I left them, and became what I am to-day, a Baptist minister, so called, but I hope a great deal more a Christian than a Baptist. It is seldom I mention it; I only do so by way of illustration here. Many a one will go to chapel, because his grandmother did. Well, she was a good old soul, but I do not see that she ought to influence your judgment. "That does not signify," says one, "I do not like to leave the church of my fathers." No more do I; I would rather belong to the same denomination with my father; I would not willfully differ from any of my friends, or leave their sect and denomination, but let God be above our parents; though our parents are at the very top of our hearts, and we love them and reverence them, and in all other matters pay them strict obedience, yet, with regard to religion, to our own Master we stand

or fall, and we claim to have the right of judging for ourselves as men, and then we think it our duty, having judged, to carry out our convictions. Now I am not going to say, "If God be your mother's God, serve him;" though that would be a very good argument with some of you; but with you waverers, the only plea I use is, "If God be God, serve him;" if the gospel be right, believe it; if a religious life be right, carry it out; if not, give it up. I only put my argument on Elijah's plea—"If God be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." VI. And now I make my appeal to the halters and waverers, with some questions, which I pray the Lord to apply. Now I will put this question to them: "How long halt ye?" I will tell them; ye will halt between two opinions, all of you who are undecided, until God shall answer by fire. Fire was not what these poor people wanted that were assembled there. When Elijah says, that "the God that answereth by fire let him be God," I fancy I hear some of them saying, "No; the God that answereth by water let him be God; we want rain badly enough." "No," said Elijah, "if rain should come, you would say that it was the common course of providence; and that would not decide you." I tell you, all the providences that befall you undecided ones will not decide you. God may surround you with providences; he may surround you with frequent warnings from the death-bed of your fellows; but providences will never decide you. It is not the God of rain, but the God of fire that will do it. There are two ways in which you undecided ones will be decided by-and-by. You that are decided for God will want no decision; you that are decided for Satan will want no decision; you are on Satan's side, and must dwell for ever in eternal burning. But these undecided ones want something to decide them, and will have either one of the two things; they will either have the fire of God's Spirit to decide them, or else the fire of eternal judgment, and that will decide them. I may preach to you, my hearers; and all the ministers in the world may preach to you that are wavering, but you will never decide for God through the force of your own will. None of you, if left to your natural judgment, to the use of your own reason, will ever decide for God. You may decide for him merely as an outward form, but not as an inward spiritual thing, which should possess your heart as a Christian, as a believer in the doctrine of effectual grace. I know that none of you will ever decide for God's gospel, unless God decide you; and I tell you that you must either be decided by the descent of the fire of his Spirit into your hearts now, or else in the day of

judgment. O! which shall it be? O! that the prayer might be put up by the thousand lips that are here: "Lord, decide me now by the fire of thy Spirit; O! let thy Spirit descend into my heart, to burn up the bullock, that I may be a whole burnt offering to God; to burn up the wood and the stones of my sin; to burn up the very dust of worldliness; ah, and to lick up the water of my impiety, which now lieth in the trenches, and my cold indifference, that seek to put out the sacrifice."

"O make this heart rejoice or ache!
Decide this doubt for me;
And if it be not broken, break,
And heal it, if it be."

"O sovereign grace, my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph too,
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the triumphs of his word."

And it may be, that whilst I speak, the mighty fire, unseen by men, and unfelt by the vast majority of you, shall descend into some heart which has of old been dedicated to God by his divine election, which is now like an altar broken down, but which God, by his free grace, will this day build up. O! I pray that that influence may enter into some hearts, that there may be some go out of this place, saying,

"Tis done, the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's, and he is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Glad to obey the voice divine."

Now rest my undivided heart, fixed on this stable center, rest." O! that many may say that! But remember, if it be not so, the day is coming—dies irae, the day of wrath and anger—when ye shall be decided of God; when the firmament shall be lit up with lightnings, when the earth shall roll with drunken terror, when the pillars of the universe shall shake, and God shall sit, in the person of his Son, to judge the world in righteousness. You will not be undecided then, when, "Depart ye cursed," or "Come, ye

blessed," shall be your doom. There will be no indecision then, when you shall meet him with joy or else with terror—when, "rocks hide me, mountains on me fall," shall be your doleful shriek; or else your joyful song shall be, "The Lord is come." In that day you will be decided; but till then, unless the living fire of the Holy Spirit decide you, you will go on halting between two opinions. May God grant you his Holy Spirit that you may turn unto him and be saved!

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The Enchanted Ground

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others: but let us watch and be sober. - 1 Thessalonians 5:6

As the spiritual guide of the flock of God along the intricate mazes of experience, it is the duty of the gospel minister to point out every turning of the road to heaven, to speak concerning its dangers or its privileges, and to warn any whom he may suspect to be in a position peculiarly perilous. Now, there is a portion of the road which leadeth from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, which has in it, perhaps, more dangers than any other portion of the way. It doth not abound with lions; there are no dragons in it; it hath no dark woods, and no deep pitfalls; yet more seeming pilgrims have been destroyed in that portion of the road than anywhere else, and not even Doubting Castle, with all its host of bones, can show so many who have been slain there. It is the part of the road called the Enchanted Ground. The great geographer, John Bunyan, well pictured it when he said:

"I then saw in my dream that they went on till they came into a certain country, whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy, if he came a stranger into it. And here Hopeful began to be very dull, and heavy of

sleep; wherefore he said unto Christian, I do now begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold up mine eyes; let us lie down here, and take one nap.

Christian: "By no means, said the other, lest sleeping we never awake more."

Hopeful: "Why, my brother? Sleep is sweet to the laboring man; we may be refreshed if we take a nap."

Christian: "Do you not remember that one of the shepherds bid us beware of the Enchanted Ground? He meant by that, that we should beware of sleeping; wherefore, 'let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober.'"

There are no doubt, many of us, beloved, who are passing over this plain; and I fear that this is the condition of the majority of churches in the present day. They are lying down on the settles of Lukewarmness, in the Arbors of the Enchanted Ground. There is not that activity and zeal we could wish to see among them; they are not, perhaps, notably heterodox; they may not be invaded by the lion of persecution, but they are somewhat worse than that, - they are lying down to slumber, like Heedless and Too-Bold in the Arbor of Sloth. May God grant that his servants may be the means of arousing the church from its lethargy, and stirring it up from its slumbers, lest haply professors should sleep the sleep of death.

This morning I intend to show you what is meant by the state of sleep into which Christians sometimes fall; secondly, I shall use some considerations, if possible, to wake up such as are slumbering; thirdly, I shall mark sundry times when the Christian is most liable to fall asleep; and shall conclude by giving you some advice as to the mode in which you should conduct yourselves when you are passing over the Enchanted Ground, and feel drowsiness weighing down your eyelids.

I. First, what is that state of sleep into which the Christian man may fall? It is not death. He was dead once, but he is now alive in Christ Jesus; and

therefore shall never die; but though a living man shall never die, being quickened by an immortal life, yet that living man may sleep; and that sleep is so nearly akin to death that I have known slumbering Christians mistaken for dead, carnal sinners. Come, beloved, let me picture to you the state of the Christian while he is in a condition of sleep.

First, sleep is a state of insensibility; and such is that state which too often falls upon even the best children of God. When a man is asleep he is insensible. The world goes on, and he knows naught about it. The watchman calls beneath his window, and he sleeps on still. A fire is in a neighboring street, his neighbor's house is burned to ashes, but he is asleep, and knows it not. Persons are sick in the house, but he is not awakened; they may die, and he weeps not for them. A revolution may be raging in the streets of his city; a king may be losing his crown; but he that is asleep shares not in the turmoil of politics. A volcano may burst somewhere near him, and he may be in imminent peril; but he escapeth not; he is sound asleep, he is insensible. The winds are howling, the thunders are rolling across the sky, and the lightnings flash at his window; but he that can sleep on careth not for these, and is insensible to them all. The sweetest music is passing through the street; but he sleeps, and only in dreams doth he hear the sweetness. The most terrific wailings may assail his ears; but sleep has sealed them with the wax of slumber, and he hears not. Let the world break in sunder, and the elements go to ruin, keep him asleep, and he will not perceive it. Christian, behold your condition. Have you not sometimes been brought into a condition of insensibility? You wished you could feel; but all you felt was pain because you could not feel. You wished you could pray. It was not that you felt prayerless, but it was because you did not feel at all. You sighed once; you would give a world if you could sigh now. You used to groan once; a groan now would be worth a golden star if you could buy it. As for songs, you can sing them, but then your heart does not go with them. You go to the house of God; but when "the multitude that keep holy day" in the full tide of song send their music up to heaven, you hear it, but your heart does not leap at the sound. Prayer goeth solemnly like the evening sacrifice up to God's throne; once you could pray, too; but now, while your body is in the house of God, your heart is not there. You feel you have brought the chrysalis of your being; but the fly is gone away from it; it is a dead,

lifeless case. You have become like a formalist; you feel that there is not savor, that unction, in the preaching that there used to be. There is no difference in your minister, you know; the change is in yourself. The hymns and the prayers are just the same, but you have fallen into a state of slumber. Once, if you thought of a man's being damned, you would weep your very soul out in tears; but now you could sit at the very brink of hell, and hear its wailings unmoved. Once the thought of restoring a sinner from the error of his ways would have made you start from your bed at midnight, and you would have rushed through the cold air to help rescue a sinner from his sins. Now, talk to you about perishing multitudes, and you hear it as an old, old tale. Tell you of thousands swept by the mighty flood of sin onwards to the precipice of destruction, you express your regret, you give your contribution, but your heart goeth not with it. You must confess that you are insensible. - not entirely, but too much so. You want to be awake: but you groan because you feel yourselves to be in this state of slumber.

Then, again, he that sleepeth is subject to divers illusions. When we sleep, judgment goeth from us, and fancy holdeth carnival within our brain. When we sleep, dreams arise and fashion in our head strange things. Sometimes we are tossed on the stormy deep, and anon we revel in king's palaces. We gather up gold and silver as if they were but the pebbles of the sea; and anon we are poor and naked, shivering in the blast. What illusions deceive us! The beggar in his dream becomes richer than Plautus, and the rich man as poor as Lazarus: the sick man is well, the healthy man hath lost his limbs, or is dead. Yea, dreams do make us descend to hell, or even carry us to heaven. Christian, if thou art one of the sleepy brotherhood, thou art subject to divers illusions. Strange thoughts come to thee which thou never hadst before. Sometimes thou doubtst if there be a God, or if thou dost exist thyself. Thou tremblest lest the gospel should not be true, and the old doctrine which once thou didst hold with a stern hand, thou art almost inclined to let go. Vile heresies assail thee. Thou thinkest that the Lord that bought thee was not the Son of God. The devil tells thee that thou art none of the Lord's, and thou dreamest that thou art cast away from the love of the covenant. Thou criest

"I would, but cannot sing;
I would, but cannot pray;"

and thou feelest as if it were all in question whether thou art one of the Lord's or no. Or perhaps thy dreams are brighter, and thou dreamest that thou art somebody, great and mighty, a special favorite of Heaven; pride puffs thee up; thou dreamest that thou art rich, and hast need of nothing, whilst thou art naked, poor, and miserable. Is this thy state, O Christian? If so, may God wake thee up from it!

Again, sleep is a state of inaction. No daily bread is earned by him that sleepeth. The man who is stretched upon his couch neither writeth books, nor tilleth the ground, nor plougheth the sea, nor doth aught else. His hands hang down, his pulse beateth, and life there is, but he is positively dead as to activity. O beloved, here is the state of many of you. How many Christians are inactive! Once it was their delight to instruct the young in the Sabbath-school, but that is now given up. Once they attended the early prayer-meeting, but not now. Once they would be hewers of wood and drawers of water, but alas! they are asleep now. Am I talking of what may happen! Is it not too true almost universally? Are not the churches asleep? Where are the ministers that preach? We have men that read the manuscripts, and talk essays: but is that preaching? We have men that can amuse an audience for twenty minutes. Is that preaching? Where are the men that preach their hearts out, and say their soul in every sentence? Where are the men that make it, not a profession, but a vocation, the breath of their bodies, the marrow of their bones, the delight of their spirits? Where are the Whitefields and Wesleys now? Are they not gone, gone, gone? Where are the Rowland Hills now, who preached every day, and three times a day, and were not afraid of preaching everywhere the unsearchable riches of Christ? Brethren, the Church slumbers. It is not merely that the pulpit is a sentry-box with the sentinel fast asleep; but the pews are affected. How are the prayer-meetings almost universally neglected! Our own church stands out like an almost solitary green islet in the midst of a dark, dark, sea; one bright pearl in the depths of an ocean of discord and confusion. Look at neighboring churches. Step into the vestry, and see a smaller band of people than you would like to think of, assembled round the pastor, whose heart is dull and heavy. Hear one

brother after another pour out the dull monotonous prayer that he has said by heart these fifty years; and then go away and say: "Where is the spirit of prayer, where the life of devotion?" Is it not almost extinct? Are not our churches "fallen, fallen, fallen from their high estate?" God wake them up, and send them more earnest and praying men!

Once more. The man who is asleep is in a state of insecurity. The murderer smiteth him that sleeps: the midnight robber plundereth his house that resteth listlessly on his pillow. Jael smiteth a sleeping Sisera. Abner taketh away the spear from the bolster of a slumbering Saul. A sleeping Eutychus falleth from the third loft, and is taken up dead. A sleeping Samson is shorn of his locks, and the Philistines are upon him. Sleeping men are ever in danger; they cannot ward off the blow of the enemy, or strike another. Christian, if thou art sleeping, thou art in danger. Thy life, I know, can never be taken from thee; that is hid with Christ in God. But O! thou mayest lose thy spear from thy bolster; thou mayest lose much of thy faith; and thy cruse of water, wherewith thou dost moisten thy lips, may be stolen by the prowling thief. O! thou little knowest thy danger. Even now the black-winged angel takes his spear, and standing at thy head, he says to Jesus (to David), "Shall I smite him? I will smite him but once." (David says) Our Jesus whispers, "Thou shalt not smite him. Take his spear and his cruse, but thou shalt not kill him." But O! awake, thou slumber! Start up from the place where thou now liest in thy insecurity! This is not the sleep of Jacob, in which ladders unite heaven and earth, and angels tread their ascending rounds; but this is the sleep where ladders are raised from hell, and devils climb upward from the pit to molest thy spirit.

II. This brings me to the second point, Some considerations to wake up sleepy Christians. I remember, once in my life, having a sleepy congregation. They had been eating too much dinner, and they came to the chapel in the afternoon very sleepy, so I tried an old expedient to rouse them. I shouted with all my might, "Fire! fire! fire!" when, starting from their seats, some of the congregation asked where it was; and I told them it was in hell, for such sleepy sinners as they were. So, beloved, I might cry "Fire! fire!" this morning, to waken sleepy Christians; but that would be a false cry, because the fire of hell was never made for

Christians at all, and they need never tremble at it. The honor of God is engaged to save the meanest sheep; and whether that sheep is asleep or awake, it is perfectly safe, so far as final salvation is concerned. There are better reasons why I should stir up a Christian, and I shall use a very few of them.

And first, O Christian! awake from thy slumber, because thy Lord is coming. That is the grand reason used in the text. The apostle says, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day." "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." "Ye brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." O Christians! do you know that your Lord is coming? In such an hour as ye think not, the man who once hung quivering on Calvary will descend in glory; "The head that once was crowned with thorns" will soon be crowned with a diadem of brilliant jewels. He will come in the clouds of heaven to his church. Would you wish to be sleeping when your Lord comes? Do you want to be like the foolish virgins, or like the wise ones, either, who, while the bridegroom tarried, slumbered and slept? If our Master were to appear this morning, are there not half of us in such a state that we should be afraid to see him? Why, you know, when a friend comes to your house, if he is some great man, what brushing and dusting there is. Every corner of the room has its cobwebs removed; every carpet is turned up; and you make every effort to have the house clean for his coming. What! and will you have your house dusty, and the spiders of neglect building the cobwebs of indolence in the corners of your house, when your Lord may arrive tomorrow? And if we are to have an audience with the Queen, what dressing there is! How careful will men be that everything should be put on aright, that they should appear properly in court dress! Do you not know, servant of the Lord, that you are to appear before the king in his beauty, and to see him soon on earth? What! will ye be asleep when he comes? When he knocks at the door, shall he have for an answer, "The good man is asleep; he did not expect you"? Oh, no; be ye like men who watch for their Lord, that at his coming he may find you ready. Ah! ye carnal professors, who attend plays and balls, would you like Christ to come and find you in the middle of your dance? would you like him to look you in the face in the opera? Ah! ye carnal tradesmen, ye can cheat, and then pray after it. Would you like Christ to find you

cheating? Ye devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers. You would not mind him coming in the middle of your long prayer; but he will come just at that poor widow's house is sticking in your throat, just as you are swallowing the lands of the poor oppressed on, and putting in your pocket the wages of which you have defrauded the labourer. Then he will come; and how terrible will he be to such as you! We have heard of the sailor, who, when his ship was sinking, rushed to the cabin to steal a bag of gold, and though warned that he could no swim with it, tied it about his loins, leaped into the sea with it, and sank to rise no more. And I am afraid there be some rich men who know not how to use their money, who will sink to hell, strangled by their gold, hanging like millstones round their necks. O Christian, it shall not b so with you; but wake from thy slumbers, for thy Lord cometh.

But again, Christian, thou art benevolent; thou lovest men's souls, and I will speak to thee of that which will touch thy heart. Wilt thou sleep while souls are being lost? A brother here, some time ago, rushed into a house which was burning, and he saved a person from it; he then returned to his wife, and what did she say to him? "Go back again, my husband, and see if you cannot save another. We will not rest till all are delivered." Methinks that this is what the Christian man would say: "If I have been the means of saving one soul, I will not rest until I have saved another." Oh, hast thou ever thought how many souls sink into hell every hour? Did the dreary thought that the death-knell of a soul is tolled by every tick of yonder clock, ever strike thee? Hast thou never thought that myriads of thy fellow creatures are in hell now, and that myriads more are hastening thither? and yet dost thou sleep? What! physician, wilt thou sleep while men are dying? Sailor, wilt thou sleep when the wreck is out at sea, and the life-boat is waiting for hands to man it! Christian, wilt thou tarry while souls are being lost? I do not say that thou canst save them - God alone can do that - but thou mayest be the instrument; and wouldst thou lose the opportunity of winning another jewel for thy crown in heaven? wouldst thou sleep while work is being done? Well, said the British king, at the battle of Agincourt, "Come on, and conquer."

And gentlemen in England - now a-bed,
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here:

And hold their manhood cheap, when any speaks
That fought with us upon this glorious day."

So methinks, when souls are being saved, Christians in bed may think themselves accursed they are not here. Sleep Christian, let me shout in thine ears - thou art sleeping while souls are being lost - sleeping while men are being damned - sleeping while hell is being peopled - sleeping while Christ is being dishonored - sleeping while the devil is grinning at thy sleepy face - sleeping while demons are dancing around thy slumbering carcase, and telling it in hell that a Christian is asleep. You will never catch the devil asleep; let not the devil catch you asleep. Watch, and be sober, that ye may be always up to do your duty.

I have no time to use other considerations, though the subject is large enough, and I should have no difficulty in finding sticks enough to beat a sleeping dog with. "Let us not sleep as do others."

III. Now it may be asked, When is the Christian most liable to sleep?

First, I answer, he is most liable to sleep when his temporal circumstances are all right. When your nest is well feathered you are then most likely to sleep; there is little danger of your sleeping when there is a bramble-bush in the bed. When all is downy, then the most likely thing will be that thou wilt say, "Soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, and be merry." Let me ask some of you, when you were more straightened in circumstances, when you had to rely upon providence each hour and had troubles to take to the throne of grace, were you not more wakeful than you are now? The miller who hath his wheel turned by a constant stream goes too sleep; but he that attendeth on the wind, which sometimes bloweth hard and sometimes gently, sleeps not, lest haply the full gust might rend the sails or there should not be enough to make them go round. Those who live by the day often sleep not by day, but they sleep in the night, - the sleep of the beloved. Easy roads tend to make us slumber. Few sleep in a storm; many sleep on a calm night. He is a brave boy, indeed, who can have his eyes sealed when "upon the high and giddy mast, in bosom of the rude imperious surge;" but he is no wonder who sleepeth when there is no

danger. Why is the church asleep now? She would not sleep if Smithfield were filled with stakes, if Bartholomew's tocsin were ringing in her ears; she would not sleep if Sicilian Vespers might be sung tomorrow's eve; she would not sleep if massacres were common now. But what is her condition? Every man sitting under his own vine and his own fig tree, none daring to make him afraid. Tread softly! she is fast asleep. Wake up, church! or else we will cut down the fig tree about thine ears. Start up! for the figs are ripe, they hang into thy sleepy mouth, and thou art too lazy to bite them off.

Now another dangerous time is when all goes well in spiritual matters. You never read that Christian went to sleep when lions were in the way; he never slept when he was going through the river Death, or when he was in Giant Despair's castle, or when he was fighting with Apollyon. Poor creature! he almost wished he could sleep then. But when he got halfway up the Hill Difficulty, and came to a pretty little arbor, in he went, and sat down and began to read his roll. O, how he rested himself! How he unstrapped his sandals and rubbed his weary feet! Very soon his mouth was open, his arms hung down, and he was fast asleep. Again, the enchanted ground was a very easy, smooth place, and liable to send the pilgrim to sleep. You remember Bunyan's description of some of the arbors: "Then they came to an arbor, warm, and promising much refreshing to the weary pilgrims; for it was finely wrought above head, beautified with greens, and furnished with benches and settles. It had also in it a soft couch, where the weary might lean." "The arbor was called the Slothful's Friend, and was made on purpose to allure, if it might be, some of the pilgrims to take up their rest there when weary." Depend upon it, it is in easy places that men shut their eyes and wander into the dreamy land of forgetfulness. Old Erskine said a good thing when he remarked, "I like a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil." There is no temptation half so bad as not being tempted. The distressed soul does not sleep; it is after we get into confidence and full assurance that we are in danger of slumbering. Take care, thou who art full of gladness. There is no season in which we are so likely to fall asleep as that of high enjoyment. The disciples went to sleep after they had seen Christ transfigured on the mountain-top. Take heed, joyous Christian, good frames are very dangerous; they often lull you into a sound sleep.

Yet there is one more thing; and, if I ever were afraid of anything, I should fear to speck before my grave and reverend fathers in the faith the fact that one of the most likely places for us to sleep in is when we get near our journey's end. It is ill for a child to say that, and I will therefore back it up by the words of that great pilot John Bunyan: "For this enchanted ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy to pilgrims has; wherefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way, and so it standeth against us with the more advantage. For when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary? and when so like to be weary as when almost at their journey's end? Therefore it is, I say, that the enchanted ground is placed so nigh to the land Beulah, and so near the end of their race. Wherefore let pilgrims look to themselves, lest it happen to them as it has done to these that, as you see, are fallen asleep, and none can awake them." May a child speck to those who are far before him in years and experience? But I am not a child when I preach. In the pulpit we stand as ambassadors of God, and God knoweth nothing of childhood or age; he teacheth whom he willeth, and speaketh as he pleases. It is true, my brethren, that those who have been years in grace are most in danger of slumbering. Somehow we get into the routine of the thing; it is usual for us to go to the house of God; it is usual for us to belong to the church, and that of itself tends to make people sleepy. Go into some of your churches in London, and you will hear a most delicious sermon preached to a people all sound asleep. The reason is that the service is all alike; they know when they have got to the third "Our Father which art in heaven." when they have passed the confession general, and when they have got to the sermon, - which is the time to sleep for twenty minutes. If the minister should smite his fist ecclesiastic upon the Bible, or enliven his faculties with a pinch of snuff, or even use his pocket handkerchief, the people would wake up, because it would be something out of the usual course. Or if he uttered an odd sentiment, they might be aroused, and would probably think that he had broken the 59th commandment, in making some of the congregation smile. But he never violates decorum; he stands, the very mirror of modesty and the picture of everything that is orderly. I have digressed, but you will see what I mean. If we are always going on the same road we are liable to sleep. If Moab gets at ease, and is not emptied from vessel to

vessel, he sleeps on, for he knows no change, and when years have worn our road with a rut of godliness, we are apt to throw the reins on our horse's neck and sleep soundly.

IV. Now, lastly let me give a little good advice to the sleeping Christian. But, Christian, if thou art asleep, thou wilt not hear me. I will speck gently, then, and let thee sleep on. No, I will not, I will shout in thine ears, "Awake, thou that sleepest! Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise. Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem. Put on thy glorious array, thou church of the living God."

But now what is the best plan to keep awake when you are going across the enchanted ground? This book tells us that one of the best plans is to keep Christian company, and talk about the ways of the Lord. Christian and Hopeful said to themselves, "Let us talk together, and then we shall not sleep." Christian said, "Brother, where shall we begin?" And Hopeful said, "We will begin where God began with us." There is no subject so likely to keep a man awake as talking of the place where God began with him. When Christian men talk together they won't sleep together. Hold Christian company, and you will not be so likely to slumber. Christians who isolate themselves and stand alone are very liable to lie down and sleep on the settle or the soft couch, and go to sleep; but, if you talk much together, as they did in old time, you will find it extremely beneficial. Two Christians talking together of the ways of the Lord will go much faster to heaven than one; and when a whole church unite in speaking of the Lord's loving kindness, verily, beloved, there is no way like that of keeping themselves awake.

Then let me remind you that if you will look at interesting things you will not sleep; and how can you be kept awake in the enchanted ground better than by holding up your Saviour before your eyes? There are some things, it is said, which will not let men shut their eyes if they are held before them. Jesus Christ crucified on Calvary is one of them. I never knew a Christian go to sleep at the foot of the cross; but he always said -

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,

Which before the cross I spend."

And he said, too -

"Here I'd sit, for ever viewing
Mercies' streams in streams of blood."

But he never said, "Here I would lay down and sleep;" for he could not sleep with that shriek, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," in his ears. He could not sleep with "It is finished!" going into his very soul. Keep thou near to the cross, Christian, and thou wilt not sleep.

Then I would advise thee to let the wind blow on thee; let the breath of the Holy Spirit continually fan thy temples, and thou wilt not sleep. Seek to live daily under the influence of the Holy Ghost; derive all thy strength from him, and thou wilt not slumber.

Lastly, labor to impress thyself with a deep sense of the value of the place to which thou art going. If thou rememberest that thou art going to heaven, thou wilt not sleep on the road. If thou thinkest that hell is behind thee, and the devil pursuing thee, I am sure thou wilt not be inclined to sleep. Would the man-slayer sleep if the avenger of blood were behind him, and the city of refuge before him? Christian, wilt thou sleep whilst the pearly gates are open; the songs of angels waiting for thee to join them; a crown decorated with delight to be worn upon thy brow? Ah, no!

"Forget the steps already trod,
And onward urge thy way."

"Weak as thou art, thou shalt not faint,
Or, fainting, shalt not die;
He feeds the strength of every saint,
He'll help thee from on high."

Dearly beloved, I have finished my sermon. There are some of you that I must dismiss, because I find nothing in the text for you. It is said, "Let us

not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober." There are some here who do not sleep at all, because they are positively dead; and, if it takes a stronger voice than mine to wake the sleeper, how much more mighty must be that voice which wakes the dead. Yet even to the dead I speak; for God can wake them, though I cannot. O, dead man! dost thou not know that thy body and thy soul are worthless carrion? that whilst thou art dead thou liest abhorred of God, abhorred of man? that soon the vultures of remorse will come and devour thy lifeless soul; and, though thou hast lived in this world these seventy years (perhaps) without God and without Christ, in thy last hour the vulture of remorse shall come and tear thy spirit; and, though thou laughest now at the wild bird that circles in the sky, he will descend upon thee soon, and thy death will be a bed of shrieks, howlings, and wailings, and lamentations and yells! Dost thou know more still, that afterwards that dead soul will be cast into Tophet; and, as in the East they burn the bodies, so thy body and thy soul together shall be burned in hell? Go not away and dream that this is a metaphor. It is truth. Say not it is a fiction; laugh not at it as a mere picture. Hell is a positive flame; it is a fire that burns the body, albeit that it burns the soul, too. There is physical fire for the body, and there is spiritual fire for the soul. Go thy way, O man; such shall be thy fate. E'en now thy funeral pile is building, thy years of sin have laid huge trees across each other; and see, the angel is flying down from heaven with a brand already lit; thou art lying dead upon the pile; he puts the brand to the base thereof; thy disease proves that the lower parts are kindling with the flame; those pains of thine are the crackling of the fire. It shall reach thee soon, thou poor diseased one; thou art near death, and when it reaches thee thou shalt know the meaning of the fire that is unquenchable, and the worm that dieth not. Yet while there is hope I will tell thee the gospel. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be," must be "damned." He that believeth on the Lord Jesus, that is, with a simple, naked faith, comes and puts his trust in him, shall be saved, without anything else; but he that believeth not shall inevitably - hear it, men, and tremble - he that believeth not shall assuredly be damned.

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Encouragement For The Depressed

For who hath despised the day of small things? - Zechariah 4:10

Zechariah was engaged in the building of the temple. When its foundations were laid, it struck everybody as being a very small edifice compared with the former glorious structure of Solomon. The friends of the enterprise lamented that it should be so small; the foes of it rejoiced and uttered strong expressions of contempt. Both friends and foes doubted whether, even on that small scale, the structure would ever be completed. They might lay the foundations, and they might rear the walls a little way, but they were too feeble a folk, possessed of too little riches and too little strength, to carry out the enterprise. It was the day of small things. Friends trembled; foes jeered. But the prophet rebuked them both—rebuked the unbelief of friends, and the contempt of enemies, by this question, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" and by a subsequent prophecy which removed the fear.

Now we shall use this question at this time for the comfort of two sorts of people—first, for weak believers, and secondly, for feeble workers. Our object shall be the strengthening of the hands that hang down, and the confirming of the feeble knees. We will begin, first of all, with:—

I. WEAK BELIEVERS

Let us describe them. It is with them a day of small things. Probably you have only been lately brought into the family of God. A few months ago you were a stranger to the divine life, and to the things of God. You have been born again, and you have the weakness of the infant. You are not strong yet, as you will be when you have grown in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is the early day with you, and it is also the day of small things. Now your knowledge is small. My dear brother, you have not been a Bible student long: thank God that you know yourself a sinner, and Christ your Saviour. That is precious knowledge; but you feel now what you once would not have confessed—your own ignorance of the things of God. Especially do the deep things of God trouble you. There are some doctrines that are very simple to other believers that appear to be mysterious, and even to be depressing to you.

They are high—you cannot attain to them. They are to you what hard nuts would be to children, whose teeth have not yet appeared. Well, be not at all alarmed about this. All the men in God's family have once been children too. There are some that seem to be born with knowledge—Christians that come to a height in Christ very rapidly. But these are only here and there. Israel did not produce a Samson every day. Most have to go through a long period of spiritual infancy and youth. And, alas! There are but few in the Church, even now, who might be called fathers there. Do not marvel, therefore, if you are somewhat small in your knowledge. Your discernment, too, is small. It is possible that anybody with a fluent tongue would lead you into error. You have, however, discernment, if you are a child of God, sufficient to be kept from deadly errors, for though there are some who would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect, yet the elect cannot be deceived, for, the life of God being in them, they discern between the precious and the vile—they choose not the things of the world, but they follow after the things of God. Your discernment, however, seeming so small, need not afflict you. It is by reason of use, when the senses are exercised, that we fully discern between all that is good and all that is evil. Thank God for a little discernment—though you see men as trees walking, and your eyes are only half opened. A little light is better than none at all. Not long since you were in total darkness. Now if there be a glimmer, be thankful, for remember where a glimmer can enter the full noontide can come, yea, and shall come in due season. Therefore, despise not the time of small discernment. Of course, you, my dear brother or sister, have small experience. I trust you will not ape experience, and try to talk as if you had the experience of the veteran saints when you are as yet only a raw recruit. You have not yet done business on the great waters. The more fierce temptations of Satan have not assailed you—the wind has been tempered as yet to the shorn lamb; God has not hung heavy weights on slender threads, but hath put a small burden on a weak back. Be thankful that it is so. Thank him for the experience that you have, and do not be desponding because you have not more. It will all come in due time. "Despise not the day of small things." It is always unwise to get down a biography and say, "Oh! I cannot be right, because I have not felt all this good man did." If a child of ten years of age were to take down the diary of his grandfather and were to say, "Because I do not feel my grandfather's weakness, do not require to use his

spectacles, or lean upon his staff, therefore I am not one of the same family," it would be very foolish reasoning. Your experience will ripen. As yet it is but natural that it should be green. Wait a while and bless God for what you have.

Probably this, however, does not trouble you so much as one other thing, you have but small faith, and, that faith being small, your feelings are very variable. I often hear this from young beginners in the divine life, "I was so happy a month ago, but I have lost that happiness now." Perhaps tomorrow, after they have been at the house of God, they will be as cheerful as possible, but the next day their joy is gone. Beware, my dear Christian friends, of living by feeling. John Bunyan puts down Mr. Live-by-feeling as one of the worst enemies of the town of Mansoul. I think he said he was hanged. I am afraid he, somehow or other, escaped from the executioner, for I very commonly meet him; and there is no villain that hates the souls of men and causes more sorrow to the people of God than this Mr. Live-by-feeling. He that lives by feeling will be happy today, and unhappy tomorrow; and if our salvation depended upon our feelings, we should be lost one day and saved another, for they are as fickle as the weather, and go up and down like a barometer. We live by faith, and if that faith be weak, bless God that weak faith is faith, and that weak faith is true faith. If thou believest in Christ Jesus, though thy faith be as a grain of mustard seed, it will save thee, and it will, by-and-bye, grow into something stronger. A diamond is a diamond, and the smallest scrap of it is of the same nature as the Koh-i-noor, and he that hath but little faith hath faith for all that; and it is not great faith that is essential to salvation, but faith that links the soul to Christ; and that soul is, therefore, saved. Instead of mourning so much that thy faith is not strong, bless God that thou hast any faith at all, for if he sees that thou despisest the faith he has given thee, it may be long before he gives thee more. Prize that little, and when he sees that thou art so glad and thankful for that little, then will he multiply it and increase it, and thy faith shall mount even to the full assurance of faith.

I think I hear you also add to all this the complaint that your other graces seem to be small too. "Oh," say you, "my patience is so little. If I have a little pain I begin to cry out. I was in hopes I should be able to bear it

without murmuring. My courage is so little: the blush is on my cheek if anybody asks me about Christ—I think I could hardly confess him before half a dozen, much less before the world. I am very weak indeed." Ah! I don't wonder. I have known some who have been strong by reason of years, and have still been lacking in that virtue. But where faith is weak, of course, the rest will be weak. A plant that has a weak root will naturally have a weak stem and then will have but weak fruit. Your weakness of faith sends a weakness through the whole. But for all this, though you are to seek for more faith, and consequently for more grace—for stronger graces, yet do not despise what graces you have. Thank God for them, and pray that the few clusters that are now upon you, may be multiplied a thousand-fold to the praise of the glory of his grace. Thus I have tried to describe those who are passing through the day of small things.

But the text says, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" Well, some have, but there is a great comfort in this—God the Father has not. He has looked upon you—you with little grace, and little love, and little faith, and he has not despised you. No, God is always near the feeble saint. If I saw a young man crossing a common alone, I should not be at all astonished, and I should not look round for his father. But I saw today, as I went home, a very tiny little tot right out on the Common—a pretty little girl, and I thought, "The father or mother are near somewhere." And truly there was the father behind a tree, whom I had not seen. I was as good as sure that the little thing was not there all alone. And when I see a little weak child of God, I feel sure that God the Father is near, watching with wakeful eye, and tending with gracious care the feebleness of his new-born child. He does not despise you if you are resting on his promise. The humble and contrite have a word all to themselves in Scripture, that these he will not despise.

It is another sweet and consoling thought that God the Son does not despise the day of small things. Jesus Christ does not, for you remember this word, "He shall carry the lambs in his bosom." We put that which we most prize nearest our heart, and this is what Jesus does. Some of us, perhaps, have outgrown the state in which we were lambs, but to ride in that heavenly carriage of the Saviour's bosom—we might well be content to go back and be lambs again. He does not despise the day of small

things.

And it is equally consolatory to reflect that the Holy Spirit does not despise the day of small things, for he it is who, having planted in the heart the grain of mustard seed, watches over it till it becomes a tree. He it is who, having seen the new-born child of grace, doth nurse, and feed, and tend it until it comes to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. The blessed Godhead despises not the weak believer. O weak believer, be consoled by this.

Who is it, then, that may despise the day of small things? Perhaps Satan has told you and whispered in your ear that such little grace as yours is not worth having, that such an insignificant plant as you are will surely be rooted up. Now let me tell you that Satan is a liar, for he himself does not despise the day of small things; and I am sure of that, because he always makes a dead set upon those who are just coming to Christ. As soon as ever he sees that the soul is a little wounded by conviction, as soon as ever he discovers that a heart begins to pray, he will assault it with fiercer temptations than ever. I have known him try to drive such a one to suicide, or to lead him into worse sin than he has ever committed before.
He: -

"Trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

He may tell you that the little grace in you is of no account, but he knows right well that it is the handful of corn on the top of the mountain, the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon. He knows it is the little grace in the heart that overthrows his kingdom there. "Ah!" say you, "but I have been greatly troubled lately because I have many friends that despise me, because though I can hardly say I am a believer, yet I have some desire towards God." What sort of friends are these? Are they worldly friends? Oh! Do not fret about what they say. It would never trouble me if I were an artist, if a blind man were to utter the sharpest criticism on my works. What does he know about it? And when an ungodly person begins to say about your piety that it is deficient and faulty, poor soul, let him say what he will—it need not affect you. "Ah!" say you, "the persons that seem to

despise me, and to put me out, and tell me that I am no child of God, are, I believe, Christians." Well then, do two things: first, lay what they say to you in a measure to heart, because it may be if God's children do not see in you the mark of a child, perhaps you are not a child. Let it lead you to examination. Oh! Dear friends, it is very easy to be self-deceived, and God may employ, perhaps, one of his servants to enlighten you upon this, and deliver you from a strong delusion. But, on the other hand, if you really do trust in your Saviour, if you have begun to pray, if you have some love to God, and any Christian treats you harshly as if he thought you a hypocrite, forgive him—bear it. He has made a mistake. He would not do so if he knew you better. Say within yourself, "After all, if my brother does not know me, it is enough if my Father does. If my Father loves me, though my brother gives me the cold shoulder, I will be sorry for it, but it shall not break my heart. I will cling the closer to my Lord because his servants seem shy of me." Why, it is not much wonder, is it, that some Christians should be afraid of some of you converts, for think what you used to be a little while ago? Why, a mother hears her son say he is converted. A month or two ago she knew where he spent his evenings, and what were his habits of sin, and though she hopes it is so, she is afraid lest she should lead him to presumption, and she rejoices with trembling, and, perhaps, tells him more about her trembling than she does about her rejoicing. Why, the saints of old could not think Saul was converted at first. He was to be brought into the church meeting and received—I will suppose the case. I should not wonder before he came, when he saw the elders, one of them would say, "Well, the young man seems to know something of the grace of God: there is certainly a change in him, but it is a remarkable thing that he should wish to join the very people he was persecuting; but, perhaps, it is a mere impulse. It may be, after all, that he will go back to his old companions." Do you wonder they should say so? Because I don't. I am not at all surprised. I am sorry when there are unjust suspicions, I am sorry when a genuine child of God is questioned; but I would not have you lay it much to heart. As I have said before, if your Father knows you, you need not be so broken in heart because your brother does not. Be glad that God does not despise the day of small things. And now let me say to you who are in this state of small things, that I earnestly trust that you will not yourselves despise the day of small things. "How can we do that?" say you. Why, you can do it by

desponding. Why, I think there was a time when you would have been ready to leap for joy, if you had been told that you would have given you a little faith, and now you have got a little faith, instead of rejoicing, you are sighing, and moaning, and mourning. Do not do so. Be thankful for moonlight, and you shall get sunlight: be thankful for sunlight, and you shall get that light of heaven which is as the light of seven days. Do not despond lest you seem to despise the mercy which God has given you. A poor patient that has been very, very lame and weak, and could not rise from his bed, is at last able to walk with a stick. "Well," he says to himself, "I wish I could walk, and run, and leap as other men." Suppose he sits down and frets because he cannot. His physician might put his hand on his shoulder and say, "My good fellow, why, you ought to be thankful you can stand at all. A little while ago you know you could not stand upright. Be glad for what you have got: don't seem to despise what has been done for you." I say to every Christian here, while you long after strength, don't seem to despise the grace that God has bestowed, but rejoice and bless his name.

You can despise the day of small things, again, by not seeking after more. "That is strange," say you. Well, a man who has got a little, and does not want more—it looks as if he despised the little. He who has a little light, and does not ask for more light, does not care for light at all. You that have a little faith, and do not want more faith, do not value faith at all—you are despising it. On the one hand, do not despond because you have the day of small things, but in the next place, do not stand still and be satisfied with what you have; but prove your value of the little by earnestly seeking after more grace. Do not despise the grace that God has given you, but bless God for it: and do this in the presence of his people. If you hold your tongue about your grace, and never let anyone know, surely it must be because you do not think it is worth saying anything about. Tell your brethren, tell your sisters, and they of the Lord's household, that the Lord hath done gracious things for you; and then it will be seen that you do not despise his grace.

And now let us run over a thought or two about these small things in weak believers. Be it remembered that little faith is saving faith, and that the day of small things is a day of safe things. Be it remembered that it is

natural that living things should begin small. The man is first a babe. The daylight is first of all twilight. It is by little and by little that we come unto the stature of men in Christ Jesus. The day of small things is not only natural, but promising. Small things are living things. Let them alone, and they grow. The day of small things has its beauty and its excellence. I have known some who in after years would have liked to have gone back to their first days. Oh! well do some of us remember when we would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon. We had not much knowledge, but oh! how we longed to know. We stood in the aisles then, and we never got tired. Now soft seats we need, and very comfortable places, and the atmosphere must neither be too hot nor too cold. We are getting dainty now perhaps; but in those first young days of spiritual life, what appetites we had for divine truth, and what zeal, what sacred fire was in our heart! True, some of it was wild fire, and, perhaps, the energy of the flesh mingled with the power of the spirit, but, for all that, God remembers the love of our espousals, and so do we remember it too. The mother loves her grown-up son, but sometimes she thinks she does not love him as she did when she could cuddle him in her arms. Oh! the beauty of a little child! Oh! the beauty of a lamb in the faith! I daresay, the farmer and the butcher like the sheep better than the lambs, but the lambs are best to look at, at any rate; and the rosebud—there is a charm about it that there is not in the full-blown rose. And so in the day of small things there is a special excellence that we ought not to despise. Besides, small as grace may be in the heart, it is divine—it is a spark from the ever-blazing sun. He is a partaker of the divine nature who has even a little living faith in Christ. And being divine, it is immortal. Not all the devils in hell could quench the feeblest spark of grace that ever dropped into the heart of man. If God has given thee faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will defy all earth and hell, all time and eternity, ever to destroy it. So there is much reason why we should not despise the day of small things.

One word and I leave this point. You Christians, don't despise anybody, but specially do not despise any in whom you see even a little love to Christ. But do more—look after them, look after the little ones. I think I have heard of a shepherd who had a remarkably fine flock of sheep, and he had a secret about them. He was often asked how it was that his flocks seemed so much to excel all others. At last he told the secret—"I give my

principal attention to the lambs." Now you elders of the church, and you my matronly sisters, you that know the Lord, and have known him for years, look up the lambs, search them out, and take a special care of them; and if they are well nurtured in their early days they will get a strength of spiritual constitution that will make them the joy of the Good Shepherd during the rest of their days. Now I leave that point. In the second place, I said that I would address a word or two to:—

II. FEEBLE WORKERS

Thank God, there are many workers here tonight, and maybe they will put themselves down as feeble. May the words I utter be an encouragement to them, and to feeble workers collectively. When a church begins, it is usually small; and the day of small things is a time of considerable anxiety and fear. I may be addressing some who are members of a newly-organised church. Dear brethren, do not despise the day of small things. Rest assured that God does not save by numbers, and that results are not in the spiritual kingdom in proportion to numbers. I have been reading lately with considerable care the life of John Wesley by two or three different authors in order to get as well as I could a fair idea of the good man; but one thing I have noticed—that the beginnings of the work which has become so wonderfully large were very small indeed. Mr. Wesley and his first brethren were not rich people. Nearly all that joined him were poor. Here and there, there was a person of some standing, but the Methodists were the poor of the land. And his first preachers were not men of education. One or two were so, but the most were good outdoor preachers—head preachers, magnificent preachers as God made them by his Spirit; but they were not men who had had the benefit of college training, or who were remarkable for ability. The Methodists had neither money nor eminent men at first, and their numbers were very few. During the whole life of that good man, which was protracted for so many years, the denomination did not attain any very remarkable size. They were few, and apparently feeble; but Methodism was never so glorious as it was at first, and there never were so many conversions, I believe, as in those early days. Now I speak sorrowfully. It is a great denomination. It abounds in wealth: I am glad it does. It has mighty orators: I rejoice it has. But it has no increase, no conversion. This year and other years it

remains stationary. I do not say this because that is an exceptional denomination, for almost all others have the same tale. Year by year as the statistics come in, it is just this. "No increase—hardly hold our ground." I use that as an illustration here. This church will get in precisely the same condition if we do not look out—just the same state. When we have not the means we get the blessing, and when we seem to have the might and power, then the blessing does not come. Oh! may God send us poverty; may God send us lack of means, and take away our power of speech if it must be, and help us only to stammer, if we may only thus get the blessing. Oh! I crave to be useful to souls, and all the rest may go where it will. And each church must crave the same. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Instead of despising the day of small things, we ought to be encouraged. It is by the small things that God seems to work, but the great things he does not often use. He won't have Gideon's great host—let them go to their homes—let the mass of them go. Bring them down to the water: pick out only the men that lap, and then there is a very few. You can tell them almost on your fingers' ends—just two or three hundred men. Then Gideon shall go forth against the Midianites; and as the cake of barley bread smote the tent, and it lay along, so the sound of the sword of the Lord and of Gideon at the dead of night shall make the host to tremble, and the Lord God shall get to himself the victory. Never mind your feebleness, brethren, your fewness, your poverty, your want of ability. Throw your souls into God's cause, pray mightily, lay hold on the gates of heaven, stir heaven and earth, rather than be defeated in winning souls, and you will see results that will astonish you yet. "Who hath despised the day of small things?"

Now take the case of each Christian individually. Every one of us ought to be at work for Christ, but the great mass of us cannot do great things. Don't despise, then, the day of little things. You can only give a penny. Now then, he that sat over by the treasury did not despise the widow's two mites that made a farthing. Your little thank-offering, if given from your heart, is as acceptable as if it had been a hundred times as much. Don't, therefore, neglect to do the little. Don't despise the day of small things. You can only give away a tract in the street. Don't say, "I won't do that." Souls have been saved by the distribution of tracts and sermons. Scatter them, scatter them—they will be good seed. You know not where

they may fall. You can only write a letter to a friend sometimes about Christ. Don't neglect to do it: write one tomorrow. Remember a playmate of yours; you may take liberties with him about his soul from your intimacy with him. Write to him about his state before God, and urge him to seek the Saviour. Who knows?—a sermon may miss him, but a letter from the well-known school companion will reach his heart. Mother, it is only two or three little children at home that you have an influence over. Despise not the day of small things. Take them tomorrow; put your arms around their necks as they kneel by you—pray, "God bless my boys and girls, and save them"—tell them of Christ now. Oh! How well can mothers preach to children! I can never forget my mother's teaching. On the Sunday night, when we were at home, she would have us round the table and explain the Scriptures as we read, and then pray; and one night she left an impression upon my mind that never will be erased, when she said, "I have told you, my dear children, the way of salvation, and if you perish you will perish justly. I shall have to say 'Amen' to your condemnation if you are condemned"; and I could not bear that. Anybody else might say "Amen," but not my mother. Oh! You don't know—you that have to deal with children—what you may do. Despise not these little opportunities. Put a word in edgeways for Christ—you that go about in trains, you that go into workshops and factories. If Christians were men who were all true to their colours, I think we should soon see a great change come over our great establishments. Speak up for Jesus—be not ashamed of him, and because you can say but little, don't refuse, therefore, to say that, but rather say it over twenty times, and so make the little into much. Again, and again, and again, repeat the feeble stroke, and there shall come to be as much result from it as from one tremendous blow. God accepts your little works if they are done in faith in his dear Son. God will give success to your little works: God will educate you by your little works to do greater works; and your little works may call out others who shall do greater works by far than ever you shall be able to accomplish. Evangelists, go on preaching at the street corner—you that visit the low lodging-houses, go on. Get into the room and talk of Jesus Christ there as you have done. You that go into the country towns on the Sabbath and speak on the village-greens of Christ, go on with it. I am glad to see you, but I am glad to miss you when I know you are about the Master's work. We don't want to keep the salt in the box: let it be rubbed

into the putrid mass to stay the putrifaction. We don't want the seed forever in the corn-bin: let it be scattered and it will give us more. Oh! brethren and sisters, wake up if any of you are asleep. Don't let an ounce of strength in this church be wasted—not a single grain of ability, either in the way of doing, or praying, or giving, or holy living. Spend and be spent, for who hath despised the day of small things? The Lord encourage weak believers, and the Lord accept the efforts of feeble workers, and send to both his richest benediction for Christ's sake. Amen.

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Enduring To The End

He that endureth to the end shall be saved. - Matthew 10:22

This particular text was originally addressed to the apostles when they were sent to teach and preach in the name of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps bright visions floated before their minds, of honor and esteem among men. It was no mean dignity to be among the twelve first heralds of salvation to the sons of Adam. Was a check needed to their high hopes? Perhaps so. Lest they should enter upon their work without having counted its cost, Christ gives them a very full description of the treatment which they might expect to receive, and reminds them that it was not the commencement of their ministry which would win them their reward, but "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." It would be well if every youthful aspirant to the gospel ministry would remember this, if merely to put our hand to the plough proved us to be called of God, how many would he found so; but alas, too many look back and prove unworthy of the kingdom. The charge of Paul to Timothy, is a very necessary exhortation to every young minister: "Be thou faithful unto death." It is not to be faithful for a time, but to be "faithful unto death," which will enable a man to say, "I have fought a good fight." How many dangers surround the Christian minister! As the officers in an army are the chosen targets of the sharpshooters, so are the ministers of Christ.

The king of Syria said to his servants, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel;" even so the arch-fiend makes his main attack upon the ministers of God. From the first moment of his call to the work, the preacher of the Word will be familiar with temptation. While he is yet in his youth, there are multitudes of the softer temptations to turn the head and trip the feet of the youthful herald of the cross; and when the blandishments of early popularity have passed away, as soon they must, the harsh croak of slander, and the adder's tongue of ingratitude assail him, he finds himself stale and flat where once he was flattered and admired; nay, the venom of malice succeeds to the honeyed morsels of adulation. Now, let him gird his loins and fight the good fight of faith. In his after days, to provide fresh matter Sabbath after Sabbath, to rule as in the sight of God, to watch over the souls of men, to weep with them who weep, to rejoice with those who do rejoice, to be a nursing father unto young converts, sternly to rebuke hypocrites, to deal faithfully with backsliders, to speak with solemn authority and paternal pathos to those who are in the first stages of spiritual decline, to carry about with him the care of the souls of hundreds, is enough to make him grow old while yet he is young, and to mar his visage with the lines of grief, till, like the Savior, at the age of thirty years, men shall count him nearly fifty. "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" said the adversaries of Christ to him when he was but thirty-two. If the minister should fall, my brethren; if, set upon a pinnacle, he should be cast down; if, standing in slippery places, he should falter; if the standard-bearer fall, as fall full well he may, what mischief is done to the Church, what shouts are heard among the adversaries, what dancings are seen among the daughters of Philistia! How hath God's banner been stained in the dust, and the name of Jesus cast into the mire! When the minister of Christ turns traitor, it is as if the pillars of the house did tremble; every stone in the structure feels the shock. If Satan can succeed in overturning the preachers of the Word, it is as if yon broad-spreading tree should suddenly fall beneath the axe; prone in the dust it lies to wither and to rot; but where are the birds of the air which made their nests among its boughs, and whither fly those beasts of the field which found a happy shadow beneath its branches? Dismay hath seized them, and they flee in affright. All who were comforted by the preacher's word, strengthened by his example, and edified by his teaching, are filled with humiliation and

grief, crying, "Alas! my brother." By these our manifold dangers and weighty responsibilities, we may very justly appeal to you who feed under our ministry, and beseech you, "Brethren, pray for us." Well, we know that though our ministry be received of the Lord Jesus, if hitherto we have been kept faithful by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet it is only he who endureth to the end who shall be saved.

But, my brethren, how glorious is the sight of the man who does endure to the end as a minister of Christ. I have photographed upon my heart just now, the portrait of one very, very dear to me, and I think I may venture to produce a rough sketch of him, as no mean example of how honorable it is to endure to the end. This man began while yet a youth to preach the Word. Sprung of ancestors who had loved the Lord and served his Church, he felt the glow of holy enthusiasm. Having proved his capabilities, he entered college, and after the close of its course, settled in a spot where for more than fifty years he continued his labors. In his early days, his sober earnestness and sound doctrine were owned of God in many conversions both at home and abroad. Assailed by slander and abuse, it was his privilege to live it all down. He outlived his enemies, and though he had buried a generation of his friends, yet he found many warm hearts clustering round him to the last. Visiting his flock, preaching in his own pulpit, and making very many journeys to other Churches, years followed one another so rapidly, that he found himself the head of a large tribe of children and grandchildren, most of them walking in the truth. At the age of fourscore years, he preached on still, until laden with infirmities, but yet as joyful and as cheerful as in the heyday of his youth, his time had come to die. He was able to say truthfully, when last he spake to me, "I do not know that my testimony for God has ever altered, as to the fundamental doctrines; I have grown in experience, but from the first day until now, I have had no new doctrines to teach my hearers. I have had to make no confessions of error on vital points, but have been held fast to the doctrines of grace, and can now say that I love them better than ever." Such an one was he, as Paul, the aged, longing to preach so long as his tottering knees could bear him to the pulpit. I am thankful that I had such a grandsire. He fell asleep in Christ but a few hours ago, and on his dying bed talked as cheerfully as men can do in the full vigor of their health. Most sweetly he talked of the preciousness of Christ, and

chiefly of the security of the believer; the truthfulness of the promise; the immutability of the covenant; the faithfulness of God, and the infallibility of the divine decree. Among other things which he said at the last was this, which is, we think, worth your treasuring in your memories. "Dr Watts sings—

'Firm as the earth thy gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust.'

What, Doctor, is it not firmer than that? Could you not find a better comparison? Why, the earth will give way beneath our feet one day or another, if we rest on it. The comparison will not do. The Doctor was much nearer the mark, when he said—

"Firm as his throne his promise stands,
And he can well secure
What I've committed to his hands.
"Till the decisive hour."

"Firm as his throne," said he, "he must cease to be king before he can break his promise, or lose his people. Divine sovereignty makes us all secure." He fell asleep right quietly, for his day was over, and the night was come, what could he do better than go to rest in Jesus? Would God it may be our lot to preach the Word, so long as we breathe, standing fast unto the end in the truth of God; and if we see not our sons and grandsons testifying to those doctrines which are so dear to us, yet may we see our children walking in the truth. I know of nothing, dear friends, which I would choose to have, as the subject of my ambition for life, than to be kept faithful to my God to death, still to be a soul-winner, still to be a true herald of the cross, and testify the name of Jesus to the last hour. It is only such who in the ministry shall be saved.

Our text, however, occurs again in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, at the fourteenth verse, upon which occasion it was not addressed to the apostles, but to the disciples. The disciples, looking upon the huge stones which were used in the construction of the Temple, admired the edifice greatly, and expected their Lord to utter a few words of passing

encomium; instead of which, he, who came not to be an admirer of architecture, but to hew living stones out of the quarry of nature, to build them up into a spiritual temple turned their remarks to practical account, by warning them of a time of affliction, in which there should be such trouble as had never been before, and he added, "No, nor ever shall be." He described false prophets as abounding, and the love of many as waxing cold, and warned them that "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." So that this solemn truth applies to every one of you.

The Christian man, though not called to the post of danger in witnessing publicly of the grace of God, is destined in his measure to testify concerning Jesus, and in his proper sphere and place, to be a burning and a shining light. He may not have the cares of a Church, but he hath far more, the cares of business: he is mixed up with the world; he is compelled to associate with the ungodly. To a great degree, he must, at least six days in the week, walk in an atmosphere uncongenial with his nature: he is compelled to hear words which will never provoke him to love and good works, and to behold actions whose example is obnoxious. He is exposed to temptations of every sort and size, for this is the lot of the followers of the Lamb. Satan knows how useful is a consistent follower of the Savior, and how much damage to Christ's cause an inconsistent professor may bring, and therefore he emptieth out all his arrows from his quiver that he may wound, even unto death, the soldier of the cross. My brethren, many of you have had a far longer experience than myself; you know how stern is the battle of the religious life, how you must contend, even unto blood, striving against sin. Your life is one continued scene of warfare, both without and within; perhaps even now you are crying with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" A Christian's career is always fighting, never ceasing; always ploughing the stormy sea, and never resting till he reaches the port of glory. If my God shall preserve you, as preserve you he must, or else you are not his; if he shall keep you, as keep you he will if you have committed your souls to his faithful guardianship, what an honor awaits you! I have in my mind's eye, just now, one who has been for about sixty years associated with this Church, and who this week, full of years, and ripe for heaven, was carried by angels into the

Savior's bosom. Called by divine grace, while yet young, he was united with the Christian Church early in life. By divine grace, he was enabled to maintain a consistent and honorable character for many years; as an officer of this Church, he was acceptable among his brethren, and useful both by his godly example and sound judgment; while in various parts of the Church of Christ, he earned unto himself a good degree. He went last Sabbath day, twice to the house of God where he was accustomed of late years to worship, enjoying the Word, and feasting at the Communion-table with much delight. He went to his bed without having any very serious illness upon him, having spent his last evening upon earth in cheerful conversation with his daughters. Ere the morning light, with his head leaning upon his hand, he had fallen asleep in Christ, having been admitted to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. As I think of my brother, though of late years I have seen but little of him, I can but rejoice in the grace which illuminated his pathway. When I saw him, the week before his departure, although full of years, there was little or no failure in mind. He was just the picture of an aged saint waiting for his Master, and willing to work in his cause while life remained. I refer, as most of you know, to Mr. Samuel Gale. Let us thank God and take courage—thank God that he has preserved in this case, a Christian so many, many years, and take courage to hope that there will be found in this Church, many, at all periods, whose grey heads shall be crowns of glory. "He that endureth to the end," and only he "shall be saved."

But, dear friends, perseverance is not the lot of the few; it is not left to laborious preachers of the Word, or to consistent Church-officers, it is the common lot of every believer in the Church. It must be so, for only thus can they prove that they are believers. It must be so, for only by their perseverance can the promise be fulfilled, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Without perseverance, they cannot be saved; and, as saved they must be, persevere they shall through divine grace.

I shall now, with brevity and earnestness, as God enables me, speak upon our text thus: perseverance is the badge of saints—the target of our foes—the glory of Christ—and the care of all believers.

I. First, then, PERSEVERANCE IS THE BADGE OF TRUE SAINTS. It is

their Scriptural mark. How am I to know a Christian? By his words? Well, to some degree, words betray the man; but a man's speech is not always the copy of his heart, for with smooth language many are able to deceive. What doth our Lord say? "Ye shall know them by their fruits." But how am I to know a man's fruits? By watching him one day? I may, perhaps, form a guess of his character by being with him for a single hour, but I could not confidently pronounce upon a man's true state even by being with him for a week. George Whitfield was asked what he thought of a certain person's character. "I have never lived with him," was his very proper answer. If we take the run of a man's life, say for ten, twenty, or thirty years, and, if by carefully watching, we see that he brings forth the fruits of grace through the Holy Spirit, our conclusion may be drawn very safely. As the truly magnetized needle in the compass, with many deflections, yet does really and naturally point to the pole; so, if I can see that despite infirmities, my friend sincerely and constantly aims at holiness, then I may conclude with something like certainty, that he is a child of God. Although works do not justify a man before God, they do justify a man's profession before his fellows. I cannot tell whether you are justified in calling yourself a Christian except by your works; by your works, therefore, as James saith, shall ye be justified. You cannot by your words convince me that you are a Christian, much less by your experience, which I cannot see but must take on trust from you; but your actions will, unless you be an unmitigated hypocrite, speak the truth, and speak the truth loudly too. If your course is as the shining light which shineth more unto the perfect day, I know that yours is the path of the just. All other conclusions are only the judgment of charity such as we are bound to exercise; but this is as far as man can get it, the judgment of certainty when a man's life has been consistent through out.

Moreover, analogy shows us that it is perseverance which must mark the Christian. How do I know the winner at the foot-race? There are the spectators, and there are the runners. What strong men! what magnificent muscles! what thews and sinews! Yonder is the goal, and there it is that I must judge who is the winner, not here, at the starting-point, for "They which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize." I may select this one, or that other person, as likely to win, but I cannot be absolutely sure until the race is over. There they fly! see how they press

forward with straining muscles; but one has tripped, another faints, a third is out of breath, and others are far behind. One only wins—and who is he? Why, he who continueth to the end, So I may gather from the analogy, which Paul constantly allows us, from the ancient games, that only he who continueth till he reaches the goal may be accounted a Christian at all. A ship starts on a voyage to Australia—if it stops at Madeira, or returns after reaching the Cape, would you consider that it ought to be called an emigrant ship for New South Wales? It must go the whole voyage, or it does not deserve the name. A man has begun to build a house, and has erected one side of it—do you consider him a builder if he stops there, and fails to cover it in or to finish the other walls? Do we give men praise for being warriors because they know how to make one desperate charge, but lose the campaign? Have we not, of late, smiled at the boasting despatches of commanders, in fights where both combatants fought with valor, and yet neither of them had the common sense to push on to reap the victory? What was the very strength of Wellington, but that when a triumph had been achieved, he knew how to reap the harvest which had been sown in blood? And he only is a true conqueror, and shall be crowned at the last, who continueth till war's trumpet is blown no more. It is with a Christian as it was with the great Napoleon: he said, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." So, under God, conquest has made you what you are, and conquest must sustain you. Your motto must be, "Excelsior;" or, if it be not, you know not the noble spirit of God's princes. But why do I multiply illustrations, when all the world rings with the praise of perseverance?

Moreover, the common-sense judgment of mankind tells us, that those who merely begin and do not hold out, will not be saved. Why, if every man would be saved who began to follow Christ, who would be damned? In such a country as this, the most of men have at least one religious spasm in their lives. I suppose that there is not a person before me, who at some time or other did not determine to be a pilgrim. You, Mr. Pliable, were induced by a Christian friend, who had some influence with you, to go with him some short way, till you came to the Slough of Despond, and you thought yourself very wise when you scrambled out on that side which was nearest to your own home. And even you, Mr. Obstinate, are not always dogged; you have fits of thoughtfulness and intervals of

tenderness. My hearer, how impressed you were at the prayer meeting! how excited you were at that revival service! When you heard a zealous brother preach at the theater what an impression was produced! Ah! yes; the shop was shut up for a Sunday or two; you did not swear or get drunk for nearly a month, but you could not hold on any longer. Now, if those who were to begin were saved, why you would be secure, though you are at the present time as far from anything like religion, as the darkness at midnight is from the blazing light of midday. Besides, common sense shows us, I say, that a man must hold on, or else he cannot be saved, because the very worst of men are those who begin and then give up. If you would turn over all the black pages of villany, to find the name of the son of perdition, where would you find it? Why, among the apostles. The man who had wrought miracles and preached the gospel, sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver—Judas Iscariot, betrays the Son of Man with a kiss. Where is a worse name than that of Simon Magus? Simon "believed also," says the Scripture, and yet he offered the apostles money if they would sell to him the Holy Ghost. What an infamous notoriety Demas has obtained, who loved the present evil world! How much damage did Alexander the coppersmith do to Paul? "He did me much evil," said he, "the Lord reward him according to his works." And yet that Alexander was once foremost in danger, and even exposed his own person in the theater at Ephesus, that he might rescue the apostle. There are none so bad as those who once seemed to be good. "If the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" That which is best when ripe, is worst when rotten; liquor which is sweetest in one stage, becomes sourest in another. Let not him that putteth on his armor boast as though he putteth it off; for even common sense teaches you, that it is not to begin, but to continue to the end which marks the time of the child of God.

But we need not look to analogy and to mere common sense. Scripture is plain enough. What says John? "They went out from us." Why? Were they ever saints? Oh! no—"They went out from us, because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us, but they went out from us, that it might be manifest that they were not of us." They were no Christians, or else they had not thus apostatized. Peter saith, "It hath happened unto them according to the proverb, the dog hath returned to its vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing

in the mire," indicating at once most clearly that the dog, though it did vomit, always was a dog. When men disgorge their sins unwillingly, not giving them up because they dislike them, but because they cannot retain them; if a favorable time comes, they will return to swallow once more what they seemed to abandon. The sow that was washed—ay, bring it into the parlour, introduce it among society; it was washed, and well-washed too; whoever saw so respectable a member of the honorable confraternity of swine before? Bring it in! Yes, but will you keep it there? Wait and see. Because you have not transformed it into a man, on the first occasion it will be found wallowing in the mire. Why? Because it was not a man, but a sow. And so we think we may learn from multitudes of other passages, if we had time to quote them, that those who go back into perdition are not saints at all, for perseverance is the badge of the righteous. "The righteous shalt hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." We not only get life by faith, but faith sustains it; "the just shall live by faith;" "but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

What we have learned from Scripture, dear friends, has been abundantly confirmed by observation. Every day would I bless God that in so numerous a Church we have comparatively so few who have proved false; but I have seen enough, and the Lord knoweth, more than enough, to make me very jealous over you with a godly jealousy. I could tell of many an instance of men and women who did ran well. "What did hinder them that they should not obey the truth?" I remember a young man of whom I thought as favourably as of any of you, and I believe he did at that time deserve our favorable judgment. He walked among us, one of the most hopeful of our sons, and we hoped that God would make him serviceable to his cause. He fell into bad company. There was enough conscience left, after a long course of secret sin, to make him feel uncomfortable in his wickedness, though he did not give it up; and when at last his sin stared him in the face, and others knew it, so ashamed was he, that, though he bore the Christian name, he took poison that he might escape the shame which he had brought upon himself. He was rescued—rescued by skill and the good providence of God; but where he is, and what he is, God only knoweth, for he had taken another poison more deadly still which made him the slave of his own lusts.

Do not think it is the young alone, however. It is a very lamentable fact that there are, in proportion, more backslidings among the old than the young; and, if you want to find a great sinner in that respect, you will find him, surely, nine times out of ten, with grey hairs on his head. Have I not frequently mentioned that you do not find in Scripture, many cases of young people going astray. You do find believers sinning, but they were all getting old men. There is Noah—no youth. There is Lot, when drunken—no child. There is David with Bathsheba,—no young man in the heat of passion. There is Peter denying his Lord—no boy at the time. These were men of experience and knowledge and wisdom. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

With sorrow do we remember one whom, years ago, we heard pray among us, and sweetly too; esteemed and trusted by us all. I remember a dear brother saying very kindly, but not too wisely, "If he is not a child of God, I am not." But what did he, my brethren, to our shame and sorrow, but go aside to the very worst and foulest of sins, and where is he now? Perhaps the ale-house may tell or worse places still. So have we seen, that earth's sun may be eclipsed, earth's stars may go out, and all human glory melt into shame. No true child of God perishes—hold that fast; but this is the badge of a true child of God: that a man endures to the end; and if a man does not hold on, but slinks back to his old master, and once again fits on the old collar, and wears again the Satanic yoke, there is sure proof that he has never come out of the spiritual Egypt through Jesus Christ, his leader, and hath never obtained that eternal life which cannot die, because it is born of God. I have thus then, dear friends, said enough to prove, I think, beyond dispute, that the true badge of the Christian is perseverance, and that without it, no man has proved himself to be a child of God.

II. Secondly, PERSEVERANCE IS THEREFORE, THE TARGET OF ALL OUR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES.

We have many adversaries. Look at the world! The world does not object to our being Christians for a time; it will cheerfully overlook all misdemeanors in that way, if we will now shake hands and be as we used

to be. Your old companions who used to call you such good fellows, when you were bad fellows, would they not very readily forgive you for having been Christians, if you would just go back and be as in days gone by? Oh! certainly, they would look upon your religion as a freak of folly, but they would very easily overlook it, if you would give it up for the future. "O!" saith the world, "come back; come back to my arms once more; be enamored of me, and though thou hast spoken some hard words against me, and done some cruel deeds against me, I will cheerfully forgive thee." The world is always stabbing at the believer's perseverance. Sometimes she will bully him back; she will persecute him with her tongue—cruel mockings shall be used; and at another time, she will cozen him, "Come thou back to me; O come thou back! Wherefore should we disagree? Thou art made for me, and I am made for thee!" And she beckons so gently and so sweetly, even as Solomon's harlot of old. This is the one thing with her, that thou shouldst cease to be a pilgrim, and settle down to buy and sell with her in Vanity Fair.

Your second enemy, the flesh. What is its aim? "Oh! " cries the flesh, "we have had enough of this; it is weary work being a pilgrim, come, give it up." Sloth says, "Sit still where thou art. Enough is as good as a feast, at least, of this tedious thing." Then, lust crieth, "Am I always to be mortified? Am I never to be indulged? Give me at least, a furlough from this constant warfare?" The flesh cares not how soft the chain, so that it does but hold us fast, and prevent our pressing on to glory.

Then comes in the devil, and sometimes he beats the big drum, and cries with a thundering voice "There is no heaven; there is no God; you are a fool to persevere." Or, changing his tactics, he cries, "Come back! I will give thee a better treatment than thou hadst before. Thou thoughtest me a hard master, but that was misrepresentation; come and try me; I am a different devil from what I was ten years ago; I am respectable to what I was then. I do not want you to go back to the low theater or the casino; come with me, and be a respectable lover of pleasure. I tell thee, I can dress in broad cloth as well as in corderoy, and I can walk in the courts of kings, as well as in the courts and alleys of the beggar. O come back!" he saith, and make thyself one of mine." So that this hellish trinity, the world, the flesh, and the devil, all stab at the Christian's perseverance.

His perseverance in service they will frequently attack: "What profit is there is in serving God? The devil will say to me sometimes, as he did to Jonah, "Flee thou unto Tarshish, and do not stop in this Nineveh; they will not believe thy word, though thou speak in God's name?" To you he will say, "Why, you are so busy all the six days of the week, what is the good of spending your Sunday with a parcel of noisy brats in a Sunday School? Why go about with those tracts in the streets? Much good you will get from it. Would not you be better with having a little rest?" Ah! that word rest—some of us are very fond of it; but we ought to recollect that we spoil it if we try to get it here, for rest is only beyond the grave. We shall have rest enough when once we come into the presence of our Lord. Perseverance in service, then, the devil would murder outright.

If he cannot stay us in service, he will try to prevent our perseverance in suffering. "Why be patient any longer?" says he; "why sit on that dunghill, scraping your sores with a potsherd?—curse God, and die. You have been always poor since you have been a Christian; your business does not prosper; you see, you cannot make money unless you do as others do. You must go with the times, or else you will not get on. Give it all up. Why be always suffering like this?" Thus the foul spirit tempts us. Or you may have espoused some good cause, and the moment you open your mouth, many laugh and try to put you down. "Well," says the devil, "be put down—what is the use of it? Why make yourself singularly eccentric, and expose yourself to perpetual martyrdom? It is all very nice," saith he, "if you will be a martyr, to be burnt at once, and have done with it; but to hang, like Lord Cobham, to be roasted over a slow fire for days, is not comfortable. Why," saith the tempter, "why be always suffering—give it up." You see, then, it is also perseverance in suffering which the devil shooteth at.

Or, perhaps, it is perseverance in steadfastness. The love of many has waxed cold, but you remain zealous. "Well," saith he, "what is the good of your being so zealous? Other people are good enough people, you could not censure them: why do you want to be more righteous than they are? Why should you be pushing the Church before you, and dragging the world behind you? What need is there for you to go two marches in one

day? Is not one enough? Do as the rest do; loiter as they do. Sleep as do others, and let your lamp go out as other virgins do." Thus is our perseverance in steadfastness frequently assailed.

Or else, it will be our doctrinal sentiments. "Why," says Satan, "do you hold to these denominational creeds? Sensible men are getting more liberal, they are giving away what does not belong to them—God's truth; they are removing the old landmarks. Acts of uniformity are to be repealed, articles and creeds are to be laid aside as useless lumber, not necessary for this very enlightened age; fall in with this, and be an Anythingarian. Believe that black is white; hold that truth and a lie are very much akin to one another, and that it not does matter which we do believe, for we are all of us right, though we flatly contradict each other; that the Bible is a nose of wax to fit any face; that it does not teach anything material, but you may make it say anything you like. Do that," saith he, "and be no longer firm in your opinion."

I think I have proved—and need not waste more words about it—that perseverance is the target for all enemies. Wear your shield, Christian, therefore, close upon your armor, and cry mightily unto God, that by his Spirit you may endure to the end.

III. Thirdly, brethren, PERSEVERANCE IS THE GLORY OF CHRIST.

That he makes all his people persevere to the end, is greatly to his honor. If they should fall away and perish, every office, and work, and attribute of Christ would be stained in the mire. If any one child of God should perish, where were Christ's covenant engagements? What is he worth as a mediator of the covenant and the surety of it, if he hath not made the promises sure to all the seed? My brethren, Christ is made a leader and commander of the people, to bring many souls into glory; but if he doth not bring them into glory, where is the captain's honor? Where is the efficacy of the precious blood, if it does not effectually redeem? If it only redeemeth for a time and then suffereth us to perish, where is its value? If it only blots out sin for a few weeks, and then permits that sin to return and to remain upon us, where, I say, is the glory of Calvary, and where is the lustre of the wounds of Jesus? He lives, he lives to intercede, but how

can I honor his intercession, if it be fruitless? Does he not pray, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;" and if they be not finally brought to be with him where he is, where is the honor of his intercession? Hath not the Pleader failed, and the great Mediator been dismissed without success? Is he not at this day in union with his people? But what is the value of union to Christ, if that union does not insure salvation? Is he not to-day at the right hand of God, preparing a place for his saints; and will he prepare a place for them, and then lose them on the road? Oh! can it be that he procures the harp and the crown, and will not save souls to use them? My brethren, the perishing of one true child of God, would be such dishonor to Jesus, that I cannot think of it without considering it as blasphemy. One true believer in hell! Oh! what laughter in the pit—what defiance, what unholy mirth! "Ah! Prince of life and glory," saith the prince of the pit, "I have defeated thee; I have snatched the prey from the mighty, and the lawful captive I have delivered; I have torn a jewel from thy crown. See, here it is! Thou didst redeem this soul with blood, and yet it is in hell." Hear what Satan cries—"Christ suffered for this soul, and yet God makes it suffer for itself. Where is the justice of God?" Christ came from heaven to earth to save this soul, and failed in the attempt, and I have him here;" and as he plunges that soul into deeper waves of woe, the shout of triumph goes up more and more blasphemously—"We have conquered heaven! We have rent the eternal covenant; we have foiled the purposes of God; we have defeated his decree; we have triumphed over the power of the Mediator, and cast his blood to the ground!" Shall it ever be? Atrocious question! It can never be. They who are in Christ are saved. They whom Jesus Christ hath really taken into union with himself, shall be with him where he is. But how are you to know whether you are in union with Christ? My brethren, you can only know it by obeying the apostle's words, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure."

IV. I close, therefore, with but a hint on the last point, **PERSEVERANCE SHOULD BE THE GREAT CARE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN**—his daily and his nightly care. O beloved! I conjure you by the love of God, and by the love of your own souls, be faithful unto death. Have you difficulties? You must conquer them. Hannibal crossed the Alps, for his heart was full of fury against Rome; and you must cross the Alps of difficulty, for I trust

your heart is full of hatred of sin. When Mr. Smeaton had built the lighthouse upon the Eddystone, he looked out anxiously after a storm to see if the edifice was still there, and it was his great joy when he could see it still standing, for a former builder had constructed an edifice which he thought to be indestructible, and expressed a wish that he might be in it in the worst storm which ever blew, and he was so, and neither himself nor his lighthouse were ever seen afterwards. Now you have to be exposed to multitudes of storms; you must be in your lighthouse in the worst storm which ever blew; build firmly then on the Rock of Ages, and make sure work for eternity, for if you do these things, ye shall never fall. For this Church's sake, I pray you do it; for nothing can dishonor and weaken a Church so much as the falls of professors. A thousand rivers flow to the sea, and make rich the meadows, but no man heareth the sound thereof; but if there be one cataract, its roaring will be heard for miles, and every traveler will mark the fall. A thousand Christians can scarcely do such honor to their Master as one hypocrite can do dishonor to him. If you have ever tasted that the Lord is gracious, pray that your foot slip not. It would be infinitely better to bury you in the earth than see you buried in sin. If I must be lost, God grant it may not be as an apostate. If I must, after all, perish, were it not better never to have known the way of righteousness than after having known the theory of it, and something of the enjoyment of it, turn again to the beggarly elements of the world? Let your prayer be not against death, but against sin. For your own sake, for the Church's sake, for the name of Christ's sake, I pray you do this. But ye cannot persevere except by much watchfulness in the closet, much carefulness over every action, much dependance upon the strong hand of the Holy Spirit who alone can make you stand. Walk and live as in the sight of God, knowing where your great strength lieth, and depend upon it you shall yet sing that sweet doxology in Jude, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." A simple faith brings the soul to Christ, Christ keeps the faith alive; that faith enables the believer to persevere, and so he enters heaven. May that be your lot and mine for Christ's sake. Amen.

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Entangled In The Land

For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. - Exodus 14:3

Israel was clean escaped from Egypt. Not a hoof of their cattle was left behind; nor foot of child or aged man remained in the house of bondage. But though they were gone, they were not forgotten by the tyrant who had enslaved them. They had been a very useful body of workers; for they had built treasure cities and storehouses for Pharaoh. Compelled to work without wages, they cost the tyrant nothing but the expenditure of the lash. His exactions of forced labor had grown intolerable to the people; but the buildings erected had been a joy to the lord of Egypt. When they were quite gone, Pharaoh woke up to a sense of his loss; and his attendants felt the same; so that they cried, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" Then they resolved to drive them back again, and they thought it easy to do so; for they said "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." They knew that the Israelites had no spirit for war, and they felt sure that they had only overtake them, and hurry them back, like a drove of cattle. They had found them such submissive servants that they expected to fit on them their fetters again, and rivet them for ever. Perhaps their God had shot his last arrow, and Egypt might capture his people again without fear of plagues. Thus men thought; but the Lord thought otherwise.

Do not I speak to some at this hour who, during the last few months, have, by the power of the Lord's gracious hand, escaped out of the bondage of sin? You have got clean away from your old master. With a high hand and an outstretched arm has God brought you forth into liberty. You remember the sprinkling of the blood and the eating of the Paschal Lamb, and you are now on your way to Canaan. But your former master and his friends have not forgotten you. You were once a valuable servant to Satan, and he will not willingly lose you. Some of you whom

God has saved by grace could drink for Satan, and lie for him, and swear for him, and lead others into evil ways, and you could do cheerfully other things which I need not mention, which he always desires to have done in his kingdom. You were a trained servant, and knew your master's way so as to answer his purpose better than most. Servants of Satan usually serve him greedily, and you were very eager. Nothing is too hot or too heavy for men who are thoroughly enthusiastic for evil. Sins that should be thought degrading are followed by men under the notion of pleasure and gaiety. "A short life and a merry one," is too often the cry of persons who are preferring death to life. The devil has the knack of making his bondsmen boast of their freedom; and they follow with eagerness that which is to their own loss and ruin. Poor slaves! their slavery has blinded their minds. Thanks be unto God, certain of you have lately fled from your former bondage; but the point I am to speak of is this—the great tyrant has not forgotten you, and he designs in his heart your capture and re-enslavement. He and his are continually looking for opportunities by which they may bring you again into the thralldom of evil, fasten the manacles of habit upon your hands, and fit the fetters of despair upon your foes. By the grace of God I hope that the Prince of evil, and his helpers, will be disappointed; but they will leave no stone unturned to effect their purposes. One of their hopes of driving you back is the belief that you are entangled by your circumstances and surroundings. They conceive that you have got into serious difficulty through your conversion, and that you cannot find your way out of your perplexity. No, the enemy says, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil." The Pharaoh of the infernal regions thinks to drive the fugitives back again like a flock of sheep; and, notwithstanding all that God has done for them, he hopes again to bring them under his yoke. If Jehovah has brought you out, his work will never be undone; but the enemy's hope lies in his belief that you are hopelessly entangled by your present environment.

I speak just now mainly to new converts, and I trust I may encourage them. Satan has less hope of getting back those who have escaped from his tyranny for many years. If he can trip them up or worry them, even now, he will take a delight in doing it, but he begins to see that the older pilgrims are really the Lord's, and cannot fall into his hands. Of those

who have only lately escaped from his power he has greater hope, for they have not yet proved by the test of experience that the work within them is divine. He hopes that possibly theirs is only temporary reformation; and if so, he can soon make them slip back into the mire of sin, from which he hopes they have only half escaped. I am going to speak to the raw recruits, "from Egypt lately come"; hoping that, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, they may be cheered in pressing forward, and may feel that they can never go back to their old sins.

The early period of Christian faith, like the infancy of life, is crowded with dangers. Literally, new-born life is so precarious that it is a wonder that any infant survives; and infant spiritual life is so full of weaknesses and diseases that none would survive were it not for Almighty grace. Hence the need of the special precept: "Feed my lambs." It is our bounden duty to look well after beginners in the ways of God. The moral mortality in our churches is mainly among the new converts. If they survive the first years of temptation, they continue with us as a rule. Our church-roll shows that the leakage is through the unseasoned timbers.

When they have conquered early fears,
And vanquished youthful wrong,
Grace will preserve their following years,
And make their virtues strong.

If we leave them without help and comfort in their beginnings, we cannot tell how much they will sin and suffer. With the view of helping them, I shall speak, first, upon one of our early dangers; and, secondly, upon our security against that danger.

I. ONE OF OUR EARLY DANGERS is this: we may become entangled in the land; the wilderness may shut us in. That entanglement takes a great many shapes. I will only hint at a few of them.

Dealing with old friends is a frequent one. The man is a new creature in Christ Jesus, and since his friends find that he is so, they trouble him. His foes are they of his own household. How is the youth to make an open confession of Christ before his infidel father? Possibly the convert is a

wife. How is she to be a Christian if she is married to an ungodly husband? Our earthly loves have great power over us, and it is right that they should; but herein comes a hindrance to spiritual life. Satan says to himself, "Ah! he cannot break away from my kingdom, for his brother, his wife, or his betrothed will keep him in my service." It may not only be one member of the family, but several may combine to draw back the half escaped one. It may be, parents, brothers, sisters, friends of all sorts, will unite in their efforts to jeer the young Christian out of his faith, and lead him off from the road of uprightness. We hear much of the Salvation Army, but, alas! there is an Army of Damnation too. Very zealous and crafty are these followers of the evil one. Cruel mockings, accusations of hypocrisy, slanders, and unkindnesses are not spared to turn the young Christian from the right way. Because of household opposition Satan says, "He is entangled in the land." The adversary thinks that you have not the courage to stand up against your relatives, and will not dare to confess your Lord before your wife, or your father. We shall see now whether the Lord has brought you out, or whether you are running off on a mere whim of your own: the devil will not be slow to apply the test.

In some cases the entanglement is not so much that of the family as of society. I have personally known one or two friends moving in high circles who have said to me, "As soon as I am known to be a Christian, my friends will cut my acquaintance. I do not know what I shall do when I have to visit at certain houses; assuredly I shall have to run the gauntlet." It has been a quiet pleasure to me when I have found that they have been banished from such "society" altogether, for it could never have been of any spiritual advantage to them, and it might have proved a snare. Their loss was a real gain. But, oh! how many are afraid of Sir John and of Lady Mary, or of some wealthy neighbor! These fine folks may be nothing very great after all; but, still, weak hearts are all too apt to dread the loss of their patronage, and are ready enough to make a great cross of being frowned out of their society.

In other circles the same difficulties occur. The workshop has its trials as well as the drawing-room. "Ah!" says Satan, "the man came out, and confessed himself a Christian the other night, but I know where he works, and there is not a man in the place who will sympathize with him. He will

be entangled in the land." It happens that one begins in the morning with a joke, a second comes on with an oath, a third follows suit with a sharp and bitter observation. All day long they give the new convert such handfuls of mud as they can find, and the hope of the evil one is that thus he will be forced back on his old ways. The same thing happens on the farm, or on board ship, or in the barrack-room: old companions want to have our society, and are not pleased with the silent rebuke which is implied in our separating from them. You know more about this than I do; but I wonder not at Satan saying, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." Why, some of you can scarcely descend the steps of this Tabernacle, convinced of sin and aroused to seek eternal salvation, before an old friend meets you, and, by his careless salutation, he makes you forget the emotion which just before was so manifest! Or if you get over the first attack, you are so warmly assailed indoors that you are greatly inclined to give in. Alas for the many who are speedily entangled in the nets of human associates, and never gain the liberty of Christ! The demands of business, of position, of self-interest, of custom—these all hold men as birds are caught with bird-lime, or as the needle is held by a powerful magnet, and so they are prepared to hearken to evil entreaties, and return to the country from which they came out.

To some, the entanglements come from having to deal with new matters. All things have become new, and among the rest even their ordinary business wears a different aspect. It used to be conducted in such and such a way; but now, on examination, the man says, "I am a Christian. I cannot do as I have done; and yet, how can I alter it?" It is a very simple matter to fall into those ways of trade which are questionable; but it is not quite so easy to quit them, and yet to gain a livelihood. When you alter one custom of trade, another matter hangs upon it, and needs a change; and it is not easy to bring partners, and clerks, and workpeople, out of old ways into new. They are very apt to be sticklers for former methods. Moreover, there are people in the trade who think you more nice than wise, and will even refuse to do business with you if you are so particular. It is no small thing for the convert to set himself right with the world in his changed mode of dealing; yet this has got to be done, and done with decision, too, or there is no escaping from evil. At such a time the struggler feels—I am entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut me

in; and the enemy of souls is of the same opinion. Now is his opportunity; but if you escape him now he will never again have such an advantage over you.

At the same time, our young brother may be alarmed about the other side of his new associations—namely, joining the church. It seems an ordeal to young beginners to come to see the pastor about uniting with the Lord's people. I am sure they need not be at all terrified at me, for no one will more heartily welcome any sincere seeker after Jesus. All that I shall ask is a simple confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if that be given, even with fear and trembling, I shall be well content. Yet, to the timid beginner, it seems very solemn to be spoken to by the elders of the church. Mr. Bunyan puts lions in front of the Palace Beautiful, by which palace he means the church. I have been told by a facetious person that Mr. Bunyan meant by these lions the deacons and elders. Well, I can only say that I find them brave as lions; but even if they were terrible as those monarchs of the wood, there is no just cause for fearing them; for Mr. Bunyan adds, "The lions are chained." If any of you are afraid of our deacons and elders, you are so without reason; for the lions are chained by the intense love they bear both to their Lord and to all pilgrims to Zion. A guard is set before the door of the church for a necessary purpose, for we would have none enter who are self-deceived; but none of the brethren in office among us will harm anyone who desires to serve the Lord, and dwell with his people. If you have been troubled about your admission to the church, I hope that fear will come to an end by your pushing forward, and being enrolled in our ranks. Get right in your position both towards the world and the church, and let not the evil one say with regard to either of these matters, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in."

We have known others bewildered with doctrinal difficulties. When a man's soul is renewed he begins to think, and he desires to understand many things which aforesaid were indifferent to him. He meets with that most plain and precious truth, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and he is well satisfied with that declaration. Still, as he grows, he seeks more knowledge, and longs to understand the deep things of God. Possibly, as a young beginner he goes beyond his depth.

He perceives the doctrine of election in the Bible, and he asks, "What is this?" It may be he is greatly grieved with this doctrine; for though it is rich with comfort for those who, by reason of years, have had their senses exercised, yet it is a hard nut for babes in grace. It is simple enough when seen from one side of it, but from another it is a bottomless mystery. We have seen minds quite bewildered, where to us all things have seemed plain.

I have known people stumble over hard texts. "What means this text? What means that passage? What means the other Scripture?" You would be astonished if you knew how many people are disturbed in mind, lie awake at nights, and are likely to lose their faith in Christ, over Scriptures which are as cheering as can be when once they are understood. These people need that some man should guide them; for, like the Ethiopian nobleman, they will not otherwise understand what they read. In former periods, many lost themselves in meditations upon free will, predestination, irresistible grace, and so forth. It was a pity that they dwelt so much upon the decrees of the Father, and so little upon the work of the Lord Jesus. They got their heads muddled by things too high for them. People are more frivolous now, as a rule, and this evil is rare. Still, there are to be found, here and there, thoughtful persons, not yet fully instructed in the faith, who are puzzled and confounded as the infinite glory of revealed truth opens up before their astonished gaze. They will know hereafter; but for the present they are sorely troubled and perplexed, and their cruel enemy rejoices that "They are entangled in the land." Nothing contributes more to this than the divisions in the Christian church. One preacher cries up one thing, and another quite the contrary, till young converts cry, "Which are we to believe?" and they stand as if they had come to cross-roads, and did not know which way to take. I am sorry it should be so; but there is a promise to the family of faith, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." You shall not lose your way if you will accept the Word of God as a little child. Be of good courage; for it is written—"He shall guide thee continually."

Far worse is the case of those who are entangled through strange discoveries. They came in among professed believers, and they supposed that all Christians were perfect (which, by the way, is a mere

supposition), and now they have met with a certain loud professor who has acted very dishonorably and unkindly towards them, and they cry out with astonishment, "How is this?" We who know by experience and observation that Judas may be looked for among common disciples, since he appeared among the chosen twelve, are not so staggered when we see a hypocrite. We now expect to see black sheep, even in the choicest flock; but the new convert is sorely grieved and stumbled when he finds out the melancholy fact that all men are not what they seem. Great mischief is wrought among young Christians by hypocritical or inconsistent professors. God grant that none of us may be of that kind, for the blood of souls will lie at the door of such persons!

It may be that, in his earliest days, the young convert finds out with surprise that his own heart is brimming over with sin. He thought that he was so changed that no sin remained in him, and no temptation from without could move him. He hoped that he was so sure of the truth of God that he should never doubt, and now he has to cry, "Lord, help mine unbelief," for he can hardly decide whether he believes or not. He has discovered another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity. He finds that when he would do good evil is present with him; and this inward conflict between the flesh and the spirit comes upon him as a terrible surprise. "Why am I thus?" cries he. "Can I be a child of God and have such dreadful thoughts? Could I feel so wretched if I were indeed a possessor of grace?" When young beginners get into this rough road, they are taken by surprise, and know not what to do. Then is it that the adversary of their souls hopes that "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.

Akin to this are their amazements at painful experiences. It may be the Lord withholds the light of his countenance from them, and then they walk in darkness, and see no light. If they were always to enjoy calm and comfort, they would with self-complacency boast, "My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved," and the Lord hides himself from them to slay their pride. If they were always at ease they would fall into living by feeling, instead of walking by faith. Therefore the Lord tries them, leads them by a desert path, clouds their sky, and burdens their backs. Then they enquire, "How is this?" Some of us know that when God

shuts us up in the dark, he loves us as dearly as when he pours sunlight upon us, but beginners in divine life do not know this, and they are terribly put to it, since they judge God's heart by his hand. "Can I be a child of God, and yet be so afflicted? and why is my light so dim?" These frames and feelings, which come of our being frail, foolish, and feeble-minded, are a great perplexity; and when we cannot make them out, the adversary cries, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in."

What if, at the back of all this, we should be assailed with special trials? Suppose it should be true that, ever since you have been a Christian, you have not prospered in worldly concerns as you did before. It will seem strange. When you were a man of the world, and were an enemy of God, you had plenty of money, and a host of friends; but now that you have become a Christian, your means and your friends are gradually melting away. It may be the case: I have known such an instance. Yet it is not hard to explain this in several ways. The Lord would not have us follow him for the sake of what we get from him. He would have us men, against whom even Satan could not say, "Hast thou not set a hedge about him, and all that he has?" Our Lord desires followers who will cling to him at all risks, for no other reason but their value of himself and his truth. He would have servants who, having counted the cost, would lose estate and repute, yea, and life itself, sooner than turn aside from the way of their Lord. Perhaps you are being educated to this point of faithfulness. Do not, therefore, doubt, because of your exercises and tribulations; but take these things joyfully. The path to heaven lies by the dens of the leopards, and the haunts of the young lions. Dream not that God has forsaken you. Leave it to the devil to say, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in."

Possibly, once more, some may be much beset on the road to heaven by mental difficulties. I do not often say much about these things; because there are plenty of preachers who, by mentioning difficulties, are really spreading them. Certain clever gentlemen of the cloth may think it their duty to sow doubts among their hearers; but I have no such ambition. They may imagine that they are answering the questions which they suggest, but it seems to me that they are merely advertising them to many

of those who were previously unaware of them. This is an age when men assail the inspiration of the Bible, the atoning sacrifice, and the election of grace. I need not enlarge. Everything is now attacked. There is no part of the Bible which some critic would not take away from us. It may be, young friend, that you cannot answer all the objections which you hear. Do not wonder if you cannot. You would be wiser than Solomon if you could reply to all objections that cavillers may invent. A friend came to me with a great difficulty, supposing that I could answer it off-hand; but I replied, "He who fashioned this piece of criticism took time in the making of it, and you must allow me the same time to demolish it. I will do my best with it; but remember, if you find a thousand difficulties which I cannot meet, that fact will not prove that they cannot be met; for I do not profess to be omniscient, nor do I assert that faith is a grace which has no difficulties to surmount." If there were a thousand more objections which could not at this present be answered, they might confuse our feeble minds, but they would not shake the eternal truth itself. God's Word is sure, be the difficulties what they may. Know what you do know, and believe what you do believe, and get a firm grip of undoubted verities; and though, when you are worried with the doubts and hypotheses of philosophers and the like, Satan will say, "They are entangled in the land," let him see that your worry is soon ended by a childlike faith in the living God. Real faith will find a way out of perplexity, or will make one. True faith will sooner set aside the conclusions of human reason than the declarations of God: in fact, faith teaches reason to be reasonable by setting before it the highest of all reasons, namely, the testimony of God. God send us such a childlike faith, and then we shall not be "entangled in the land"!

II. I have thus shown you what our danger is. Now, secondly, let us think of OUR SECURITY UNDER THIS TRIAL.

My text is, "Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." Upon this I make the first observation, that this is not true. It is only what Pharaoh said. And so when Satan says, "They are entangled in the land," it is not true; it is only one of the sayings of the father of lies. "They say"—says one. Well, what do they say? Let them say it: their saying will not make it true. A troubled

one comes to me, and complains of a certain charge which has been made, and he adds, as the sharp edge of it all, "Sir, it is not true." Well, then, do not fret about it. One cries out, "They are taking away my character, and I feel it keenly because what they say is cruelly false." Friend, do not feel it at all. You ought to feel it if what they say is true. Now, what Pharaoh said was not true; and his speech did not cause the children of Israel to be really entangled in the land. Pharaoh's tongue speaks his wish; but his wish will not be realized. Our adversaries say that our cause is defeated. Is it? "Ah!" say they, we have shut him up. The man cannot answer us; we have crushed his faith, and argued his confidence to death." Have you? By the grace of God we stand fast in the once-delivered faith, after all your sophistries and boasts. You say that we are entangled; but we are not. "Show us," say they, "the way in which you will get out of the wilderness." No, that we cannot do; but, if you will wait a while, the Lord will show you that, by leading us graciously through the divided sea, and it may be also by drowning you therein, as he did the Egyptians when the waters overwhelmed them. Israel could not guess her way, but Israel could wait till God revealed it. Newly-emancipated one, thou art shut in with doubts and difficulties suggested by carnal reason; but, I pray thee, believe thy God. By the blood of the cross, I entreat thee, believe the Lord Jesus. By the eternal judgment and the great white throne, believe thy God. "Let God be true but every man a liar." Wait thou till he shall clear thy way, through the very heart of the sea if need be: a way which will conduct thee in safety to the other shore, where, with timbrel and with song, thou shalt proclaim his victory.

My next observation is this: that though Pharaoh said, "They are entangled in the land; the wilderness hath shut them in," yet they had a guide. Look at the surroundings of my text, and you will see that they were guided by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, so that they had no need to be in any perplexity as to their road. We, too, have a Guide. In providence we are not left without a Leader, and in spiritual things we are not left without the Spirit of God, who shall lead us into all truth. Young traveler, you are not turned out alone into a wild wilderness to find a path: the Good Shepherd goes before you; follow him as the sheep follow their shepherd. He never led his flock in the wrong direction yet. Do what he bids you, and you are safe. Do as he did when

he was here below: his example is your safe direction. Believe him and obey him. Keep to the narrow path. Hold fast your integrity, and never let go your faith. You have a heavenly Guide. You are not left alone, and therefore you cannot be entangled in the land; the wilderness has not shut you in.

Remember, next, that the Lord had appointed a way for these people. There was not only a guide, but a way. But where was that way? Mountains blocked them on either side. They could not turn back, for Pharaoh shut up that route. Where should they go? The reedy Red Sea rolled across their front. Hearken! Their way is across the bottom of that sea, and up from its depths to the other shore. A strange path! "It is no way at all," cries unbelief. Have you never read concerning God, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Tried believer, the Lord will make a way for you where no foot has been before. That which, like a sea, threatens to drown you, shall be a highway for your escape.

I had once a friend, an upright gracious man, a gentleman whom God had prospered. He had, when engaged in a bank, acted uprightly in a matter in which his superiors judged him to be foolishly scrupulous, and therefore dismissed him. He could not do wrong; and so he was left with a wife and family, without a situation, and as everybody told him, irretrievably ruined, because of his "foolish conscientiousness." He was for years the head of that very bank. In a singular way, the Lord made his discharge the means of his advancement, so that he rose, step by step, to be the master where he had been the rejected servant; and this, humanly speaking, would not have come about had it not been for the incident mentioned. Have faith that God can turn the evil into good, and that which threatens to annihilate you will be the means of your enlargement. Look you well to your integrity, and the Lord will look to your prosperity. The way of faith is not a common turnpike road, which every careless traveler may traverse without care or study. It is a mysterious way, which no fowl knoweth, and the lion's whelp hath not trodden. Those who inherit the special glories of heaven must encounter the special perils of the deep and of the desert, and in their wonderful journey they shall behold the glorious arm of the Lord working wonders for them.

Note well that the Lord would not only find them a way, but, at the same time, overthrow their enemies. You have come up out of Egypt, O young believer, but the taskmasters are at your heels! There may come a decisive moment, after which they shall never pursue you again. These who seek your soul are to be destroyed, so that there shall not be one of them left. I believe that many a young convert hates sin, and hates all evil habits, but these evils keep dogging his footsteps, and seem as if they would master him; and then there comes a time of great struggle and tremendous battling without and within: on that one desperate field he fights the matter out. His adversaries are drowned in that Red Sea: his old sins and his old habits love for ever their former power. The Red Sea rolled between Israel and Egypt; and whatever else might trouble the pilgrim host, they were never, throughout the whole forty years, molested by Pharaoh, or any of the Egyptians. It is a grand thing when a man gets clean away from the world and is reckoned as dead to it. He has burnt his boats, and has landed on the shore, from which he never can go back again, but must fight out the battle against sin even to the end. When a man is sworn into the army of Christ for eternity, and the world has cast him out, there is nothing for him but to go right ahead. Everything that he has is now staked on the cross of Christ. Happy man to have come to such a pass—to be once for all crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him! The Egyptians of sin which had so fiercely pursued him are drowned, and the rest of the Egyptians of evil have given him up; and he may go on his way to the promised land in peace, so far as his old taskmasters are concerned.

Remember, also, dear friends, that when these people were thought to be hopelessly entangled, they were about to see the Lord perform for them a work which would be most helpful to their ultimate conquest of Canaan; for when Pharaoh and his chariots were drowned in the sea, Palestine heard of it, and all the natives thereof began to tremble. Thus sang Moses in his famous song, "Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine." That day in which a convert has to fight out the battle once for all with himself shall give him strength for all future conflict, and smooth

his pathway into the land that flows with milk and honey. You must not think, young Christian, because you are saved from guilt, that everything is done, and the warfare ended! There is a life-long conflict for you before you obtain possession of your inheritance; and, it may be that, if now, when you are in special trouble, you are found faithful, all the rest of the road will be cleared from similar troubles. Now shall the Egyptians be drowned in the sea. Some of us can recollect the time when we had to stand still and seriously ask, "Can I now be true to the Lord and his law? I am advised the other way by a very prudent friend. Can I reject this advice? I can see the worldly advantage that I should gain through acting in a crooked course. Can I forego that advantage I can see that I shall have to suffer if I am conscientious. Can I take up my cross?" When, after hours of anguish and prayer, you have come out of every entanglement pure and free, from that time forth the Lord may lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and your victory over all other adversaries will be easy. Will not this comfort some of you who have just come to the Red Sea? The place of test and trial shall be the place of the ending of the foe.

Why had the Lord led the people so far if he would not help them still? Do I hear some one say, "I fear that I shall never get out of my difficulties"? Yet you believe that the Lord has brought you out from the dominion of Satan? Tell me, has God brought you so far to let you perish? He has broken off the yoke of sin; he has given you a hope in Christ, and you are a changed man. Do you think that he would do all this for you, and then leave you? Come, my brother, has the Lord brought you out of Egypt, by the precious blood of the Lamb, that you should die in the wilderness? Do you believe that Jesus has redeemed you to let you be lost after all? I would speak personally to any elderly Christians here who begin to think that they shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy. How old are you? Sixty." Sixty? How long do you expect to live? Answer: ten years. Then if God has taken care of you for sixty years, can you not trust him for the odd ten? "Well," says one, "I am eighty." Eighty? How long do you reckon to remain on earth Are you going to doubt for the few years that are yet to come? Have you trusted your God for eighty long years? Do not doubt him now, I pray you. Do not please the devil by distrusting your faithful God. As surely as Jehovah begins he will finish. It shall never be said of any work of God, "He began to build, and was not able to finish." If he has

set you on the way to the eternal inheritance, he will surely bring you into it. God is never defeated or turned aside. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." Comfort one another, therefore, with such words as these.

Lastly, the Lord must bring Israel out of all entanglement, for how else could he be glorified? Suppose that the Israelites had been left to perish when Pharaoh said they were shut in, what then? What would the Lord have done for his great name? Would not the Egyptians have exulted over Israel's God? A Scotch minister tells the story of an aged saint who, on her dying bed, said that her Saviour would never leave her to perish. "But suppose that he did not keep his promise, and you were to be lost?" She answered, "He would be a greater loser than I." When asked what she meant, she answered, "It is true that I would lose my soul; but God would lose his honor and his glory if he were not true." Brethren, if we have trusted in God, and have come out of the Egypt of the world through his grace, and have left all its sins behind us, if we were left to die in the wilderness, the Lord Jesus Christ would lose his glory as a Saviour, the divine Father would lose his name for immutable faithfulness, and the Holy Ghost would lose his honor for perseverance in completing every work which he undertakes. The Lord God of Israel will never stain his glory, wherefore be ye confident that he who brought you out of Egypt will bring you into Canaan. How I delight in that verse which we sang just now—

"My name from the palms of his hands eternity will not erase;
Impress'd on his heart it remains in marks of indelible grace:
Yes, I to the end shall endure, as sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure, the glorified spirits in heaven."

"Ah" murmurs one, "I don't believe that!" Then I am sorry for you; for "according to your faith be it unto you." "I believe," says one, "that men fall away and perish." It will be an evil thing for you if it should be to you according to your faith. If you have grace enough to grasp the whole range of blessing which the covenant of God offers you, then the whole shall be yours by a covenant of salt. He that thinks he can be off and on with God saved today and lost to-morrow, and then saved again has a comfortless creed to defend, and a world of absurdities to meet. You are

born again. Suppose that you could lose the new life which comes by the new birth, what then? I have heard of people being born again, but could they be born again, and again, and again? According to the notion of some, certain persons are born again, and again, and again, and again, and again; I do not know how many times. There is nothing in Scripture to warrant such a strange idea. If you, my friend, will come and cast yourself on Christ, and take him to be your Saviour once for all, he will save you now with an everlasting salvation. He saith, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Jesus himself has said it, "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Believe for this with heroic faith. Believe for eternal salvation in Jesus Christ, who is able to work in you a livelong escape from sin. According to your faith, so shall it be. Oh, no! The devil may say that we are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut us in; but we shall get out of the labyrinth right enough. Is it not written: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." We shall yet sing unto the Lord who hath triumphed gloriously. Our sins and our fears hath he thrown into the sea. So be it. Hallelujah! Amen.

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The Eternal Name

His name shall endure for ever. - Psalm 72:17

No one here requires to be told that this is the name of Jesus Christ, which "shall endure for ever." Men have said of many of their works, "they shall endure for ever;" but how much have they been disappointed! In the age succeeding the flood, they made the brick, they gathered the slime, and when they had piled old Babel's tower, they said, "This shall last for ever." But God confounded their language; they finished it not. By his lightnings he destroyed it, and left it a monument of their folly. Old Pharaoh and the Egyptian monarchs heaped up their pyramids, and they said, "They shall stand for ever," and so indeed they do stand; but the time is approaching when age shall devour even these. So with all the proudest works of man, whether they have been his temples or his monarchies, he has written "everlasting" on them; but God has ordained their end, and they have passed away. The most stable things have been evanescent as shadows, and the bubbles, of an hour, speedily destroyed at God's bidding. Where is Nineveh, and where is Babylon? Where the cities of Persia? Where are the high places of Edom? Where are Moab, and the princes of Ammon? Where are the temples or the heroes of Greece? Where the millions that passed from the gates of Thebes? Where are the hosts of Xerxes, or where the vast armies of the Roman emperors? Have they not passed away? And though in their pride they said, "This monarchy is an everlasting one; this queen of the seven hills shall be called the eternal city," its pride is dimmed; and she who sat alone, and said, "I shall be no widow, but a queen for ever," she hath fallen, hath fallen, and in a little while she shall sink like a millstone in the flood, her name being a curse and a byword, and her site the habitation of dragons and owls. Man calls his works eternal—God calls them fleeting; man conceives that they are built of rock—God says, "Nay, sand, or worse than that—they are air." Man says he erects them for eternity—God blows but for a moment, and where are they? Like baseless fabrics of a vision, they are passed and gone for ever.

It is pleasant, then, to find that there is one thing which is to last for ever. Concerning that one thing we hope to speak to-night, if God will enable me to preach, and you to hear. "His name shall endure for ever." First, the religion sanctified by his name shall endure for ever; secondly, the honor of his name shall endure for ever; and thirdly, the saving, comforting power of his name shall endure for ever.

I. First, the religion of the name of Jesus is to endure for ever. When impostors forged their delusions, they land hopes that peradventure they might in some distant age carry the world before them; and if they saw a few followers gather around their standard, who offered incense at their shrine, then they smiled, and said, "My religion shall outshine the stars, and last through eternity." But how mistaken have they been! How many false systems have started up and passed away! Why, some of us have seen, even in our short lifetime, sects that rose like Jonah's gourd, in a single night, and passed away as swiftly, We, too, have behold prophets rise, who have had their hour—yea, they have had their day, as dogs all have; but, like the dogs', their day has passed away, and the impostor, where is he? And the arch-deceiver, where is he? Gone and ceased. Specially might I say this of the various systems of Infidelity. Within a hundred and fifty years, how has the boasted power of reason changed! It has piled up one thing, and then another day it has laughed at its own handiwork, demolished its own castle, and constructed another, and the next day a third. It has a thousand dresses. Once it came forth like a fool with its bells, heralded by Voltaire; then it came out a braggart bully, like Tom Paine; then it changed its course, and assumed another shape, till, forsooth, we have it in the base, bestial secularism of the present day, which looks for naught but the earth, keeps its nose upon the ground, and, like the beast, thinks this world is enough; or looks for another through seeking this. Why, before one hair on this head shall be gray, the last secularist shall have passed away; before many of us are fifty years of age, a new Infidelity shall come, and to those who say, "Where will saints be?" we can turn round and say, "Where are you?" And they will answer, "We have altered our names." They will have altered their name, assumed a fresh shape, put on a new form of evil, but still their nature will be the same; opposing Christ, and endeavoring to blaspheme his truths. On all

their systems of religion, or non-religion—for that is a system too—it may be written, "Evanescent; fading as the flower, fleeting as the meteor, frail and unreal as a vapor." But of Christ's religion, it shall be said, "His name shall endure for ever." Let me now say a few things—not to prove it, for that I do not wish to do—but to give you some hints whereby, possibly, I may one day prove it to other people, that Jesus Christ's religion must inevitably endure for ever.

And first, we ask those who think it shall pass away, when was there a time when it did not exist? We ask them whether they can point their finger to a period when the religion of Jesus was an unheard-of thing? "Yes," they will reply, "before the days of Christ and his apostles." But we answer, "Nay, Bethlehem was not the birthplace of the gospel; though Jesus was born there, there was a gospel long before the birth of Jesus, and a preached one, too; although not preached in all its simplicity and plainness, as we hear it now. There was a gospel in the wilderness of Sinai, although it might be confused with the smoke of the incense, and only to be seen through slaughtered victims; yet, there was a gospel there." Yea, more, we take them back to the fair trees of Eden, where the fruits perpetually ripened, and summer always rested, and amid these groves we tell them there was a gospel, and we let them hear the voice of God, as he spoke to recreant man, and said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And having taken them thus far back, we ask, "Where were false religions born? Where was their cradle?" They point us to Mecca, or they turn their fingers to Rome; they speak of Confucius, or the dogmas of Buddha. But we say, you only go back to a distant obscurity; we take you to, the primeval age; we direct you to the days of purity; we take you back to the time when Adam first trod the earth; and then we ask you whether it is not likely that, as the first-born, it will not also be the last to die? and as it was born so early, and still exists, whilst a thousand ephemera have become extinct, whether it does not look most possible, that when all others shall have perished, like the bubble upon the wave, this only shall swim, like a good ship upon the ocean, and still shall bear its myriad souls, not to the land of shades, but across the river of death to the plains of heaven?

We ask next, supposing Christ's gospel to become extinct, what religion is

to supplant it? We inquire of the wise man, who says Christianity is soon to die, "Pray, sir, what religion are we to have in its stead? Are we to leave the delusions of the heathen, who bow before their gods, and worship images of wood and stone? Will ye have the orgies of Bacchus, or the obscenities of Venus? Would ye see your daughters once more bowing down before Thammuz, or performing obscene rites as of old?" Nay, ye would not endure such things; ye would say, "It must not be tolerated by civilized men." Then what would ye have? Would ye have Romanism and its superstitions? Ye will say, "No, God help us; never." They may do what they please with Britain; but she is too wise to take old Popery back again, while Smithfield lasts, and there is one of the signs of martyrs there; aye, while there breaths a man who marks himself a freeman, and swears by the constitution of Old England, we cannot take Popery back again. She may be rampant with her superstitions and her priestcraft; but with one consent my hearers reply, "We will not have Popery." Then what will ye choose? Shall it be Mahometanism? Will ye choose that, with all its fables, its wickedness and libidinousness? I will not tell you of it. Nor will I mention the accursed imposture of the West that has lately arisen. We will not allow Polygamy, while there are men to be found who love the social circle, and cannot see it invaded. We would not wish, when God hath given to man one wife, that he should drag in twenty, as the companions of that one. We cannot prefer Mormonism; we will not, and we shall not. Then what shall we have in the place of Christianity? "Infidelity," you cry, do you, sirs? And would you have that? Then what would be the consequence? What do many of them promote? Communist views, and the real disruption of all society as at present established. Would you desire Reigns of Terror here, as they had in France? Do you wish to see all society shattered, and men wandering like monster icebergs on the sea, dashing against each other, and being at last utterly destroyed? God save us from Infidelity! What can you have, then? Naught. There is nothing, to supplant Christianity. What religion shall overcome it? There is not one to be compared with it. If we tread the globe round, and search from Britain to Japan, there shall be no religion found, so just to God, so safe to man.

We ask the enemy once more, suppose a religion were to be found which would be preferable to the one we love, by what means would you crush

ours? How would you get rid of the religion of Jesus? and how would you extinguish his name? Surely, sirs, ye would never think of the old practice of persecution, would you? Would you once more try the efficacy of stakes and fires, to burn out the name of Jesus? Would ye give us the boots and instruments of torture? Try it, sirs, and ye shall not quench Christianity. Each martyr, dipping his finger in his blood, would write its honors on the heavens as he died; and the very flame that mounted up to heaven would emblazon the skies with the name of Jesus. Persecution has been tried. Turn to the Alps; let the valleys of Piedmont speak; let Switzerland testify; let France, with its St. Bartholomew; let England, with, all its massacres, speak. And if ye have not crushed it yet, shall ye hope to do it? Shall ye? Nay, a thousand are to be found, and ten thousand if it were necessary, who are willing to march to the stake tomorrow: and when they are burned, if ye could take up their hearts, ye would see engraven upon each of them the name of Jesus. "His name shall endure for ever;" for how can ye destroy our love to it? "Ah, but," ye say, "we would try gentler means than that." Well, what would ye attempt? Would ye invent a better religion? We bid you do it, and let us hear it; we have not yet so much as believed you capable of such a discovery. What then? Would ye wake up one that should deceive us and lead us astray? We bid you do it; for it is not possible to deceive the elect. Ye may deceive the multitude, but God's elect shall not be led astray. They have tried us. Have they not given us Popery? Have they not assailed us with Puseyism? Are they not tempting us with Arminianism by the wholesale? And do we therefore renounce God's truth? No: we have taken this for our motto, and by it we will stand. "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible," is still the religion of Protestants: and the self-same truth which moved the lips of Chrysostom, the old doctrine that ravished the heart of Augustine, the old faith which Athanasius declared, the good old doctrine that Calvin preached, is our gospel now, and God helping us, we will stand by it till we die. How will ye quench it? If ye wish to do it, where can ye find the means? It is not in your power. Aha! aha! aha! we laugh you to scorn.

But you will quench it, will you? You will try it, do you say? And you hope you will accomplish your purpose? Yes. I know you will, when you have annihilated the sun; when you have quenched the moon with drops of

your tears; when you have dried up the sea with your drinking. Then shall ye do it. And yet ye say ye will.

And next, I ask you, suppose you did, what would become of the world then? Ah! were I eloquent to-night, I might perhaps tell you. If I could borrow the language of a Robert Hall, I might hang the world in mourning; I might make the sea the great chief-mourner, with its dirge of howling winds, and its wild death-march of disordered waves; I might clothe all nature, not in words of green, but in garments of sombre blackness; I would bid hurricanes howl the solemn wailing—that death-shriek of a world—for what would become of us, if we should lose the gospel? As for me, I tell you fairly, I would cry, "Let me begone!" I would have no wish to be here without my Lord; and if the gospel be not true, I should bless God to annihilate me this instant; for I would not care to live if ye would destroy the name of Jesus Christ. But that would not be all, that one man should be miserable, for there are thousands and thousands who can speak as I do. Again, what would become of civilization if ye could take Christianity away? Where would be the hope of a perpetual peace? Where governments? Where your Sabbath Schools? Where all your societies? Where everything that ameliorates the condition of man, reforms his manners, and moralizes his character? Where? Let echo answer, "Where?" They would be gone, and not a scrap of them would be left. And where, O men, would be your hope of heaven? And where the knowledge of eternity? Where a help across the river death? Where a heaven? And where bliss everlasting? All were gone if his name did not endure for ever. But we are sure of it, we know it, we affirm it, we declare it; we believe, and ever will, that "his name shall endure for ever,"—aye, for ever! let who will try to stop it.

This is my first point; I shall have to speak with rather bated breath upon the second, although I feel so warm within as well as without, that I would to God I could speak with all my strength, as I might do.

II. But, secondly, as his religion, so the honor of his name is to last for ever. Voltaire said he lived in the twilight of Christianity. He meant a lie; he spoke the truth. He did live in its twilight; but it was the twilight before the morning—not the twilight of the evening, as he meant to say;

for the morning comes, when the light of the sun shall break upon us in its truest glory. The scorers have said that we should soon forget to honor Christ, and that one day no man should acknowledge him. Now, we assert again, in the words of my text, "His name shall endure for ever," as to the honor of it. Yes, I will tell you how long it will endure. As long as on this earth there is a sinner who has been reclaimed by omnipotent grace, Christ's name shall endure; as long as there is a Mary ready to wash his feet with tears and wipe them with the hair of her head; as long as there breathes a chief of sinners who has washed himself in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; as long as there exists a Christian who has put his faith in Jesus, and found him his delight, his refuge, his stay, his shield, his song, and his joy, there will be no fear that Jesus' name will cease to be heard. We can never give up that name. We let the Unitarian take the gospel without a godhead in it; we let him deny Jesus Christ; but as long as Christians, true Christians, live, as long as we taste that the Lord is gracious, have manifestations of his love, sights of his face, whispers of his mercy, assurances of his affection, promises of his grace, hopes of his blessing, we cannot cease to honor his name. But if all these were gone—if we were to cease to sing his praise, would Jesus Christ's name be forgotten then? No; the stones would sing, the hills would be an orchestra, the mountains would skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs; for is he not their Creator? And if these lips, and the lips of all mortals were dumb at once, there are creatures enough in this wide world besides. Why, the sun would lead the chorus; the moon would play upon her silver harp, and sweetly sing to her music; stars would dance in their measured courses; the shoreless depths of ether would become the home of songs; and the void immensity would burst out into one great shout, "Thou art the glorious Son of God; great is thy majesty, and infinite thy power." Can Christ's name be forgotten? No; it is painted on the skies; it is written on the floods; the winds whisper it; the tempests howl it; the seas chant it; the stars shine it; the beasts low it; the thunders proclaim it; earth shouts it; heaven echoes it. But if that were gone—if this great universe should all subside in God, just as a moment's foam subsides into the wave that bears it and is lost for ever—would his name be forgotten then? No. Turn your eyes up yonder; see heaven's terra firma. "Who are these that are arrayed in white, and whence came they?" "These are they that came out of great tribulation; they have washed their

robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore they are before the throne of God, and praise him day and night in his temple." And if these were gone; if the last harp of the glorified had been touched with the last fingers; if the last praise of the saints had ceased; if the last hallelujah had echoed through the then deserted vaults of heaven, for they would be gloomy then; if the last immortal had been buried in his grave, if graves there might be for immortals—would his praise cease then? No, by heaven! no; for yonder stand the angels; they too sing his glory; to him the cherubim and seraphim do cry without ceasing, when they mention his name, in that thrice holy chorus, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of armies." But if these were perished—if angels had been swept away, if the wing of seraph never flapped the ether, if the voice of the cherub never sung his flaming sonnet, if the living creatures ceased their everlasting chorus, if the measured symphonies of glory were extinct in silence, would his name then be lost? Ah! no; for as God upon the throne he sits, the everlasting One, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And if the universe were all annihilated, still would his name be heard, for the Father would hear it, and the Spirit would hear it, and deeply graven on immortal marble in the rocks of ages, it would stand—Jesus the Son of God, co-equal with his Father. "His name shall endure for ever."

III. And so shall the power of his name. Do you inquire what this is? Let me tell you. Seest thou yonder thief hanging upon the cross? Behold the fiends at the foot thereof, with open mouths; charming themselves with the sweet thought, that another soul shall give them meat in hell. Behold the death-bird, fluttering his wings o'er the poor wretch's head; vengeance passes by and stamps him for her own; deep on his breast is written "a condemned sinner;" on his brow is the clammy sweat, expressed from him by agony and death. Look in his heart; it is filthy with the crust of years of sin; the smoke of lust is hanging within in black festoons of darkness; his whole heart is hell condensed. Now, look at him. He is dying. One foot seems to be in hell; the other hangs tottering in life—only kept by a nail. There is a power in Jesus' eye. That thief looks: he whispers, "Lord, remember me." Turn your eye again there. Do you see that thief? Where is the clammy sweat? It is there. Where is that horrid anguish? It is not there. Positively, there is a smile upon his lips. The fiends of hell, where are they? There are none: but a bright seraph is

present, with his wings outspread, and his hands ready to snatch that soul, now a precious jewel, and bear it aloft to the palace of the great King. Look within his heart; it is white with purity. Look at his breast; it is not written "condemned," but "justified." Look in the book of life: his name is graven there. Look on Jesus' heart: there on one of the precious stones he bears that poor thief's name. Yea, once more, look! seest thou that bright one amid the glorified, clearer than the sun, and fair as the moon? That is the thief! That is the power of Jesus; and that power shall endure for ever. He who saved the thief can save the last man who shall ever live; for still

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
O may I there, tho' vile as he,
Wash all my sins away!

Dear dying Lamb! that precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more."

His powerful "name shall endure for ever."

Nor is that all the power of his name. Let me take you to another scene, and ye shall witness somewhat else. There on that deathbed, lies a saint; no gloom is on his brow, no terror on his face; weakly, but placidly, he smiles; he groans, perhaps, but yet he sings. He sighs now and then, but oftener he shouts. Stand by him. My brother, what makes thee look in death's face with such joy? "Jesus," he whispers. What makes thee so placid and calm? "The name of Jesus." See, he forgets everything! Ask him a question; he cannot answer it—he does not understand you. Still he smiles. His wife comes, inquiring, "Do you know my name?" He answers,

"no." His dearest friend requests him to remember his intimacy. "I know you not," he says. Whisper in his ear, "Do you know the name of Jesus?" and his eyes flash glory, and his face beams heaven, and his lips speak sonnets, and his heart bursts with eternity; for he hears the name of Jesus, and that name shall endure for ever. "He who landed one in heaven will land me there. Come on, death. I will mention Christ's name there. O grave! this shall be my glory, the name of Jesus! Hell-dog! this shall be thy death—for the sting of death is extracted—Christ our Lord." "His name shall endure for ever."

I had a hundred particulars to give you; but my voice fails, so I had better stop. You will not require more of me tonight; you perceive the difficulty I feel in speaking each word. May God send it home to your souls! I am not particularly anxious about my own name, whether that shall endure for ever or not, provided it is recorded in my Master's book. George Whitefield, when asked whether he would found a denomination, said, "No; Brother John Wesley may do as he pleases, but let my name perish; let Christ's name last for ever." Amen to that! Let my name perish; but let Christ's name last for ever. I shall be quite contented for you to go away and forget me. I shall not see the faces of half of you again, I dare say; you may never be persuaded to step within the walls of a conventicle; you will think it perhaps not respectable enough to come to a Baptist meeting. Well, I do not say we are a very respectable people; we don't profess to be; but this one thing we do profess, we love our Bibles; and if it is not respectable to do so, we do not care to be had in esteem. But we do not know that we are so disreputable after all; for I believe, if I may state my own opinion, that if Protestant Christendom were counted out of that door—not merely every real Christian, but every professor—I believe the Paedo-Baptists would have no very great majority to boast of. We are not, after all, such a very small, disreputable sect. Regard us in England, we may be; but take America, and Jamaica, and the West Indies, and include those who are Baptists in principle, though not openly so, and we surrender to none, not even to the established church of this country, in numbers. That, however, we care very little about; for I say of the Baptist name, let it perish, but let Christ's name last for ever. I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. You will say, Why? Because when everybody else sees

baptism by immersion, we shall be immersed into all sects, and our sect will be gone. Once give us the predominance, and we are not a sect any longer. A man may be a Churchman, or a Wesleyan, or an Independent, and yet be a Baptist. So that I say, I hope the Baptist name will soon perish; but let Christ's name last for ever. Yea, and yet again; much as I love dear Old England, I do not believe she will ever perish. No, Britain! thou shalt never perish, for the flag of Old England is nailed to the mast by the prayers of Christians, by the efforts of Sunday Schools and her pious men. But, I say, let even England's name perish; let her be merged in one great brotherhood; let us have no England, and no France, and no Russia, and no Turkey, but let us have Christendom; and I say heartily from my soul, let nations and national distinctions perish, but let Christ's name last for ever. Perhaps there is only one thing on earth that I love better than the last I have mentioned, and that is the pure doctrine of unadulterated Calvinism. But if that be wrong—if there be anything in that which is false—I, for one, say, let that perish too, and let Christ's name last for ever. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! "Crown him Lord of all!" You will not hear me say anything else. These are my last words in Exeter Hall for this time. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Crown him Lord of all.

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Even Now

Even now. - John 11:22

I hope that there are a great many persons here who are interested in the souls of those around them. We shall certainly never exercise faith concerning those for whose salvation we have no care. I trust, also, that we are diligent in looking after individuals, especially those who are amongst our own family and friends. This is what Martha did; her whole care was for her brother. It is often easier to have faith that Christ can save sinners in general, than to believe that he can come into our own home, and save some particular member of our household. But, oh, the joy when this comes to pass; when we are able to kneel beside some of

our loved ones, and rejoice with them in being made alive by the power of the Holy Ghost! We cannot expect to have this privilege, however, unless like Martha we send our prayers to Jesus, and go to meet him, and tell him of our need. In the presence of Christ it seems very natural to trust him even at the worst extremity. It is when we are at our wits' end that he delights to help us. When our hopes seem to be buried, then it is that God can give a resurrection. When our Isaac is on the altar, then the heavens are opened, and the voice of the Eternal is heard. Art thou giving way to despair concerning thy dear friend? Art thou beginning to doubt thy Saviour, and to complain of his delay? Be sure that Jesus will come at the right time, though he must be the judge of which is the best time for him to appear.

Martha had a fine faith. If we all had such an honest belief in Christ as she had, many a man, who now lies dead in his sins, would, ere long, hear that voice which would call him forth from his tomb, and restore him unto his friends. Martha's faith had to do with a dreadful case. Her brother was dead, and had been buried, but her faith still lived; and in spite of all things which went against her, she believed in Christ, and looked to him for help in her extremity. Her faith went to the very edge of the gulf, and she said, "But I know, that even now, whatever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee."

Still, Martha had not so much faith as she thought she had. But a few hours after she had confessed her confidence in the power of the Lord Jesus, or perhaps it was only a few minutes, she stood at the grave of her brother, and evidently doubted the wisdom of him she professed to trust. She objected to the stone being removed; and, strong in the admitted facts of the case, she urged her reason and said, "Lord, by this time he stinketh." Well, but, Martha, you said, not very long ago, "I know that even now Christ can interpose." Yes, she said it, and she believed it in the way in which most of us believe; but when her faith was sharply tried by a matter of fact, she did not appear to have had all the faith she professed. I suspect this also is true of most of us. We often fancy our confidence in Christ is much stronger than it really is. I think I have told you of my old friend, Will Richardson, who said, when he was seventy-five years of age, that it was a very curious thing, that all the winter through, he had

thought he should like to be a-harvesting, or out in the hay-field, because he felt so strong. He imagined that he could do so much as any of the youngsters. "But," he said, "do you know, Mr. Spurgeon, when the summer comes, I do not get through the haymaking; and when the autumn comes, I find I have not sufficient strength for reaping?" So it often is in spiritual things. When we are not called upon to bear the trouble, we feel wonderfully strong; but when the trial comes, very much of our boasted faith is gone in smoke. Take heed that ye examine well your faith; let it be true and real, for you will need it all.

However, Christ did not take Martha at her worst, but at her best. When our Lord says, "According to your faith be it unto you," he does not mean "According to your faith in its ebb," but "According to your faith in its flood." He reads the thermometer at its at its highest point, not at its lowest; not even taking the "mean temperature" of our trust. He gives us credit for our quickest pace; not counting our slowest, nor seeking to discover our average speed in this matter of faith. Christ did for Martha all she could have asked or believed; her brother did rise again, and he was restored to her, and to his friends. In thy case, too, O thou trembling, timorous believer, the Lord Jesus will take thee at thy best, and he will do for thee great things, seeing that thou desirest to believe greatly, and that thy prayer is, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

The point upon which Martha chiefly rested, when she expressed her faith, was the power of Christ in intercession with his Father. "I know," said she, "that, even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Since the omnipotence of God could be claimed, she felt no anxiety as to the greatness of the request. "Whatsoever" was asked could easily be gained, if it was only asked by him who never was denied. Beloved in the Lord, our Christ is still alive, and he is still pleading. Beloved in the Lord, our Christ is still alive, and he is still pleading. Can you believe, even now, that whatever he shall ask of God, God will give it him, and give it you for his dear Son's sake? What an anchorage is the intercession of Christ! "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Here is a grand pillar to rest the weight of our souls upon: "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Surely, we may have great

faith in him who never wearies, and who never fails; who lives, indeed, for no other purpose than to plead for those who trust in his dying love, and in his living power. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Fall back upon the intercessory power of Christ in every time of need, and you will find comfort that will never fail you.

It is a grand thing to have faith for the present, not bemoaning the past, nor dreaming of some future faith which we hope may yet be ours. The present hour is the only time we really possess. The past is gone beyond recall. If it has been filled with faith in God, we can no more live on that faith now than we can live to-day on this bread we ate last week. If, on the contrary, the past has been marred by our unbelief, that is no reason why this moment should not witness a grand triumph of trust in the faithful Saviour. Let us not excuse our present lack of faith by the thought of some future blessing. No confidence which we may learn to put in Christ, in the days to come, can atone for our present unbelief. If we ever mean to trust him, why should we not do so now, since he is as worthy of our belief now as he will ever be, and since what we miss now we miss beyond recall.

"The present, the present, is all thou hast
For thy sure possessing,
Like the patriarch's angel, hold it fast,
Till it gives its blessing."

In this verse, "I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee," I want to fix your attention only on the two words, "Even now." We have just sung—

"Pass me not, O tender Saviour,
Let me love and cling to thee;
I am longing for thy favour;
When thou comest, call for me:
Even me."

Our hymn was "Even me." The sermon is to be "Even now." If you have been singing "Even me," and so applying the truth to your own case, say also, with an energy of heart that will take no denial, "Even now," and listen with earnest expectation to that gospel which is always in the present tense: "While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation." Remember, too, that this is not only the preacher's word, for the Holy Ghost saith, "To-day": "Even now."

I shall use these words, first, in reference to those who are concerned about the souls of others, as Martha was about her dead brother. Believe that Christ can save even now. Then I shall speak to you who are somewhat concerned about your own souls. You believe, perhaps, that Christ can save. I want you to be persuaded that he can save you even now; that is to say, at this exact hour and minute, going by the clock, while you hear these words, even now, Christ can forgive; even now, Christ can save; even now, Christ can bless.

I. First, CAN WE BELIEVE THIS WITH REFERENCE TO OTHERS? If you are in the same position as Martha, I can bring out several points of likeness which should encourage you to persevere. You, mother, have prayer for your boy; you, father, have pleaded for your girl; you, dear wife, have been much in prayer for your husband; you beloved teacher, have frequently brought your class before God; and yet there is a bad case pressing upon your mind, and your heart is heavy about some dear one, whose condition seems hopeless. I want you to believe that now, even now, Christ can grant your prayer, and save that soul; that now, even now, he can give you such a blessing that the past delay shall be more than recompensed to you.

There is one, for instance, in whom we are deeply interested, and we can say that the case has cost great sorrow. So Martha could have said of Lazarus. "Blessed master", she might have said, "my brother took the fever"—(for I should think it was a fever that he had)—"and I watched him; I brought cold water from the well, and I laved his burning brow; I was by his bedside all night. I never took off my clothes. Nobody knows how my heart was wrung with anguish as I saw the hot beaded drops upon his brow, and tried to moisten his parched tongue and lips. I

sorrowed as though I was about to die myself; but in spite of all that, I believe even now that thou canst help me; even now." Alas! There are many griefs in the world like this. A mother says, "Nobody knows what I have suffered through that son of mine. I shall die of a broken heart because of his conduct." "No one can tell," says the father, "what grief that daughter of mine has caused me. I have sometimes wished that she had never been born." There have been many, many such stories told into my ear, in which a beloved one has been the cause of anguish and agony untold to gracious, loving hearts. To those so sorely troubled I now speak. Can you believe that even now the living Intercessor is "mighty to save"? It may be that you are at this moment trembling on the verge of the blessing you so long have sought. God give you faith to grasp it "even now"!

With other persons we are met with a fresh difficulty. The case has already disappointed us. That is how some of you have found it, is it not? "Yes," you say, "I have prayed long for a dear friend, and I believed, some time ago, that my prayer was heard, and that there was a change for the better; indeed, there was an apparent change; but it came to nothing." You are just like Martha. She kept saying to herself, "Christ will come. Brother is very ill, but Jesus will come before he dies; I know he will. It cannot be that he will stay away much longer; and when he comes, Lazarus will soon be well." Day after day, Mary and she sent their messenger to look toward the Jordan, to see if Jesus was not coming. But he did not come. It must have been a terrible disappointment to both these sisters; enough to stagger the strongest faith that had ever had in the sympathy of Christ. But Martha got the better of it, and she said, "Even now, though disappointed so bitterly, I believe that thou canst so whatsoever thou wilt." Learn from Martha, my discouraged brother. You thought that your friend was converted, but he wanted to go back again; you thought that there was a real work of grace upon his heart, but it turned out to be a mere disappointment, and disappeared, like the mist of the sun. But can you not believe over the head of your disappointment, and say, "I believe even now, even now"? Blessed shall your faith be, if it gets so far.

Perhaps further difficulties have met us. We have attempted to help

someone, and the case has proved our helplessness. "Ah, yes," says one, "that exactly describes me. I never felt so helpless in my life. I have done all that I can do, and it amounts to nothing. I have been careful in my example. I have been prayerful in my words. I have been very patient and long-suffering. I have tried to induce my beloved one to go and listen to the gospel here and there. I have put holy books in his way, and all the while, I have seized opportunities to plead with him, often with tears in my eyes, and I can do nothing! I am dead beat." Yes, that is just where Martha got to; she had done everything and nothing seemed to be of the least use. None of the medicines she applied seemed to soothe the sufferer. She had gone down to the village, perhaps to the home of Simon the leper, who was a friend of hers, and he possibly advise some new remedies; but nothing seemed to make the least difference. Her brother grew worse and worse, until she saw that, though she had nursed him back to health the last time he had been ill, she was now utterly powerless. Then he died. Yet, even though things had gone as far as that, she had faith in Christ. In like manner, your case is beyond your skill; but you cannot believe that, even now, the end of nature will be the beginning of grace; can you not even now feel that you shall find that word true, "He shall not fail"? Christ never did fail yet, and he never will. When all the doctors give a patient up, the Great Physician can step in and heal. Can you believe concerning your friend "even now"?

But perhaps you are in a worse plight still. The case has been given up. I think I hear one kind, gracious soul, whose hope has been crushed, say, "Well, sir, that is just what we have come to about my boy. We held a little family meeting, and said we must get him to go away to Australia, if we can. If he will only go to America, or somewhere abroad, it will be a relief to have him out of our sight. He keeps coming home intoxicated, and gets brought before the magistrates. He is a disgrace to us. He is a shame to the name he bears. We have given him up." Martha had come to this. She had given her brother up, and had actually buried him; yet she believed in the power of Christ. Ah, there are many people that are buried alive! I do not know that such a thing ever happens in the cemetery; but I know it happens in our streets and homes. Many are buried morally, and given up by us before God gives them up. And, somehow, it is often the given-up people that God delights to bless. Can you believe that even now, even

now, prayer can be heard, that even now the Holy Ghost can change the nature, and that even now Christ can save the soul? Believest thou this? I shall rejoice if thou canst, and thou too shalt rejoice ere long.

But there is still a lower depth. Here is one who is much concerned about an individual, and the case is loathsome. "Though we loved him once," he says, "his character has now become such that it is pestilential to the family. He leads others astray. We cannot think of what he has done without the very memory of his life spreading a taint over our conscience, and over our mind." There are persons alive in the world, who are just masses of living putridity. There may be such here. I should be glad if a word I said could reach them. It is a shocking thing that there are men and women, made in the image of God, with talents and ability, with capacity and conscience, who, nevertheless, seem to live for nothing else but to indulge their licentious passions, and to lead others into vices which else they had never known. There must come an awful day of reckoning to such when the Christ of God shall sit upon the throne, and shall weigh before all men the secret doings of libertines, of debauched men, and depraved women. If any of you have such a one related to you, can you believe that even now Christ can raise that one? Yours is just the same sort of case as Martha had. She could have said, "Brother is buried; worse than that, he stinketh." She did not like to say that of dear Lazarus, her own brother, but she could not help saying it. And there are some men of whom we are compelled to say, no matter how much our love seeks to shield them, that their character stinks. But can you still believe that, even now, there is hope that God can intervene, and that grace can save? Why, my dear friend, you and I know that it is so! I do believe it; we must all believe it. If it comes to a case very near and dear to you, and you begin to be a little bit staggered, recollect what you used to be yourselves—not openly so depraved, perhaps, but inwardly, quite the same, and take hope for these foul men and women from the remembrance of what you were: "and such were some of you; but ye are washed." When John Newton used to preach at St. Mary Woolnoth, he always believed in the possibility of the salvation of the worst of his hearers; for he had been himself one of the vilest of the vile. When he was very old, and they said, "Dear Mr. Newton, you are too old to preach; you had better not go into the pulpit now," he said, "What! Shall the old African blasphemer, who

has been saved by grace, leave off preaching the gospel while there is a breath in his body? Never." I think while there is breath in the body of some of us, we must go on telling the gospel; for, if it saved us, it can save the worst of sinners. We are bound to believe that even now Christ can save even the most horrible and the most vile.

"His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me."

Perhaps there is even a more desperate difficulty still with reference to someone whom we would fain see living for God. The case is beyond our reach. "Yes," that brother quickly answers, "now you have come to my trouble. I do not even know where my boy is; he ran away, and we have not heard from him for years. How can I help him?" Why, believe that "even now" Christ can speak to him, and save him! He can send his grace where we can send our love. The great difficulty which lies like a stone at the door of the sepulchre will not prevent him speaking the life-giving word. He has all forces at his command, and when he says the word, the stone shall be rolled away, and the son, that is lost shall be found; the dead shall be made alive again. Though you cannot reach your son, or your daughter, Christ can meet with them. "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither does his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." Though your prodigal boy or your wandering girl be at the end of the earth, Christ can reach them, and save them. "Have faith in God." "Even now" Christ can aid you.

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to God alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, 'It shall be done.'"

I know there are some Christian people who have drifted into the terribly wicked state of giving up their relatives as hopeless. There was a brother here, who is now in heaven, a good, earnest Christian man, whose son had treated him very shockingly indeed, and the father, justly indignant, felt it right to give his son up. He had often tried to help him, but the young man was so scandalous a scapegrace that I did not wonder that the

old man turned him away. But one night, as I was preaching here, I spoke in something like the same way in which I have spoken now; and the next morning the old man's arm was about his child's neck. He could not help himself; he felt he must go and find his son out, and seek again to reclaim him. It seemed to have been the appointed time for that boy's salvation, for it pleased God that within a few months that son died, and he passed away with a good hope, through grace, that he had been brought to his Saviour's feet by his father's love. If any of you have a very bad son, go after him, seeking, until by the grace of God, you shall find him. And you that have grown hopeless about your relatives, you must try not to give them up. If other people cast them off, you must not, for they are allied to you by the ties of blood. Seek them out. You are the best person in the world to seek them, and the most likely to find them, if you can believe that even now, when the worst has come to the worst, "even now," almighty grace can step in, and save the lost soul.

Oh, that some here may have faith to claim at this moment the salvation of their friends! May desire be wrought into expectancy, and hope become certainty! Like Jacob at Jabbok, my we lay hold of God, saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." To such faith the Lord will give a quick response. He that will not be denied shall not be denied. My friend, Hudson Taylor, who has done such a wonderful work for China, is an instance of this. Brought up in a godly home, he, as a young man, tried to imitate the lives of his parents, and failing in his own strength to make himself better, he swung to the other extreme, and began to entertain skeptical notions. One day, when his mother was from home, a great yearning after her boy possessed her, and she went up to her room to plead with God that "even now" he would save him. If I remember aright, she said that she would not leave the room until she had the assurance that her boy would be brought to Christ. At length her faith triumphed, and she rose quite certain that all was well, and that "even now" her son was saved. What was he doing at that time? Having half an hour to spare, he wandered into his father's library, and aimlessly took down one book after another to find some short and interesting passage to divert his mind. He could not find what he wanted in any of the books, so, seeing a narrative tract, he took it up with the intention of reading the story, and putting it down where the sermon part of it began. As he read, he came to

the words "the finished work of Christ", and almost at the very moment in which his mother, who was miles away, claimed his soul of God, light came into his heart. He saw that it was by the finished work of Christ that he was to be saved; and kneeling in his father's library, he sought and found the life of God. Some days afterwards, when his mother returned, he said to her, "I have some news to tell you." "Oh, I know what it is!" she answered, smiling, "You have given yourself to God." "Who told you?" he asked in astonishment. "God told me," she said, and together they praised him, who, at the same moment, gave faith to the mother, and the life to the son, and who has since made him such a blessing to the world. It was the mother's faith, claiming the blessing "even now", that did it. I tell you this remarkable incident that many others may be stirred up to the same immediate and importunate desire for the salvation of their children and relatives. There are some things we must always pray for with submission as to whether it is the will of God to bestow them upon us: but for the salvation of men and women we may ask without fear. God delights to save and to bless; and when the faith is given to us to expect an immediate answer to such a prayer, thrice happy we are. Seek such faith even now, I beseech you, "even now."

II. But, in the second place, I want to speak very earnestly to any here who are concerned about their own souls. Jesus came to save you "even now." CAN WE BELIEVE THIS FOR OURSELVES? Can you expect the Lord, even while you hear these words, to speak to you the word of power, and bring you forth from your sleep of sin?

For some of you, the time is late, very late; yet it is not too late. You are getting into years, my friend. I want you to believe that even now Christ can save you. I often notice the number of old people who come to the Tabernacle. I am glad to see the aged saints; but amongst so many elderly people, no doubt, there are some unsaved sinners, whose grey hairs are not a crown of glory, but a fool's cap. But, however old you are, though you are sixty, seventy, eighty or even ninety years of age, yet "even now" Christ can give you life. Blessed be God for that! But it is not altogether the years that trouble you; it is your sins. As I have already said, if you have gone to the very extremity of sin, you may believe that, after all those years of wandering, the arms of free grace are still open to receive

you "even now." There is an old proverb, "It is never too late to mend." It is ever too late for us to mend ourselves, but it is never too late for Christ to mend us. Christ can make us new, and it is never too late for him to do it. If you come to him, and trust him, he will receive you "even now."

By the longsuffering of God, there is a time left to you, in which you may turn to him. What a thousand mercies it is that "even now" is a time of mercy to you: it might have been the moment of you everlasting doom! You have been in accidents; you have been within an inch of the grave many times; you have been ill, seriously ill; you have been well-nigh given up for dead; and here you are yet alive, but still an enemy to God! Plucked by his hand from the fire and flood, and, mayhap, from battle; delivered from fever and cholera, and still ungrateful, still rebelling, still spending the life that grace has lent you in resisting the love of God! Long years ago you should have believed in Christ, but the text is "even now." Do not begin to say, "I believe that God could have saved me years ago;" there is no faith in that. Do not meet my earnest plea, by saying, "I believe that God can save me under such-and-such conditions." Believe that he can save you now, up in the top gallery there, just as you are. You came in here careless and thoughtless; yet, even now, he can save you. Away yonder, quite a man of the world, free and easy, destitute of all religious inclinations though you may be, he can save you even now. O God, strike many a man down, as thou did Saul of Tarsus, and change their hearts by thine own supreme love, as thou canst do it, even now, on the very spot where they sit or stand.

But though God waits to be gracious to you, though you have yet time to repent, remember, it is but a time, therefore seize it. Your opportunity will not last for ever. I believe that even now God can save; but if you reject Christ, there will come a time when salvation will be impossible. On earth, as long as a man desires to be saved, he may be saved: while there is life there is hope. I believe that, if a man's breath were going from his body, if he could then look to Christ, he would live. But—

"There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave, to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and long despair,

Reign in eternal silence there."

Do not venture on that last leap without Christ; but even now, ere the clock strikes another time, fly to Jesus. Trust him "even now."

It is a time of hope. Even now, there is still every opportunity and every preparation for the sinner's salvation. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Shall I give you some reasons for believing that "even now" is a time of hope? There are many good arguments which may be brought forward, in order to banish the thought of despair.

First, the gospel is still preached. The old-fashioned gospel is not dead yet. There are a great many who would like to muzzle the mouths of God's ministers; but they never will. The old gospel will live when they are dead; and, because it is still preached to you, you may believe and live. What is the old gospel? It is that, seeing you are helpless to save yourself, or bring yourself back to God, Christ came to restore you; that he took those sins of yours, which were enough to sink you to hell, and bore them on the cross, that he might bring you to heaven. If you will but trust him, even now, he will deliver you from the curse of the law; for it is written, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." If you will trust him, even now, he will give you a life of blessedness, which will never end; for again it is written, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Because that gospel is preached, there is hope for you. When there is no hope, there will be no presentation of the gospel. God must, by an edict, suspend the preaching of the gospel ere he can suspend the fulfillment of the gospel promise to every soul that believeth. Since there is a gospel, take it; take it now, even now. God help you to do so!

In the second place, I know there is hope now, "even now"; for the Christ still lives. He rose from the dead, no more to die, and he is as strong as ever. "I am he that liveth and was dead." He saith, "an behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen." These words were spoken to the Apostle John, and when he saw him, he said that "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow;" but when the spouse saw him, she said, "His locks are busy, and black as a raven." Yet both saw truly. John's vision of

the white hair was to show that Christ is the ancient of days; but the view of the spouse was to show his everlasting youth, his unceasing strength and power to save. If there is any difference in him, Christ is to-day more mighty to save than he was when Martha saw him. He had not then completed the work of salvation, but he has perfectly accomplished it now; and therefore there is hope for everyone who trusts in him. My Lord has gone up yonder where a prayer will find him, with the keys of death and hell jingling at his girdle, and with the omnipotence of God in his right hand. If you believe on him, by his "eternal power and Godhead" he will save you, and save you even now, on the spot, before you leave this house.

Moreover, I know that this is a time of hope, in the next place, because the precious blood still has power. All salvation is through the blood of the Lamb. Still—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;"

and still, "even now,"—

"Sinners, plunged beneath the flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

The endless efficacy of the atoning sacrifice is the reason why you may come and believe in Jesus, "even now." If that blood had diminished in its force, I should not dare to speak as I do; but I can, "even now," say with confidence,—

"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

How many have already entered into glory by the blood of the Lamb! When a man comes to die, nothing else will do for him but this: our own works are a poor staff for us when we pass through the river. All those

who are now in the land of light have but one confidence, and but one song: they stand upon the merit of Jesus Christ, and they praise the Lamb who was slain, by whose blood they have been cleansed and sanctified. There is no other way of salvation but that. "Even now: that blood has virtue to take away your sin. Christ is a sufficient Saviour, because his death has unexhausted power. Believe that he can save you "even now."

Again, I would remind you that "even now" is a time of hope to you because the Spirit still can renew. He is yet at work, regenerating and sanctifying. He came down at Pentecost to dwell with his people, and has never gone back again. He is still in the church. Sometimes we feel his mighty power more than at other times, but he is always at work. Oh, you that do not know anything about the power of the Holy Ghost, let me tell you that this is the most wonderful phenomenon that can ever be observed! Those of us, who have seen and known his mighty energy, can bear testimony to it. In my retirement, at Menton, during the last few weeks, if you had seen me, you would have found me sitting every morning, at half-past nine o'clock, at my little table, with my Bible, just reading a chapter, and offering prayer, my family prayer with the little group of forty to fifty friends, who gathered for that morning act of worship. There they met, and the Spirit of God was manifestly moving among them, converting, cheering, comforting. It was because of no effort of mine; it was simply the Word, attended by the Spirit of God, binding us together, and binding us all to Christ. And here, in this house, for seven-and-thirty years, have I in all simply preached this old-fashioned gospel. I have just kept to that one theme; content to know nothing else amongst men; and where are they that preached new gospels? They have been like the mist upon the mountain's brow. They came, and they have gone. And so it will always be with those who preach anything but the Word of God; for nothing will abide but the mount itself, the everlasting truth of the gospel to which the Holy Ghost bears witness. That same Holy Ghost is able to give you a new heart "even now", to make you a new creature in Christ Jesus at this moment. Believest thou this?

Once more. I know that "even now" Christ can save you, and I pray you to believe it, for the Father is still waiting to receive returning prodigals. Still, as of old, the door is open, and the best robe hangs in the hall, ready

to be put upon the shoulders of the son who comes back from the far country, even though he returns reeking with the odour of the swine-trough. How longingly the Father looks along the road, to see whether at length some of you are turning homeward! Ah! did you but know the joy that awaits those who come, and the feast which would load the welcoming table, you would "even now" say, "I will arise and go to my Father." You should have returned long ago; but blessed be his love, which "even now" waits to clasp you to his heart!

Last of all, faith is but the work of a moment. Believe and live. Thou hast nothing to do; thou needest no preparations: come as thou art, without a single plea, but that he bids thee to come. Come now, "even now." If Christ were far away, the time that is left to some of you might be too short to reach him; if there were many things which first of all you had to do, your life might close before they were half done; if faith had to grow strong before it received salvation, you might be in the place of eternal despair before your faith had time to be more than a mere mustard seed. But Christ is not far away; he is in our midst, he is by your side. You have nothing to do before you trust him, he has done it all; and, however weak your faith, if it but comes in contact with Christ, it will convey you to instant blessing. "Even now" you may be saved for ever; for—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at one he receives,
Redemption in full, through his blood."

Surely all these are sufficient reasons why "even now" is a time of hope to you; may it also be a time of blessing! It shall be so if thou wilt but at this instant cast thyself on Christ. He says to thee that, if thou wilt but believe, thou shalt see the glory of God. Martha saw that glory. Thou shalt see it too if thou hast like precious faith.

I long that God would give me some souls to-night, on this first occasion when I have met an evening congregation since my return from the sunny South. I desire earnestly that he would set the bells of heaven ringing because sinners have returned, and heirs of glory have been born into the

family of grace. I stirred you up to pray this morning. Pray mightily that this word to-night, simple but pointed, may be blessed to many.

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Everybody's Sermon

I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes. - Hosea 12:10

When the Lord would win his people Israel from their iniquities, he did not leave a stone unturned, but gave them precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little. He taught them sometimes with a rod in his hand, when he smote them with sore famine and pestilence, and invasion; at other times he sought to win them with bounties, for he multiplied their corn and their wine and their oil, and he laid no famine upon them. But all the teachings of his providence were unavailing, and whilst his hand was stretched out, still they continued to rebel against the Most High. He hewed them by the prophets. He sent them first one, and then another: the golden mouthed Isaiah was followed by the plaintive Jeremy; while at his heels in quick succession, there followed many far-seeing, thunder-speaking seers. But though prophet followed prophet in quick succession, each of them uttering the burning words of the Most High, yet they would have none of his rebukes, but they hardened their hearts, and went on still in their iniquities. Among the rest of God's agencies for striking their attention and their conscience, was the use of similitudes. The prophets were accustomed not only to preach, but to be themselves as signs and wonders to the people. For instance, Isaiah named his child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, that they might know that the judgment of the Lord was hastening upon them; and this child was ordained to be a sign, "for before the child shall have knowledge to cry, my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." On another occasion, the lord said unto Isaiah, "Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, "Like as my servant Isaiah hath

walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives young and old, naked and barefoot, to the shame of Egypt." Hosea, the prophet, himself had to teach the people by a similitude. You will notice in the first chapter a most extraordinary similitude. The Lord said to him, "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms; for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord," and he did so; and the children begotten by this: marriage, were made as signs and wonders to the people. As for his first son he was to be called Jezreel, "for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." As for his daughter, she was to be called Lo-ruhamah "for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away." Thus by divers significant signs, God made the people think. He made his prophets do strange things, in order that the people might talk about what he had done, and then the meaning which God would have them learn, should come home more powerfully to their consciences, and be the better remembered.

Now it struck me that God is every day preaching to us by similitudes. When Christ was on earth he preached in parables, and, though he is in heaven now, he is preaching in parables to-day. Providence is God's sermon. The things which we see about us are God's thoughts and God's words to us; and if we were but wise there is not a step that we take, which we should not find to be full of mighty instruction. O ye sons of men! God warns you every day by his own word; he speaks to you by the lips of his servants, his ministers; but, besides this, by similitudes he addresses you at every time. He leaves no stone unturned to bring his wandering children to himself, to make the lost sheep of the house of Israel return to the fold. In addressing myself to you this morning, I shall endeavor to show how every day, and every season of the year, in every place, and in every calling which you are made to exercise, God is speaking to you by similitudes.

I. EVERY DAY God speaks to you by similitudes. Let us begin with the early morning. This morning you awakened and you found yourselves unclothed, and you began to array yourselves in your garments. Did not

God, if you would but have heard him, speak to you by a similitude? Did he not as much as say to thee, "Sinner, what will it be when thy vain dreams shall have ended, if thou shouldst wake up in eternity to find thyself naked? Wherewithal shalt thou array thyself? If in this life thou dost cast away the wedding garment, the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ, what wilt thou do when the trump of the archangel shall awaken thee from thy clay cold couch in the grave, when the heavens shall be blazing with lightnings, and the solid pillars of the earth shall quake with the terror of God's thunder? How wilt thou be able to dress thyself then? Canst thou confront thy Maker without a covering for thy nakedness? Adam dared not, and canst thou attempt it? Will he not affright thee with his terrors? Will he not cast thee to the tormentors that thou mayest be burned up with unquenchable fire, because thou didst forget the clothing of thy soul while thou wast in this place of probation?

Well, you have put on your dress, and you come down to your families, and your Children gather round your table for the morning meal. If you have been wise God has been preaching to you by a similitude then: he seemed to say to thee—"Sinner, to whom should a child go but to his father? And where should be his resort when he is hungry but to his father's table?" And as you feed your children, if you had an ear to hear, the Lord was speaking to you and saying, "How willingly would I feed you! How would I give you of the bread of heaven and cause you to eat angels, food! But thou hast spent thy money for that which is not bread, and thy labor for that which not. Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, let thy soul delight itself in fatness." Did he not stand there as a Father, and say, "Come my child, come to my table. The precious blood of my Son has been shed to be thy drink, and he has given his body to be thy bread. Why wilt thou wander hungry and thirsty? Come to my table O, my child, for I love my children to be there and to feast upon the mercies I have provided."

You left your home and you went to your business. I knew not in what calling your time was occupied—of that we will say more before we shall have gathered up the ends of your similitudes this morning—but you spend your time in your work; and surely, beloved, All the time that your fingers were occupied, God was speaking to your heart, if the ears of your

soul had not been closed, so that you were heavy and ready to slumber, and could not hear his voice And when the sun was shining in high heaven, and the hour of noon was reached, mightest thou not bare lifted up thine eye and remembered that if thou hadst committed thy soul to God, thy path should have been as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day? Did he not speak to thee and say, "I brought the sun from the darkness of the east; I have guided him and helped him to ascend the slippery steeps of heaven and now he standeth in his zenith, like a giant that hath run his race, and hath attained his goal. And even so will I do with thee. Commit thy ways unto me and I will make thee full of light, and thy path shall be as brightness, and thy life shall be as the noon-day: thy sun shall not go down by day, but the days of thy mourning shall be ended, for the Lord God shall be thy light, and thy salvation."

And the sun began to set, and the shadows of evening were drawing on, and did not the Lord then remind thee of thy death? Suns have their setting, and men have their graves. When the shadows of the evening were stretched out, and when the darkness began to gather, did he not say unto thee, "O man, take heed of thine eventide, for the light of the sun shall not endure for ever? There are twelve hours wherein a man shall work, but when they are past there is no work nor device in the night of that grave whither we are all hastening. Work while ye have the light, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. Therefore, whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." Look I say to the sun at his setting and observe the rainbow hues of glory with which he paints the sky, and mark how he appears to increase his orb as he nears the horizon. O man kneel down and learn this prayer,— "Lord, let my dying be like the setting of the sun; help me, if clouds and darkness are round about me, to light them up with splendor; surround me, O my God, with a greater brightness at my death than I have shown in all my former life. If my death-bed shall be the miserable pallet, and if I expire in some lone cot yet nevertheless, grant, O Lord, that my poverty may be gilded with the light that thou shalt give me, that I may exhibit the grandeur of a Christian's departure at my dying hour." God speaketh to thee, O man, by similitude, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

And now, thou hast lit thy candle and thou sittest down; thy children are about thee. and the Lord sends thee a little preacher to preach thee a sermon, if thou wilt hear. It is a little gnat, and it flieth round and round about thy candle, and delighteth itself in the light thereof, till, dazzled and intoxicated, it begins to singe its wings and burn itself. Thou seekest to put it away, but it dashes into the flame, and having burned itself it can scarcely fan itself through the air again. But as soon as it has recruited its strength again, mad-like it dashes to its death and destruction. Did not the Lord say to thee, "Sinner, thou art doing this also, thou lovest the light of sin; oh! that thou wert wise enough to tremble at the fire of sin, for he who delights in the sparks thereof, must be consumed in the burning!" Did not the hand seem to be like the hand of thy Almighty, who would put thee away from thine own destruction, and who rebukes and smites thee by his providence, as much as to say to thee, "Poor silly man be not thine own destruction." And whilst thou seest perhaps with a little sorrow the death of the foolish insect, might not that forewarn thee of thine awful doom. when, after having been dazzled with the giddy round of this world's joys, thou shalt at last plunge into the eternal burning and lose thy soul, so madly, for nothing but the enjoyments of an hour? Doth not God preach to thee thus?

And now it is time for thee to retire to thy rest. Thy door is bolted, and thou hast fast closed it. Did not that remind thee of that saying, "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut-to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us;' and he shall answer and say unto you, I know not whence you are?" in vain shall be your knocking then, when the bars of immutable justice shall have fast closed the gates of mercy on mankind; when the hand of the Almighty Master shall have shut his children within the gates of Paradise, and shall have left the thief and the robber in the cold chilly darkness, the outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Did he not preach to thee by similitude? Even then, when thy finger was on the bolt, might not his finger have been on thy heart?

And at night time thou wast startled. The watchman in the street awoke thee with the cry of the hour of the night, or his tramp along the street. O

man, if thou hadst ears to hear, thou mightest have heard in the steady tramp of the policeman the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." And every sound at midnight that did awaken thee from thy slumber and startle thee upon thy bed, might seem to forewarn thee of that dread trump of the archangel which shall herald the coming of the Son of Man, in the day he shall judge both the quick and the dead, according to my gospel. O that ye were wise, that ye understood this, for all the day long, from dewy morning till the darkness of the eventide, and the thick darkness of midnight, God evermore doth preach to man—he preacheth to him by similitudes.

II. And now we turn the current of our thoughts, and observe that ALL THE YEAR round God doth preach to man by similitudes. It was but a little while ago that we were sowing our seeds in our garden, and scattering the corn over the broad furrows. God had sent the seed time, to remind us that we too are like the ground, and that he is scattering seed in our hearts each day. And did he not say to us, "Take heed, O man, lest thou shouldest be like the highway whereon the seed was scattered, the fowls of the air devoured it. Take heed that thou be not like the ground that had its basement on a hard and arid rock, lest this seed should spring up and by-and-bye should wither away when the sun arose, because it had not much depth of earth. And be thou careful, O son of man, that thou art not like the ground where the seed did spring up, but the thorns sprang up and choked it; but be thou like the good ground whereon the seed did fall, and it brought forth fruit, some twenty, some fifty, and some a hundred fold."

We thought, when we were sowing the seed, that we expected one day to see it spring up again. Was there not a lesson for us there? Are not our actions all of them as seeds? Are not our little words like grains of mustard seed? Is not our daily conversation like a handful of the corn that we scatter over the soil? And ought we not to remember that our words shall live again, that our acts are as immortal as ourselves, that after having laid a little while in the dust to be matured, they shall certainly arise? The black deeds of sin shall bear a dismal harvest of damnation; and the right deeds which God's grace has permitted us to do, shall, through his mercy and not through our merit, bring forth a

bounteous harvest in the day when they who sow in tears slowly reap in joy. Doth not seed-time preach to thee, O man, and say, "Take heed that thou sowest good seed in thy field."

And when the seed sprang up, and the season had changed, did God cease then to preach? Ah! no. First the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, had each its homily. And when at last the harvest came, how loud the sermon which it preached to us! It said to us, "O Israel, I have set a harvest for thee. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." If you have an opportunity to journey into the country during the next three weeks, you will, if your heart is rightly attuned, find a marvellous mass of wisdom couched in a cornfield. Why I could not attempt for a moment to open the mighty mines of gabled treasure which are hidden there. Think, beloved, of the joy of thy harvest. How does it tell us of the joy of the redeemed if we, being saved, shall at last be carried like shocks of corn fully ripe into the garner. Look at the ear of corn when it is fully ripe, and see how it bendeth toward the earth! It held its head erect before, but in getting ripe how humble does it become! And how does God speak to the sinner and tell him, that if he would be fit for the great harvest he must drop his head and cry "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner." And when we see the weeds spring up amongst wheat, have we not our Master's parable over again of the tares among the wheat; and are we not reminded of the great day of division, when he shall say to the reaper, "Gather first the tares and bind them in bundles, to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." O yellow field of corn, thou preaches well to me, for thou safest to me, the minister, "Behold, the fields are ripe already to the harvest. Work thou thyself; and pray thou the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers into the harvest." And it preaches well to thee, thou man of years, it tells thee that the sickle of death is sharp, and that thou must soon fall, but it cheers and comforts thee, for it tells thee that the wheat shall be safely housed, and it bids thee hope that thou shalt be carried to thy Master's garner to be his joy and his delight for ever. Hark, then, to the rustling eloquence of the yellow harvest.

In a very little time, my beloved, you will see the birds congregated upon

the housetops in great multitudes, and after they have whirled round and round and round as if they were taking their last sight of Old England, or rehearsing their supplications before they launched away, you will see them, with their leader in advance, speed across the purple sea to live in sunnier climes, while winter's cold hand shall strip their native woods. And doth not God seem to preach to you, sinners, when these birds are taking their flight? Do you not remember how he himself puts it? "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." Doth he not tell us that there is a time of dark winter coming upon this world; a time of trouble, such as there has been none like it, neither shall be any more; a time, when all the joys of sin shall be nipped and frost-bitten, and when the summer of man's estate shall be turned into the dark winter of his disappointment? And does he not say to you, "Sinner fly away—away—away to the goodly land, where Jesus dwells! Away from self and sin! Away from the city of destruction! Away from the whirl of pleasures, and from the tossing to and fro of trouble! Haste thee, like a bird to its rest! Fly thou across the sea of repentance and faith and build thy nest in the land of mercy, that when the great day of vengeance shall pass o'er this world, thou mayest be safe in the clefts of the rock."

I remember well, how once God preached to me by a similitude in the depth of winter. The earth had been black, and there was scarcely a green thing or a flower to be seen. As you looked across the field, there was nothing but blackness—bare hedges and leafless trees, and black, black earth, wherever you looked. On a sudden God spake and unlocked the treasures of the snow, and white flakes descended until there was no blackness to be seen, and all was one sheet of dazzling whiteness. It was at that time that I was seeking the Saviour, and it was then I found him; and I remember well that sermon which I say, before me: "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than wool." Sinner! thy heart is like that black ground; thy soul is like that black tree and hedgerow, without leaf or blossom. God's grace is like the white snow—it shall fall upon thee till thy doubting heart shall glitter in whiteness of pardon, and thy poor black soul shall be covered with the spotless purity

of the Son of God. He seems to say to you, "Sinner, you are black, but I am ready to forgive you; I will wrap thy heart in the ermine of my Son's righteousness, and with my Son's own garments on, thou shalt be holy as the Holy One."

And the wind of to-day, as it comes howling through the trees,—many of which have been swept down,—reminds us of the Spirit of the Lord, which, "bloweth where it listeth," and when it pleaseth; and it tells us to seek earnestly after that divine and mysterious influence, which alone can speed us on our voyage to heaven; which shall cast down the trees of our pride, and tear up by the roots the goodly cedars of our self confidence; which shall shake our refuges of lies about our ears, and make us look to Him who is the only covert from the storm, the only shelter when "the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

Ay, and when the heat is coming down, and we hide ourselves beneath the shadow of the tree, an angel standeth there, and whispereth, "Look upwards, sinner, as thou hidest thyself from the burning rays of Sol beneath the tree; so there is One who is like the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and he bids thee come and take shadow beneath his branches, for he will screen thee from the eternal vengeance of God, and give thee shelter when the fierce heat of God's anger shall beat upon the heads of wicked men."

III. And now again, EVERY PLACE to which you journey, every animal that you see, every spot you visit, has a sermon for you. Go into your farm-yard, and your ox and your ass shall preach to you. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." The very dog at your heels may rebuke you. He follows his master; a stranger will he not follow, for he knows not the voice of a stranger, but ye forsake your God and turn aside unto your crooked ways. Look at the chicken by the side of yonder pond, and let it rebuke your ingratitude. It drinks, and every sip it takes it lifts its head to heaven and thanks the giver of the rain for the drink afforded to it; while thou eatest and drinkest, and there is no blessing pronounced at thy meals and no thanksgiving bestowed upon thy Father for his bounty. The very horse is checked by the bridle, and the whip is for the ass; but thy

God hath bridled thee by his commandments, and he hath chastened by his providence, yet art thou more obstinate than the ass or the mule; still thou wilt not run in his commandments, but thou turnest aside, wilfully and wickedly following out the perversity of thine own heart. Is it not so? Are not these things true of you? If you are still without God and without Christ, must not these things strike your conscience? Would not any one of them lead you to tremble before the Most High, and beg of him that he would give you a new heart and a right spirit, and that no longer you might be as the beasts of the field, but might be a man full of the Divine Spirit, living in obedience to your Creator.

And in journeying, you have noticed how often the road is rough with stones, and you have murmured because of the way over which you have to tread; and have you not thought that those stones were helping to make the road better, and that the worst piece of road when mended with hard stones would in time become smooth and fit to travel on? And did you think how often God has mended you; how many stones of affliction he has cast upon you; how many waggon-loads of warnings you have had spread out upon you, and you have been none the better, but have only grown worse, and when he comes to look on you to see whether your life has become smooth, whether the highway of your moral conduct has become more like the king's highway of righteousness, how might he say, "Alas! I have repaired this road, but it is none the better; let it alone until it becomes a very bog and quagmire, until he who keeps it thus ill shall have perished in it himself."

And thou hast gone by the sea-side, and has not the sea talked to thee? Inconstant as the sea art thou, but thou art not one-half so obedient. God keeps the sea, the mountain-waved sea, in check with a belt of sand; he spreads the sand along the sea-shore and even the sea observes the landmark. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" It is so. Let thy conscience prick thee. The sea obeys Him from shore to shore, and yet thou wilt not have him to be thy God, but thou sayest, "Who is the Lord that I should fear him? Who is Jehovah

that I should acknowledge his sway?"

Hear the mountains and the hills, for they have a lesson. Such is God. He abideth for ever, think not that he shall change.

And now, sinner, I entreat thee to open thine eyes as thou goest home today and if nothing that I have said shall smite thee, perhaps God shall put into thy way something that shall give thee a text, from which thou mayest preach to thyself a sermon that never shall be forgotten. Oh! if I had but time, and thought, and words, I would bring the things that are in heaven above, and in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth, and I would set them all before thee, and they should every one give their warning before they had passed from thine inspection, and I know that their voice would be, "Consider the Lord thy Creator and fear and serve him, for he hath made thee, and thou hast not made thyself;" we obey him, and we find it is our beauty to be obedient, and our glory ever to move according to his will; and thou shalt find it to be the same." Obey him while thou mayest, lest haply when this life is over all these things shall rise up against thee, and the stone in the street shall clamor for the condemnation, and the beam out of the wall shall bear witness against thee, and the beasts of the field shall be thine accusers, and the valley and hill shall begin to curse thee. O man, the earth is made for thy warning. God would have thee he saved. He hath set hand-posts everywhere in nature and in providence, pointing thee the way to the City of Refuge, and if thou art but wise thou needest not miss thy way; it is but thy wilful ignorance and thy neglect that shall cause thee to run on in the way of error, for God hath made the way straight before thee and given thee every encouragement to run therein.

IV. And now, lest I should weary you, I will just notice that every man in his CALLING has a sermon preached to him.

The farmer has a thousand sermons; I have brought them out already; let him open wide his eye, and he shall see more. He need not go an inch without hearing the songs of angels, and the voice of spirits wooing him to righteousness, for all nature round about him has a tongue given to it, when man hath an ear to hear.

There are others, however, engaged in a business which allows them to see but very little of nature, and yet even there God has provided them with a lesson. There is the baker who provides us with our bread. He thrusts his fuel into the oven, and he causeth it to glow with heat, and puts bread therein. Well may he if he be an ungodly man, tremble as he stands at the oven's mouth, for there is a text which he may well comprehend as he stands there: "For the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; they shall be consumed." Men ingather them in bundles and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. Out of the oven's mouth comes a hot and burning warning, and the man's heart might melt like wax within him if he would but regard it.

Then see the butcher. How doth the beast speak to him? He sees the lamb almost lick his knife, and the bullock goes unconsciously to the slaughter. How might he think every time that he smites the unconscious animal, (who knows nothing of death), of his own. doom. Are we not, all of us who are without Christ, fattening for the slaughter? Are we not more foolish than the bullock, for doth not the wicked man follow his executioner, and walk after his own destroyer into the very chambers of hell? When we see a drunkard pursuing his drunkenness, or an unchaste man running in the way of licentiousness, is he not as an ox going to the slaughter, until a dart smite him through the liver? Hath not God sharpened his knife and made ready his axe that the fatlings of this earth may he killed, when he shall say to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, "Behold, I have made a feast of vengeance for you, and ye shall feast upon the blood of the slain, and make yourselves drunken with the streams thereof?" Ay butcher, there is a lecture for you in your trade; and your business may reproach you.

And ye whose craft is to sit still all day, making shoes for our feet, the lapstone in your lap may reproach you, for your heart, perhaps, is as hard as that. Have you not been smitten as often as your lapstone, and yet your heart has never been broken or melted? And what shall the Lord say to you at last, when your stony heart being still within you, he shall condemn you and cast you away because you would have none of his

rebukes and would not turn at the voice of his exhortation?

Let the brewer remember that as he brews he must drink. Let the potter tremble lest he be like a vessel marred upon the wheel. Let the printer take heed, that his life be set in heavenly type, and not in the black letter of sin. Painter, beware! for paint will not suffice, we must have unvarnished realities.

Others of you are engaged in business where you are continually using scales and measures. Might you not often put yourselves into those scales? Might you not fancy you saw the great Judge standing by with his Gospel in one scale and you in the other, and solemnly looking down upon you, saying, "Mene, mene, tekel,—thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." Some of you use the measure, and when you have measured out, you cut off the portion that your customer requires. Think of your life too, it is to be of a certain length, and every year brings the measure a little farther, and at last there come the scissors that shall clip off your life, and it is done. How knowest thou when thou art come to the last inch? What is that disease thou hast about thee, but the first snip of the scissors? What is that trembling in thy bones, that failing in thy eyesight, that fleeing of thy memory, that departure off thy youthful vigor, but the first rent? How soon shalt thou be rent in twain, the remnant of thy days past away, and thy years all numbered and gone, misspent and wasted for ever!

But you say you are engaged as a servant and your occupations are diverse. Then diverse are the lectures God preaches to you. "A servant waits for his wages and the hireling fulfilleth his day." There is a similitude for thee, when thou hast fulfilled thy day on earth, and shalt take thy wages at last. Who then is thy master? Art thou serving Satan and the lusts of the flesh, and wilt thou take out thy wages at last in the hot metal of destruction? or art thou serving the fair prince Emmanuel, and shalt thy wages be the golden crowns of heaven? Oh! happy art thou if thou servest a good master, for according to thy master shall be thy reward; as is thy labor such shall the end be.

Or thou art one that guideth the pen, and from hour to hour wearily thou

writest. Ah! man, know that thy life is a writing. When thy hand is not on the pen, thou art a writer still; thou art always writing upon the pages of eternity; thy sins thou art writing or else thy holy confidence in him that loved thee. Happy shall it be for thee, O writer, if thy name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and if that black writing of thine, in the history of thy pilgrimage below, shall have been blotted out with the red blood of Christ, and thou shalt have written upon thee the fair name of Jehovah, to stand legible for ever.

Or perhaps thou art a physician or a chemist; thou prescribest or preparest medicines for man's body. God stands there by the side of thy pestle and thy mortar, and by the table where thou writest thy prescriptions, and he says to thee, "Man, thou art sick; I can prescribe for thee. The blood and righteousness of Christ, laid hold of by faith, and applied by the Spirit, can cure thy soul I can compound a medicine for thee that shall rid thee of thy sins and bring thee to the place where the inhabitants shall no more say, 'I am sick.' Wilt thou take my medicine or wilt thou reject it? Is it bitter to thee, and dost thou turn away from it? Come, drink my child, drink, for thy life lieth here; and how shalt thou escape if thou neglect so great salvation?" Do you cast iron, or melt lead, or fuse the hard metals of the mines? then pray that the Lord may melt thine heart and cast thee in the mould of the gospel? Do you make garments for men? oh, be careful that you find a garment for yourself for ever.

Are you busy in building all day long, laying the stone upon its fellow and the mortar in its crevice? Then remember thou art building for eternity too. Oh that thou mayest thyself be built upon a good foundation! Oh that thou mayest build thereon, not wood, hay, or stubble, but gold, and silver, and precious stones, and things that will abide the fire! Take care man lest thou shouldst be God's scaffold, lest thou shouldst be used on earth to be a scaffolding for building his church, and when his church is built thou shouldst be cast down and burned up with fire unquenchable. Take heed that thou art built upon a rock, and not upon the sand, and that the vermilion cement of the Saviour's precious blood unites thee to the foundation of the building, and to every stone thereof.

Art thou a jeweller, and dost thou cut thy gem and polish the diamond from day to day? Would to God thou wouldest take warning from the contrast which thou presentest to the stone on which thou dost exercise thy craft. Thou cuttest it, and it glitters the more thou dost cut it; but though thou hast been cut and ground, though thou hast had cholera and fever, and hast been at death's door many a day, thou art none the brighter, but the duller, for alas! thou art no diamond. Thou art but the pebble-stone of the brook, and in the day when God makes up his jewels he shall not enclose thee in the casket of his treasures; for thou art not one of the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold. But be thy situation what it may, be thy calling what it may, there is a continual sermon preached to thy conscience. I could that thou wouldest now from this time forth open both eye and ear, and see and hear the things that God would teach thee.

And now, dropping the similitude while the clock shall tick but a few times more, let us put the matter thus—Sinner, thou art as yet without God and without Christ; thou art liable to death every hour. Thou canst not tell but that thou mayest be in the flames of hell before the clock shall strike ONE to-day. Thou art to-day "condemned already," because thou believest not in the Son of God. And Jesus Christ saith to thee this day, "Oh, that thou wouldest consider thy latter end!" He cries to thee this morning, "How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." I entreat you, consider your ways. If it be worth while to make your bed in hell do it. If the pleasures of this world are worth being damned to all eternity for enjoying them, if heaven be a cheat and hell a delusion, go on in your sins. But, if there be hell for sinners and heaven for repenting ones, and if thou must dwell a whole eternity in one place or the other, without similitude, I put a plain question to thee—Art thou wise in living as thou dost, without thought,—careless, and godless? Wouldest thou ask now the way of salvation? It is simply this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." He died; he rose again; thou art to believe him to be thine. Thou art to believe that he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. But, more than that, believing that to be a fact, thou art to cast thy soul upon that fact and trust to him, sink or swim. Spirit of God! help us each to do this and by similitude, or by providence, or by thy

prophets, bring us each to thyself and save us eternally, and unto thee shall be the glory.

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The Evidence Of Our Lord's Wounds

Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. - John 20:27

Among us at this day we have many persons who are like Thomas—dubious, demanding signs and tokens, suspicious, and oftentimes sad. I am not sure that there is not a slight touch of Thomas in most of us. There are times and seasons when the strong man fails, and when the firm believer has to pause a while, and say, "Is it so?" It may be that our meditation upon the text before us may be of service to those who are touched with the malady which afflicted Thomas.

Notice, before we proceed to our subject in full, that Thomas asked of our Lord what he ought not to have asked. He wanted to put our risen Lord to tests which were scarcely reverent to his sacred person. Admire his Master's patience with him. He does not say, "If he does not choose to believe he may continue to suffer for his unbelief." But no; he fixes his eye upon the doubter, and addresses himself specially to him; yet not in words of reproach or anger. Jesus could bear with Thomas, though Thomas had been a long time with him, and had not known him. To put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, was much more than any disciple had a right to ask of his divine Master; and yet see the condescension of Jesus! Rather than Thomas should suffer from unbelief, Christ will let him take great liberties. Our Lord does not always act towards us according to his own dignity, but according to our necessity; and if we really are so weak that nothing will do but thrusting a hand into his side, he will let us do it. Nor do I wonder at this: if, for our

sakes, he suffered a spear to be thrust there, he may well permit a hand to follow.

Observe that Thomas was at once convinced. He said: "My Lord, and my God." This shows our Master's wisdom, that he indulged him with such familiarity, because he knew that, though the demand was presumptuous, yet the act would work for his good. Our Lord sometimes wisely refuses—saying, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended"; but at other times, he wisely grants, because, though it be too much for us to ask, yet he thinks it wise to give.

The subject for our present meditation is just this: the cure of doubts. Thomas was permitted to put his finger into the print of the nails for the curing of his doubts. Perhaps you and I wish that we could do something like it. Oh, if our Lord Jesus would appear to me for once, and I might thrust my hand into his side; or, if I might for once see him, or speak with him, how confirmed should I be! No doubt that thought has arisen in the minds of many. We shall not have such proofs, my brethren, but we shall have something near akin, to them, which will answer the same purpose.

I. The first head of my discourse shall be this: CRAVE NO SIGNS. If such signs be possible, crave them not. If there be dreams, visions, voices, ask not for them.

Crave not wonders, first, because it is dishonouring to the sacred Word to ask for them. You believe this Bible to be an inspired volume—the Book of God. The apostle Peter calls it "A more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." Are you not satisfied with that? When a person, in whose veracity you have the utmost confidence, bears testimony to this or that, if you straightway reply, "I would be glad of further evidence," you are slighting your friend, and casting unjust suspicion upon him. Will you cast suspicion upon the Holy Ghost, who, by this word, bears witness unto Christ? Oh, no! let us be content with his witness. Let us not wish to see, but remain satisfied to believe. If there be difficulties in believing, is it not natural there should be, when he that believes is finite, and the things to be believed are, in themselves, infinite? Let us accept the difficulties as being in themselves, in some

measure, proofs of the correctness of our position, as inevitable attendants of heavenly mysteries, when they are looked at by such poor minds as ours. Let us believe the Word, and crave no signs.

Crave no signs, because it is unreasonable that we should desire more than we have already. The testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, contained in the Word, should alone suffice us. Beside that, we have the testimony of saints and martyrs, who have gone before us, dying triumphant in the faith. We have the testimony of many still among us, who tell us that these things are so. In part, we have the testimony of our own conscience, of our own conversion, of our own after-experience, and this is convincing testimony. Let us be satisfied with it. Thomas ought to have been content with the testimony of Mary Magdalene, and the other disciples, but he was not. We ought to trust our brethren's word. Let us not be unreasonable in craving after proofs when already proofs are afforded us without stint.

Crave no signs, because it may be you will be presumptuous in so doing. Who are you, to set God a sign? What is it he is to do before you will believe in him? Suppose he does not choose to do it, are you therefore arrogantly to say, "I refuse to believe unless the Lord will do my bidding"? Do you imagine that any angel would demean himself to pay attention to you, who set yourself up to make demands of the Most High? Assuredly not. It is presumption which dares to ask of God anything more than the testimony of himself which he chooses to grant us in his Word

It is, moreover, damaging to ourselves to crave signs. Jesus says, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Thomas had his sign, and he believed; and so far so good, but he missed a blessing peculiar to those who have not seen, and yet have believed. Do not, therefore, rob yourselves of the special favour which lights on those who, with no evidence but the witness of the Spirit of God, are prepared at once to believe in the Lord Jesus unto eternal life.

Again, crave no signs, for this craving is highly perilous. Translated according to many, and I think translated correctly, our Saviour said, "Reach hither thy finger, and put it into the print of the nails; and become

not faithless, but believing," intending to indicate that Thomas, by degrees, would become faithless. His faith had grown to be so little that, if he continued insisting upon this and that, as a sign or evidence, that faith of his would get down to the very lowest; yea, he would have no faith left. "Become not faithless, but believing." Dear friends, if you began to seek signs, and if you were to see them, do you know what would happen? Why, you would want more; and when you had these, you would demand still more. Those who live by their feelings judge of the truth of God by their own condition. When they have happy feelings, then they believe; but if their spirits sink, if the weather happens to be a little damp, or if their constitution happens to be a little disordered, down go their spirits, and, straightway, down goes their faith. He that lives by a faith which does not rest on feeling, but is built upon the Word of the Lord, will remain fixed and steadfast as the mount of God; but he that craves for this thing and that thing, as a token for good at the hand of the Lord, stands in danger of perishing from want of faith. He shall not perish, if he has even a grain of living faith, for God will deliver him from the temptation; but the temptation is a very trying one to faith.

Crave, therefore, no sign. If you read a story of a person who saw a vision, or if you hear another declare that a voice spake to him—believe those things, or not, as you like; but do not desire them for yourself. These wonders may, or may not, be freaks of the imagination. I will not judge; but we must not rely upon them, for we are not to walk by sight, but by faith. Rely not upon anything that can be seen of the eyes, or heard of the ears; but simply trust him whom we know to be the Christ of God, the Rock of our salvation.

II. Secondly, when you want comfort, crave no sign, but **TURN TO THE WOUNDS OF OUR LORD**. You see what Thomas did. He wanted faith, and he looked for it to Jesus wounded. He says nothing about Christ's head crowned with glory. He does not say that he must see him "gird about the paps with a golden girdle." Thomas, even in his unbelief, is wise; he turns to his Lord's wounds for comfort. Whenever your unbelief prevails, follow in this respect the conduct of Thomas, and turn your eyes straightway to the wounds of Jesus. These are the fountains of never-failing consolation, from which, if a man doth once drink, he shall forget his

misery, and remember his sorrow no more. Turn to the Lord's wounds; and if you do, what will you see?

First, you will see the tokens of your Master's love. O Lord Jesus, what are those wounds in thy side, and in thy hands? He answers, "These I endured when suffering for thee. How can I forget thee? I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. How can I ever fail to remember thee? On my very heart the spear has written thy name." Look at Jesus, dead, buried, risen, and then say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me"! There is no restorative for a sinking faith like a sight of the wounded Saviour. Look, soul, and live by the proofs of his death! Come and put thy finger, by faith, into the print of the nails, and these wounds shall heal thee of unbelief. The wounds of our Lord are the tokens of his love.

They are, again, the seals of his death, especially that wound in his side. He must have died; for "one of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare witness." The Son of God did assuredly die. God, who made the heavens and the earth, took to himself our nature, and in one wondrous person he was both God and man; and lo! this wondrous Son of God bore sufferings unutterable, and consummated all by his death. This is our comfort, for if he died in our stead, then we shall not die for our sins; our transgression is put away, and our iniquity is pardoned. If the sacrifice had never been slain we might despair; but since the spear-wound proves that the great Sacrifice really died, despair is slain, hope revives, and confidence rejoices.

The wounds of Jesus, next, are the marks of identity. By these we identify his blessed person after his resurrection. The very Christ that died has risen again. There is no illusion: there could be no mistake. It is not somebody else foisted upon us in his place; but Jesus who died has left the dead, for there are the marks of the crucifixion in his hands and in his feet, and there is the spear-thrust still. It is Jesus: this same Jesus. This is a matter of great comfort to a Christian—this indisputably proven doctrine of the resurrection of our Lord. It is the keystone of the gospel arch. Take that away, or doubt it, and there remains nothing to console you. But because Jesus died and in the selfsame person rose again, and

ever lives, therefore does our heart sweetly rest, believing that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"; and also that the whole of the work of Jesus is true, is completed, and is accepted of God.

Again, those wounds, those scars of our Lord, were the memorials of his love to his people. They set forth his love so that his chosen can see the tokens; but they are also memorials to himself. He condescendingly bears these as his reminders. In heaven, at this moment, upon the person of our blessed Lord, there are the scars of his crucifixion. Centuries have gone by, and yet he looks like a Lamb that has been slain. Our first glance will assure us that this is he of whom they said, "Crucify him; crucify him." Steadily look with the eyes of your faith into the glory, and see your Master's wounds, and say within yourself, "He has compassion upon us still: he bears the marks of his passion." Look up, poor sufferer! Jesus knows what physical pain means. Look up, poor depressed one! he knows what a broken heart means. Canst thou not perceive this? Those prints upon his hands, these sacred stigmata, declare that he has not forgotten what he underwent for us, but still has a fellow-feeling for us.

Once again, these wounds may comfort us because in heaven they are, before God and the holy angels, the perpetual ensigns of his finished work. That passion of his can never be repeated, and never needs to be: "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, he sat down on the right hand of God." But the memorials are always being presented before the infinite mind of God. Those memorials are, in part, the wounds in our Lord's blessed person. Glorified spirits can never cease to sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"; for every time they gaze upon him they perceive his scars. How resplendent shine the nail-prints! No jewels that ever gemmed a king can look one-half so lustrous as these. Though he be God over all blessed for ever, yet to us, at least, his brightest splendour comes from his death.

My hearer, whensoever thy soul is clouded, turn thou to these wounds which shine like a constellation of five bright stars. Look not to thine own wounds, nor to thine own pains, or sins, or prayers, or tears, but remember that "with his stripes we are healed." Gaze, then; intently gaze, upon thy Redeemer's wounds it thou wouldest find comfort.

III. This brings me to my third point, whenever faith is staggered at all, SEEK SUCH HELPS FOR YOUR FAITH AS YOU MAY. Though we cannot literally put our finger into the print of the nails, and may not wish to do so, yet let us use such modes of recognition as we do possess. Let us put these to their utmost use; and we shall no longer desire to put our hand into the Saviour's side. We shall be perfectly satisfied without that. Ye that are troubled with doubts and fears, I give you these recommendations.

First, if you would have your faith made vivid and strong, study much the story of your Saviour's death. Read it: read it: read it: read it. "Tolle: lege," said the voice to Augustine, "Take it: read it." So say I. Take the four evangelists; take the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah; take the twenty-second psalm; take all other parts of Scripture that relate to our suffering Substitute, and read them by day and by night, till you familiarize yourself with the whole story of his griefs and sin-bearing. Keep your mind intently fixed upon it; not sometimes, but continually. Crux lux: the cross is light. Thou shalt see it by its own light. The study of the narrative, if thou pray the Holy Ghost to enlighten thee, will beget faith in thee; and thou wilt, by its means, be very greatly helped, till, at last, thou wilt say, "I cannot doubt. The truth of the atonement is impressed upon my memory, my heart, my understanding. The record has convinced me."

Next, if this suffice not, frequently contemplate the sufferings of Jesus. I mean by that, when you have read the story, sit down, and try and picture it. Let your mind conceive it as passing before you. Put yourself into the position of the apostles who saw him die. No employment will so greatly strengthen faith, and certainly none will be more enjoyable!

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
which before the cross I spend,
Life and health and peace possessing
From the sinner's dying Friend."

An hour would be grandly spent if occupied in turning over each little detail, item, and incident in the marvellous death by which you are

redeemed from death and hell. You will be surprised to find how this familiarizing of yourself with it, by the help of the Holy Spirit, will make it as vivid to you as if you saw it; and it will have a better effect upon your mind than the sight of it would have done; for probably the actual sight would have passed away from your mind, and have been forgotten, while the contemplation of the sorrowful scene will sink deep into your soul, and leave eternal lines! You will do well, first, to read and know the narrative, and then to contemplate it carefully and earnestly—I mean, not to think of it for a minute or two at chance times, but to take an hour or two that you can specially set apart on purpose to consider the story of your Saviour's death. I am persuaded, if you do this, it will be more helpful to you than putting his finger into the print of the nails was to Thomas.

What next? why, dear friends, the Lord has a way of giving his people wonderful realizations. I hope I shall not say anything incorrect when I remark that there are times with us when the Lord is present with us, and we are strongly impressed with that fact, and therefore we act under a sense of that presence as if the divine glory were actually visible. Do you know what it is to write a letter to a friend feeling as if the Lord Jesus were looking over your shoulder? I know what it is at times to stand here and preach, and feel my Lord so near me that if I had literally seen him it would not have surprised me. Have you never, in the watches of the night, lain quiet when there was no sound but the ticking of the watch, and thought of your Lord till, though you knew there was no form before you, you were just as certain that he was there as if you could see his sorrowful countenance? In quiet places all alone—you scarcely like to tell the story—in the lone wood, and in the upper chamber—you have said, "If he spake I should not be more certain of his presence; and if he smiled upon me I should not be surer of his love." These realizations have sometimes been so joyfully overwhelming that for years you have been lifted by them beyond all power of doubt. These holy summer days banish the frosts of the soul. Whenever a doubt is suggested to me about the existence of my Lord and Master, I feel that I can laugh the tempter to scorn, for I have seen him, and spoken with him. Not with these eyes, but with the eyes of my inner life, I have beheld my Lord, and communed with him. Wonder not that I am not among the crew of the black, piratical

ship of "Modern Thought."

Nor is it merely in seasons of enjoyment that we get these helps, but in times of deep distress. Prostrate with pain, unable to enjoy any comfort, unable even to sleep, I have seen the soul of the believer as happy as if all sounds were marriage peals. Some of us know what it is to be right gleesome, glad, and joyous in hours of fierce trial, because Christ has been so near. In times of losses and bereavements, when the sorrow stung you to the quick, and you thought before it came, that you never could bear it, yet have you been so sustained by a sight of the sacred head once wounded, and by fellowship with him in his sufferings, that you have said, "What are my griefs compared with his?" You have forgotten your sorrows and sung for joy of heart, as those that make merry. If you have been helped in this way, it will have all the effect upon you that ever could have come of putting your finger into the print of the nails. If, perchance, you have been given up to die, and have, mentally, gone through the whole process of dying, expecting soon to stand before the bar of God, and have been happy, and even exultant, then you could not doubt the reality of a religion that bore you up above the surging billows. Now that you are again restored to life for a little longer time, the recollection of your buoyant spirits, in what you thought to be your dying hours, will answer all the purpose to you, I think, of putting your finger into the nail-prints.

Sometimes the strengthening influence may be afforded under the stress of temptation. If ever, young man, you have had a strong temptation hurling itself against you, and your feet have almost gone—ay, let me not say "young man"; but if ever a man or a woman of any age has had to cry out, "God, help me: how shall I escape out of this?" and you have turned your eyes and seen your Lord and beheld his wounds; and if you have felt at that moment that the temptation had lost all power, you have had a seal from the Lord, and your faith has been confirmed. If at the sight of your Lord you have exclaimed, in presence of the temptation, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" after that, you have had the best proof of your Redeemer's power to save. What better or more practical proof could you desire?

In these times, when the foundations of our faith are constantly being undermined, one is sometimes driven to say to himself, "Suppose it is not true." As I stood, the other night, beneath the sky, and watched the stars, I felt my heart going up to the great Maker with all the love that I was capable of. I said to myself, "What made me love God as I know I do? What made me feel an anxiety to be like him in purity? Whatever made me long to obey my God cannot be a lie." I know that it was the love of Jesus for me that changed my heart, and made me, though once careless and indifferent to him, now to pant with strong desires to honour him. What has done this? Not a lie, surely. A truth, then, has done it. I know it by its fruits. If this Bible were to turn out untrue, and if I died and went before my Maker, could I not say to him, "I believed great things of thee, great God; if it be not so, yet did I honour thee by the faith I had concerning thy wondrous goodness, and thy power to forgive"? and I would cast myself upon his mercy without fear. But we do not entertain such doubts; for those dear wounds continually prove the truth of the gospel, and the truth of our salvation by it. Incarnate Deity is a thought that was never invented by poet's mind, nor reasoned out by philosopher's skill. Incarnate Deity, the notion of the God that lived, and bled, and died in human form, instead of guilty man, it is itself its own best witness. The wounds are the infallible witness of the gospel of Christ.

Have you not felt those wounds very powerful to you in the form of assistance in time of duty? You said, "I cannot do it, it is too hard for me." You looked to Jesus wounded, and you could do anything. A sight of the bleeding Christ has often filled us with enthusiasm, and so with power: it has rendered us mighty with the omnipotence of God. Look at the church of Christ in all ages. Kings and princes did not know what to do with her. They vowed that they would destroy her. Their persecuting edicts went forth, and they put to death thousands upon thousands of the followers of Christ. But what happened? The death of Jesus made men willing to die for him. No pain, no torture, could keep back the believing host. They loved Jesus so that though their leaders fell by bloody deaths, another rank came on, and yet another, and another, till despots saw that neither dungeon, nor rack, nor fire could stop the march of the army of Christ. It is so now. Christ's wounds pour life into the church by transfusion: the life-blood of the church of God is from Jesus' wounds. Let us know its

power and feel it working within us to will and to do of his good pleasure.

And as for those who do not trust him, what shall I say? The Lord help you to do so at once; for as long as you do not trust him, you are under an awful curse, for it is written, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—cursed at the coming of the Lord. May it not be so with you! Amen.

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The Evil And Its Remedy

The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great. - Ezekiel 9:9

The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. - 1 John 1:7

I shall have two texts this morning—the evil and its remedy. "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great;" and "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

We can learn nothing of the gospel, except by feeling its truths—no one truth of the gospel is ever truly known and really learned, until we have tested and tried and proved it, and its power has been exercised upon us. I have heard of a naturalist, who thought himself exceedingly wise with regard to the natural history of birds, and yet he had learned all he knew in his study, and had never so much as seen a bird either flying through the air or sitting upon its perch. He was but a fool although he thought himself exceeding wise. And there are some men who like him think themselves great theologians; they might even pretend to take a doctor's degree in divinity; and yet, if we came to the root of the matter, and asked them whether they ever saw or felt any of these things of which they talked, they would have to say, "No; I know these things in the letter, but not in the spirit; I understand them as a matter of theory, but not as

things of my own consciousness and experience." Be assured, that as the naturalist who was merely the student of other men's observations knew nothing, so the man who pretends to religion, but has never entered into the depths and power of its doctrines, or felt the influence of them upon his heart, knows nothing whatever, and all the knowledge he pretendeth to is but varnished ignorance. There are some sciences that may be learned by the head, but the science of Christ crucified can only be learned by the heart.

I have made use of this remark as the preface to my sermon, because I think it will be forced from each of our hearts before we have done, if the two truths which I shall consider this morning, shall come at all home to us with power. The first truth is the greatness of our sin. No man can know the greatness of sin till he has felt it, for there is no measuring-rod for sin, except its condemnation in our own conscience, when the law of God speaks to us with a terror that may be felt. And as for the richness of the blood of Christ and its ability to wash us, of that also we can know nothing till we have ourselves been washed, and have ourselves proved that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God hath cleansed us from all sin.

I. I shall begin, then, with the first doctrine as it is contained in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel, the ninth verse,—*"The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great."* There are two great lessons which every man must learn, and learn by experience, before he can be a Christian. First, he must learn that sin is an exceeding great and evil thing; and he must learn also that the blood of Christ is an exceedingly precious thing, and is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto it. The former lesson we have before us. O may God, by his infinite spirit, by his great wisdom, teach it to some of us who never knew it before!

Some men imagine that the gospel was devised, in some way or other, to soften down the harshness of God towards sin. Ah! how mistaken the idea! There is no more harsh condemnation of sin anywhere than in the gospel. Ye shall go to Sinai, and ye shall there hear its thunders rolling; ye shall behold the flashing of its terrible lightnings, till, like Moses, ye shall exceedingly fear and quake, and come away declaring that sin must be a

terrible thing, otherwise, the Holy One had never come upon Mount Paran with all these terrors round about him. But after that ye shall go to Calvary; there ye shall see no lightnings, and ye shall hear no thunders, but instead thereof, ye shall hear the groans of an expiring God, and ye shall behold the contortions and agonies of one who bore

"All that Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare."

And then ye shall say, "Now, though I never fear nor quake, yet I know how exceedingly great a thing sin must be, since such a sacrifice was required to make an atonement for it. Oh! sinners; if ye come to the gospel, imagining that there ye shall find an apology for your sin, ye have indeed mistaken your way. Moses charges you with sin, and tells you that you are without excuse; but as for the gospel, it rends away from you every shadow of a covering; it leaves you without a cloak for your sin; it tells you that you have sinned wilfully against the Most High God—that ye have not an apology that ye can possibly make for all the iniquities that ye have committed against him; and so far in any way from smoothing over your sin, and telling you that you are a weak creature and, therefore could not help your sin, it charges upon you the very weakness of your nature, and makes that itself the most damning sin of all. If ye seek apologies, better look even into the face of Moses, when it is clothed with all the majesty of the terrors of the law, than into the face of the gospel, for that is more terrible by far to him who seeks to cloak his sin.

Nor does the gospel in any way whatever give man a hope that the claims of the law will be in any way loosened. Some imagine that under the old dispensation God demanded great things of man—that he did bind upon man heavy burdens that were grievous to be borne—and they suppose that Christ came into the world to put upon the shoulders of men a lighter law, something which it would be more easy for them to obey—a law which they can more readily keep, or which if they break, would not come upon them with such terrible threatenings. Ah, not so. The gospel came not into the world to soften down the law. Till heaven and earth shall pass away, not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail. What God hath said to the sinner in the law, he saith to the sinner in the gospel. If he declareth that

"the soul that sinneth it shall die," the testimony of the gospel is not contrary to the testimony of the law. If he declares that whosoever breaketh the sacred law shall most assuredly be punished, the gospel also demands blood for blood, and eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, and doth not relax a solitary jot or tittle of its demands, but is as severe and as terribly just as even the law itself. Do you reply to this, that Christ has certainly softened down the law? I reply, that ye know not, then, the mission of Christ. What said he himself? The Lord hath said in the law "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" hath Christ softened the law? No. Saith he, "I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." That is no softening of the law. It is, as it were, the grinding of the edge of the terrible sword of Divine justice, to make it sharper far than it seemed before. Christ hath not put out the furnace; he rather seemeth to heat it seven times hotter. Before Christ came sin seemed unto me to be but little; but when he came sin became exceeding sinful, and all its dread heinousness started out before the light.

But, says one, surely the gospel does in some degree remove the greatness of our sin. Does it not soften the punishment of sin? Ah! no. Ye shall appeal to Moses; let him ascend the pulpit and preach to you. He says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and his sermon is dread and terrible. He sits down. And now comes Jesus Christ, the man of a loving countenance. What says he with regard to the punishment of sin? Ah! sirs, there was never such a preacher of the fires of hell as Christ was. Our Lord Jesus Christ was all love, but he was all honesty too. "Never man spake like that man," when he came to speak of the punishment of the lost. What other prophet was the author of such dread expressions as these?—"He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" or these—"Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." Stand at the feet of Jesus when he tells you of the punishment of sin, and the effect of iniquity, and you may tremble there far more than you would have done if Moses had been the preacher, and if Sinai had been in the background to conclude the sermon. No, brethren, the gospel of Christ in no sense whatever helps to make sin less. The proclamation of Christ to-day by his minister is the same as the utterance of Ezekiel of old—"The iniquity of the house of

Israel and Judah is exceeding great."

And now let us endeavour to deal with hearts and consciences a moment. My brethren, there are some here who have never felt this truth. There are many of you who start back affrighted from it. You will go home and represent me as one who delights to dwell on certain dark and terrible things that I suppose to be true—you say within yourselves, "I cannot, I will not, receive that doctrine of sin; I know I am a frail weak creature; I have made a great many mistakes in my life—that I will admit; but still such is my nature, and I therefore could not help it; I am not going to be arraigned before a pulpit and condemned as the chief of criminals; I may be a sinner—I confess I am with all the rest of mankind—but as to my sin being anything so great as that man attempts to describe, I do not believe it; I reject the doctrine." And thinkest thou, my friend, that I am surprised at thy doing so? I know thee who thou art; it is because as yet the grace of God has never touched thy soul that therefore thou sayest this. And here comes the proof of the doctrine with which I started. Thou dost not know this truth, because thou hast never felt it; but if thou hadst felt it, as every true-born child of God has felt it, thou wouldst say, "The man cannot describe its terrors as they are; they must be felt before they can be known, and when felt they are not to be expressed in all their fulness of terror."

But come, let me reason with you for a moment. Your sin is great, although you think it small. Remember, brother, I am not about to make out that thy sin is greater than mine. I speak to thee, and I speak to myself also, thy sin is great. Follow me in these few thoughts and perhaps thou wilt better understand it. How great a thing is one sin, when according to the Word of God one sin could suffice to damn the soul. One sin, remember, destroyed the whole human race. Adam did but take of the forbidden fruit, and that one sin blasted Eden, and made all of us inheritors of the curse, and caused the earth to bring forth thorns and thistles, even unto this day. But it may be said could one sin destroy the soul? Is it possible that one solitary sin could open the gates of hell, and then close them upon the guilty soul for ever, and that God should refuse his mercy, and shut out that soul for ever from the presence of his face? Yes, if I believe my Bible, I must believe that. Oh, how great must my sins

be if this is the terrible effect of one transgression. Sin cannot be the little thing that my pride has helped me to imagine it to be. It must be an awful thing if but one sin could ruin my soul for ever.

Think again my friend, for a moment what an imprudent and impertinent thing sin is. Behold! there is one God who filleth all in all, and he is the Infinite Creator. He makes me, and I am nothing more in his sight than an animated grain of dust; and I that animated grain of dust, with a mere ephemeral existence, have the impertinence and imprudence to set up my will against his will! I dare to proclaim war against the Infinite Majesty of heaven. It is a thing so audacious, so infernally full of pride, that one need not marvel that even a sin in the little eye of man, should, when it is looked upon by the conscience in the light of heaven, appear to be great indeed.

But think again, how great does your sin, and mine seem, if we will but think of the ingratitude which has marked it. The Lord our God has fed us from our youth up to this day: he has put the breath into our nostrils, and has held our souls in life; he has clothed the earth with mercies and he has permitted us to walk across these fair fields; and he has given us bread to eat and raiment to put on, and mercies so precious that their full value can never be known until they are taken from us; and yet you and I have persevered in breaking all his laws wilfully and wantonly: we have gone contrary to his will; it has been sufficient for us to know that a thing has been God's will, and we have at once run contrary thereunto. Oh, if we set our secret sins in the light of his mercy, if our transgressions are set side by side with his favours, we must each of us say, our sins indeed are exceeding great!

Mark, I am not now addressing myself solely and wholly to those whom the word itself condemns of great sin. We of course do not hesitate for a moment to speak of the drunkard, the whoremonger, the adulterer, and the thief, as being great sinners; we should not spare to say that their iniquity is exceeding great, for it exceeds even the bounds of man's morality, and the laws of our civil government. But I am speaking this day to you who have been the most moral, to you whose outward carriage is everything that could be desired, to you who have kept the Sabbath, to

you who have frequented God's house, and outwardly worshipped. Your sins and mine are exceeding great. They seem but little to the outward eye—but if we came to dig into the bowels thereof and see their iniquity, their hideous blackness, we most say of them they are exceeding great.

And again, I repeat it, this is a doctrine that no man can rightly know and receive until he has felt it. My hearer, hast thou ever felt this doctrine to be true—"my sin is exceeding great?" Sickness is a terrible thing, more especially when it is accompanied with pain, when the poor body is racked to an extreme, so that the spirit fails within us, and we are dried up like a potsherd; but I bear witness in this place this morning, that sickness however agonizing, is nothing like the discovery of the evil of sin. I had rather pass through seven years of the most wearisome pain, and the most languishing sickness, than I would ever again pass through the terrible discovery of the terrors of sin. There be some of you who will understand what I mean; for brother, you have felt the same. Once on a time, you were playing with your lusts, and dallying with your sin, and it pleased God to open your eyes to see that sin is exceeding sinful. You remember the horror of that state, it seemed as if all hideous things were gathered into one dread and awful spectacle. You had before loved your iniquities, but now you loathed them—and you loathed yourselves; before, you had thought that your transgressions might easily be got rid of, they were matters that might be speedily washed out by repentance, or purged away by amendment of your life; but now sin seemed an alarming thing, and that you should have committed all this iniquity; life seemed to you a curse, and death, if it had not been for that dreary something after death, would have been to you the highest blessing, if you could have escaped the lashings of your conscience, which seemed to be perpetually whipping you with whips of burning wire. Some of you, perhaps, passed through but a little of this. God was graciously pleased to give you deliverance in a few hours; but you must confess that those hours were hours into which it seemed as if years of misery had been compressed. It was my sad lot for three or four years, to feel the greatness of my sin without a discovery of the greatness of God's mercy. I had to walk through this world with more than a world upon my shoulders, and sustain a grief that so far exceeds all other griefs, as a mountain exceeds a mole hill; and I often wonder to this day how it was, that my hand was

kept from rending my own body into pieces through the terrible agony which I felt, when I discovered the greatness of my transgression. Yet, I had not been a greater sinner than any one of you here present, openly and publicly, but heart sins were laid bare, sins of lip and tongue were discovered, and then I knew—oh, that I may never have to learn over again in such a dreadful school this terrible lesson—"The iniquity of Judah and of Israel is exceeding great." This is the first part of the discourse.

II. "Well," cries one, turning on his heel, "there is very little comfort in that. It is enough to drive one to despair, if not to madness itself." Ah friend! such is the very design of this text. If I may have the pleasure of driving you to despair, if it be a despair of your self-righteousness and a despair of saving your own soul, I shall be thrice happy.

We turn therefore from that terrible text to the second one,—the first of John, the first chapter, and the seventh verse;—"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." There lies the blackness; here stands the Lord Jesus Christ. What will he do with it? Will he go and speak to it, and say, "This is no great evil; this blackness is but a little spot?" Oh! no; he looks at it, and he says, "This is terrible blackness, darkness that may be felt; this is an exceeding great evil." Will he cover it up then? Will he weave a mantle of excuse and then wrap it round about the iniquity? Ah! no; whatever covering there may have been he lifts it off; and he declares that when the Spirit of truth is come he will convince the world of sin, and lay the sinner's conscience bare and probe the wound to the bottom. What then will he do? He will do a far better thing than make an excuse or than to pretend in any way to speak lightly of it. He will cleanse it all away, remove it entirely by the power and meritorious virtue of his own blood, which is able to save unto the uttermost. The gospel does not consist in making a man's sin appear little. The way Christians get their peace is not by seeing their sins shrivelled and shrinking until they seem small to them. But on the contrary; they, first of all, see their sins expanding, and then, after that, they obtain their peace by seeing those sins entirely swept away,—far as the east is from the west.

Now, carrying in mind the remarks I made upon the first text, I call your attention for a few moments to the greatness and beauty of the second one. Note here, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from ALL sin." Dwell on the word "all" for a moment. Our sins are great; every sin is great; but there are some that in our apprehension seem to be greater than others. There are crimes that the lip of modesty could not mention. I might go far in this pulpit this morning in describing the degradation of human nature in the sins which it has invented. It is amazing how the ingenuity of man seems to have exhausted itself in inventing fresh crimes. Surely there is not the possibility of the invention of a new sin. But if there be, ere long man will invent it, for man seemeth exceedingly cunning, and full of wisdom in the discovery of means of destroying himself and the endeavour to injure his Maker. But there are some sins that show a diabolical extent of degraded ingenuity—some sins of which it were a shame to speak, of which it were disgraceful to think. But note here: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." There may be some sins of which a man cannot speak, but there is no sin which the blood of Christ cannot wash away. Blasphemy, however profane, lust, however bestial; covetousness, however far it may have gone into theft and rapine; breach of the commandments of God, however much of riot it may have run, all this may be pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ. In all the long list of human sins, though that be long as time, there standeth but one sin that is unpardonable, and that one no sinner has committed if he feels within himself a longing for mercy, for that sin once committed, the soul becomes hardened, dead, and seared, and never desireth afterwards to find peace with God. I therefore declare to thee, O trembling sinner, that however great thine iniquity may be, whatever sin thou mayest have committed in all the list of guilt, however far thou mayest have exceeded all thy fellow-creatures, though thou mayest have distanced the Pauls and Magdalens and every one of the most heinous culprits in the black race of sin, yet the blood of Christ is able now to wash thy sin away. Mark! I speak not lightly of thy sin, it is exceeding great; but I speak still more loftily of the blood of Christ. Great as are thy sins, the blood of Christ is greater still. Thy sins are like great mountains, but the blood of Christ is like Noah's flood; twenty cubits upwards shall this blood prevail, and the top of the mountains of thy sin shall be covered.

Just take the word "all" in another sense, not only as taking in all sorts of sin, but as comprehending the great aggregate mass of sin. Come here sinner, thou with the grey head. What are we to understand in thy case by this word all? Bring hither the tremendous load of the sins of thy youth. Those sins are still in thy bones, and thy tottering knees sometimes testify against the iniquities of thy early youth; but all these sins Christ can remove. Now bring hither the sins of thy riper manhood, thy transgressions in the family, thy failures in business, all the mistakes and all the errors thou hast committed in the thoughts of thy heart. Bring them all here; and then add the iniquities of thy frail and trembling age. What a mass is there here! what a mass of sin! Stir up that putrid mass, but put thy finger to thy nostrils first, for thou canst not bear the stench thereof if thou art a man with a living and quickened conscience. Couldst thou bear to read thine own diary if thou hadst written there all thy acts? No; for though thou be the purest of mankind, thy thoughts if they could have been recorded, would now if thou couldst read them, make thee startle and wonder that thou art demon enough to have had such imaginations within thy soul. But put them all there, and all these sins the blood of Christ can wash away.

Nay, more than that. Come hither ye thousands who are gathered together this morning to listen to the Word of God; what is the aggregate of your guilt? Hither ye have come, men of every grade and class, and women of every age and order; what is the mass of all your united guilt? Could ye put it so that mortal observation could comprehend the whole within its ken, it were as a mountain with a base, broad as eternity, and a summit lofty almost as the throne of the great archangel. But, remember, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin. Let but the blood be applied to our consciences and all our guilt is removed, and cast away for ever—all—none left, not one solitary stain remaining—all gone, like Israel's enemies—all drowned in the Red Sea, so that there was not one of them left, all swept away, not so much as the remembrance of them remaining. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Yet, once more, in the praise of this blood we must notice one further feature. There be some of you here who are saying, "Ah! that shall be my

hope when I come to die, that in the last hour of my extremity the blood of Christ will take my sins away; it is now my comfort to think that the blood of Christ shall wash, and purge, and purify the transgressions of life." But, mark! my text saith not so; it does not say the blood of Christ shall cleanse—that were a truth—but it says something greater than that—it says, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth"—cleanseth now. And is it possible that now a man may be forgiven? Can a harlot now have all her sins blotted out of the book of God? And can she know it? Can the thief this day have all his transgressions cast into the sea; and can he know it? Can I, the chief of sinners, this day be cleansed from all my sins, and know it? Can I know that I stand accepted before the throne of God, a holy creature because washed from every sin? Yes, tell it the wide world over, that the blood of Christ can not only wash you in the last dying article, but can wash you now. And let it be known, moreover, that to this there are a thousand witnesses, who, rising in this very place from their seats, could sing -

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of my Saviour's precious blood,
With divine assurance knowing,
He has made my peace with God"

What would you not give to have all your sins blotted out now? Would you not give yourself away to become the servant of God for ever, if now your sins should be washed away? Ah, then, say not in your hearts, "What shall I do to obtain this mercy?" Imagine not there is any difficulty in your way. Suppose not there is some hard thing to be done before you can come to Christ to be washed, O beloved! to the man that knows himself to be guilty, there is not one barrier between himself and Christ. Come, soul, this moment come to him that hung upon the cross of Calvary! come now and be washed.

But what meanest thou by coming? I mean this: come thou and put thy trust in Christ, and thou shalt be saved. What is meant by believing in Christ? Some say, that "to believe in Christ is to believe that Christ died for me." That is not a satisfactory definition of faith. An Arminian believes that Christ died for everybody. He must, therefore, necessarily

believe that Christ died for him. His believing that will not save him, for he will still remain an unconverted man and yet believe that. To believe in Christ is to trust him. The way I believe in Christ, and I know not how to speak of it, except as I feel it myself, is simply this: I know it is written that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." I do firmly believe that those he came to save he will save. The only question I ask myself is, "Can I put myself among that number whom he has declared he came to save?" Am I a sinner? Not one that utters the word in a complimentary sense, but do I feel the deep compunction in my inmost soul? do I stand and feel convicted, guilty, and condemned? I do; I know I do. Whatever I may not be, one thing I know I am—a sinner, guilty, consciously guilty, and often miserable on account of that guilt. Well, then, the Scripture says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

"And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
Thus, at his footstool, bow the knee,
And Israel's God thy peace shall be,"

Let me put my entire trust in the bloody sacrifice which he offered upon my behalf. No dependence will I have in my playings, my doings, my feelings, my weepings, my preachings, my thinkings, my Bible readings, nor all that. I would desire to have good works, and yet in my good works I will not put a shadow of trust.

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

And if there be any power in Christ to save I am saved; if there be an everlasting arm extended by Christ, and if that Saviour who hung there was "God over all, blessed for ever," and if his blood is still exhibited before the throne of God as the sacrifice for sin, then perish I cannot, till the throne of God shall break, and till the pillars of God's justice shall crumble.

Now, sinner what then hast thou to do this morning? If thou feelest thy

guilt to be great, cast thyself entirely upon this sacrifice by blood. "But no," says one, "I have not felt enough." Thy feelings are not Christ. "No, but I have not prayed enough." Thy prayers are not Christ, and thy prayers cannot save thee. "No, but I have not repented enough." Thy repentance may destroy thee, if thou putttest that in the place of Christ. All that thou hast, I repeat this morning, is this—dost thou feel thyself to be a lost, ruined, guilty sinner? Then simply cast thyself on the fact that Christ is able to save sinners and rest there. What! do you say you cannot do it? Oh may God enable you, may he give you faith, sink or swim, to cast yourself on that. "Well! but," you say, "I may not; being such a sinner?" You may; and God never yet rejected a sinner that sought salvation by Jesus. Such a thing never happened, though the sinner sometimes thought it had. Come, the crumb is under the table; though thou be but a dog come and pick it up; it is a privilege even for the dog to take it; and mercy that is great to thee, is but a crumb to him that gives it freely—come and take it. Christ will not reject thee. And if thou be the chief of sinners that ever lived, only simply trust thyself upon him, and perish thou canst not, if God be God, and if this Bible be the book of his truth. The Lord now help each one of us to come afresh to Christ, and to his name be glory.

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The Exaltation Of Christ

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. - Philippians 2:9-11

I almost regret this morning that I have ventured to occupy this pulpit, because I feel utterly unable to preach to you for your profit. I had thought that the quiet and repose of the last fortnight had removed the

effects of that terrible catastrophe; but on coming back to the same spot again, and more especially, standing here to address you, I feel somewhat of those same painful emotions which well-nigh prostrated me before. You will therefore excuse me this morning, if I make no allusion to that solemn event, or scarcely any. I could not preach to you upon a subject that should be in the least allied to it. I should be obliged to be silent if I should bring to my remembrance that terrific scene in the midst of which it was my solemn lot to stand. God shall overrule it doubtless. It may not have been so much by the malice of men, as some have asserted; it was perhaps simple wickedness - an intention to disturb a congregation; but certainly with no thought of committing so terrible a crime as that of the murder of those unhappy creatures. God forgive those who were the instigators of that horrid act! They have my forgiveness from the depths of my soul. It shall not stop us, however; we are not in the least degree daunted by it. I shall preach there again yet; ay, and God shall give us souls there, and Satan's empire shall tremble more than ever. "God is with us; who is he that shall be against us?" The text I have selected is one that has comforted me, and in a great measure, enabled me to come here to-day - the single reflection upon it had such a power of comfort on my depressed spirit. It is this: - "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." - Philippians 2:9-11.

I shall not attempt to preach upon this text; I shall only make a few remarks that have occurred to my own mind; for I could not preach to-day; I have been utterly unable to study, but I thought that even a few words might be acceptable to you this morning, and I trust to your loving hearts to excuse them. Oh, Spirit of God, magnify thy strength in thy servant's weakness, and enable him to honour his Lord, even when his soul is cast down within him.

WHEN the mind is intensely set upon one object, however much it may by divers calamities be tossed to and fro, it invariably returns to the place which it had chosen to be its dwelling place. Ye have noticed in the case of David. When the battle had been won by his warriors, they returned

flushed with victory. David's mind had doubtless suffered much perturbation in the mean time; he had dreaded alike the effects of victory and defeat; but have you not noticed how his mind in one moment returned to the darling object of his affections? "Is the young man Absalom safe?" said he, as if it mattered not what else had occurred, if his beloved son were but secure! So, beloved, it is with the Christian. In the midst of calamities, whether they be the wreck of nations, the crash of empires, the heaving of revolutions, or the scourge of war, the great question which he asks himself, and asks of others too, is this - Is Christ's kingdom safe? In his own personal afflictions his chief anxiety is, - Will God be glorified, and will his honour be increased by it? If it be so, says he, although I be but as smoking flax, yet if the sun is not dimmed I will rejoice; and though I be a bruised reed, if the pillars of the temple are unbroken, what matters it that my reed is bruised? He finds it sufficient consolation, in the midst of all the breaking in pieces which he endures, to think that Christ's throne stands fast and firm, and that though the earth hath rocked beneath his feet, yet Christ standeth on a rock which never can be moved. Some of these feelings, I think, have crossed our minds. Amidst much tumult and divers rushings to and fro of troublous thoughts our souls have returned to the darling object of our desires, and we have found it no small consolation after all to say, "It matters not what shall become of us: God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

This text has afforded sweet consolation to every heir of heaven. Allow me, very briefly, to give you the consolations of it. To the true Christian there is much comfort in the very fact of Christ's exaltation. In the second place, there is no small degree of consolation in the reason of it. "Wherefore, also, God hath highly exalted him;" that is because of his previous humiliation. And thirdly, there is no small amount of really divine solace in the thought of the person who has exalted Christ. Wherefore God also" - although men despise him and cast him down - "God also hath highly exalted him."

I. First, then, IN THE VERY FACT OF CHRIST'S EXALTATION THERE IS TO EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN A VERY LARGE DEGREE OF

COMFORT. Many of you who have no part nor lot in spiritual things, not having love to Christ, nor any desire for his glory, will but laugh when I say that this is a very bottle of cordial to the lip of the weary Christian, that Christ, after all, is glorified. To you it is no consolation, because you lack that condition of heart which makes this text sweet to the soul. To you there is nothing of joy in it; it does not stir your bosom; it gives no sweetness to your life; for this very reason, that you are not joined to Christ's cause, nor do you devoutly seek to honour him. But the true Christian's heart leapeth for joy, even when cast down by divers sorrows and temptations, at the remembrance that Christ is exalted, for in that he finds enough to cheer his own heart. Note here, beloved, that the Christian has certain features in his character which make the exaltation of Christ a matter of great joy to him. First, he has in his own opinion, and not in his own opinion only, but in reality, a relationship to Christ, and therefore he feels an interest in the success of his kinsman. Ye have watched the father's joy, when step by step his boy has climbed to opulence or fame; ye have marked the mother's eye, as it sparkled with delight when her daughter grew up to womanhood, and burst forth in all the grandeur of beauty. Ye have asked why they should feel such interest; and ye have been told, because the boy was his, or the girl was hers. They delighted in the advancement of their little ones, because of their relationship. Had there been no relationship, they might have been advanced to kings, emperors, or queens, and they would have felt but little delight. But from the fact of kindred, each step was invested with a deep and stirring interest. Now, it is so with this Christian. He feels that Jesus Christ, the glorified "Prince of the kings of the earth." is his brother. While he reverences him as God, he admires him as the man-Christ, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, and he delights, in his calm and placid moments of communion with Jesus, to say to him, "O Lord, thou art my brother." His song is, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." It is his joy to sing -

"In the blood with sinners one,"

Christ Jesus is; for he is a man, even as we are: and he is no less and no more man than we are, save only sin. Surely, when we feel we are related to Christ, his exaltation is the source of the greatest joy to our spirits; we

take a delight in it, seeing it is one of our family that is exalted. It is the Elder Brother of the great one family of God in heaven and earth; it is the Brother to whom all of us are related.

There is also in the Christian not only the feeling of relationship merely, but there is a feeling of unity in the cause. He feels that when Christ is exalted, it is himself exalted in some degree, seeing he has sympathy with his desire of promoting the great cause and honour of God in the world. I have no doubt that every common soldier who stood by the side of the Duke of Wellington felt honoured when the commander was applauded for the victory; for, said he, "I helped him, I assisted him; it was but a mean part that I played; I did but maintain my rank; I did but sustain the enemy's fire; but now the victory is gained. I feel an honour in it, for I helped, in some degree, to gain it." So the Christian, when he sees his Lord exalted, says, "It is the Captain that is exalted, and in his exaltation all his soldiers share. Have I not stood by his side? Little was the work I did, and poor the strength which I possessed to serve him; but still I aided in the labour;" and the commonest soldier in the spiritual ranks feels that he himself is in some degree exalted when he reads this - "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:" a renown above every name - "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

Moreover, the Christian knows not only that there is this unity in design, but that there is a real union between Christ and all his people. It is a doctrine of revelation seldom descanted upon, but never too much thought of - the doctrine that Christ and his members are all one. Know ye not, beloved, that every member of Christ's church is a member of Christ himself? We are "of his flesh and of his bones," parts of his great mystical body; and when we read that our head is crowned, O rejoice, ye members of his, his feet or his hands, though the crown is not on you, yet being on your Head, you share the glory, for you are one with him. See Christ yonder, sitting at his Father's right hand! Believer! he is the pledge of thy glorification; he is the surety of thine acceptance; and, moreover, he is thy representative. The seat which Christ possesses in heaven he has not only by his own right, as a person of the Deity, but he has it also as the representative of the whole church, for he is their forerunner, and he

sits in glory as the representative of every one of them. O rejoice, believer, when thou seest thy Master exalted from the tomb, when thou beholdest him exalted up to heaven. Then, when thou seest him climb the steps of light, and sit upon his lofty throne, where angels' ken can scarcely reach him - when thou hearest the acclamations of a thousand seraphs - when thou dost note the loud pealing choral symphony of millions of the redeemed; think, when thou seest him crowned with light - think that thou art exalted too in him, seeing that thou art a part of himself. Happy art thou if thou knowest this, not only in doctrine, but in sweet experience too. Knit to Christ, wedded to him, grown into him, parts and portions of his very self, we throb with the heart of the body; when the head itself is glorified we share in the praise; we felt that his glorification bestows an honour upon us. Ah! beloved, have you ever felt that unity to Christ? Have you ever felt a unity of desire with him? If so, you will find this rich with comfort; but if not - if you know not Christ - it will be a source of grief rather than a pleasure to you that he is exalted, for you will have to reflect that he is exalted to crush you, exalted to judge you and condemn you, exalted to sweep this earth of its sins, and cut the curse up by the roots, and you with it, unless you repent and turn unto God with full purpose of heart.

There is yet another feeling, which I think is extremely necessary to any very great enjoyment of this truth, that Christ is exalted. It is a feeling of entire surrender of one's whole being to the great work of seeking to honour him. Oh! I have striven for that: would to God I might attain unto it! I have now concentrated all my prayers into one, and that one prayer is this, that I may die to self, and live wholly to him. It seems to me to be the highest stage of man - to have no wish, no thought, no desire but Christ - to feel that to die were bliss, if it were for Christ - that to live in penury and woe, and scorn, and contempt, and misery, were sweet for Christ - to feel that it did not matter what became of one's self, so that one's Master was but exalted - to feel that though, like a sear leaf, you are blown in the blast, you are quite careless whither you are going, so long as you feel that the Master's hand is guiding you according to his will. Or rather to feel that though like the diamond you must be cut, that you care not how sharply you may be cut, so that you may be made fit to be a brilliant in his crown; that you care little what may be done to you, if you may but

honour him. If any of you have attained to that sweet feeling of self-annihilation, you will look up to Christ as if he were the sun, and you will say of yourself, "O Lord, I see thy beams; I feel myself to be not a beam from thee - but darkness, swallowed up in thy light. The most I ask is, that thou wouldst live in me, that the life I live in the flesh may not be my life, but thy life in me, that I may say with emphasis, as Paul did, 'For me to live is Christ.'" A man that has attained to this, never need care what is the opinion of this world. He may say, "Do you praise me? Do you flatter me? Take back your flatteries: I ask them not at your hands; I sought to praise my Master; ye have laid the praises at my door; go, lay them at his, and not at mine. Do ye scorn me? Do ye despise me? Thrice happy am I to bear it. If ye will not scorn and despise him!" And if ye will, yet know this, that he is beyond your scorn; and, therefore, smite the soldier for his Captain's sake; ay, strike, strike; but the King ye cannot touch - he is highly exalted - and thou ye think ye have gotten the victory, ye may have routed one soldier of the army, but the main body is triumphant. One soldier seems to be smitten to the dust, but the Captain is coming on with his victorious cohorts, and shall trample you, flushed with your false victory, beneath his conquering feet. As long as there is a particle of selfishness remaining in us, it will mar our sweet rejoicing in Christ; till we get rid of it, we shall never feel constant joy. I do think that the root of sorrow is self. If we once got rid of that, sorrow would be sweet, sickness would be health, sadness would be joy, penury would be wealth, so far as our feelings with regard to them are concerned. They might not be changed, but our feelings under them would be vastly different. If you would seek happiness, seek it at the roots of your selfishness; cut up your selfishness, and you will be happy. I have found that whenever I have yielded to the least joy when I have been prepared to feel acutely the arrows of the enemy; but when I have said of the praises of men, "Yes, what are ye? worthless things!" - then I could also say of their contempt - "Come on! come on! I'll send you all where I sent the praises; you may go together, and fight your battles with one another; but as for me, let your arrows rattle on my mail - they must not, and they shall not, reach my flesh." But if you give way to one you will to another. You must seek and learn to live wholly in Christ - to sorrow when you see Christ maligned and dishonoured, to rejoice when you see him exalted, and then you will have constant cause for joy. Sit down now, O reviled one, poor, despised,

and tempted one; sit down, lift up thine eyes, see him on his throne, and say within thyself, "Little though I be, I know I am united to him; he is my love, my life, my joy; I care not what happens so long as it is written, "The Lord reigneth."

II. Now, briefly upon the second point. Here also is the very fountain and well-spring of joy, in THE REASON OF CHRIST'S EXALTATION. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." Why? Because, "he being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and because obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." This of course relates to the manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ. As God, Christ needed no exaltation; he was higher than the highest, "God over all, blessed for ever." But the symbols of his glory having been for a while obscured, having wrapped his Godhead in mortal flesh, his flesh with his Godhead ascended up on high, and the man-God, Christ Jesus, who had stooped to shame, and sorrow, and degradation, was highly exalted, "far above all principalities and powers," that he might reign Prince-regent over all worlds, yea, over heaven itself. Let us consider, for a moment, that depth of degradation to which Christ descended; and then, my beloved, it will give you joy to think, that for that very reason his manhood was highly exalted. Do you see that man -

"The humble Man before his foes,
The weary Man and full of woes?"

Do you mark him as he speaks? Note the marvellous eloquence which pours from his lips, and see how the crowds attend him? But do you hear, in the distance, the growling of the thunders of calumny and scorn? Listen to the words of his accusers. They say he is "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners;" "he has a devil, and is mad." All the whole vocabulary of abuse is exhausted by vituperation upon him. He is slandered, abused, persecuted! Stop! Do you think that he is by this cast down, by this degraded? No, for this very reason: "God hath highly exalted him." Mark the shame and spitting that have come

upon the cheek of yonder man of sorrows! See his hair plucked with cruel hands; mark ye how they torture him and how they mock him. Do you think that this is all dishonourable to Christ? It is apparently so; but list to this: "He became obedient," and therefore "God hath highly exalted him." Ah! there is a marvellous connection between that shame, and spitting, and the bending of the knee of seraphs; there is a strange yet mystic link which unites the calumny and the slander with the choral sympathies of adoring angels. The one was, as it were, the seed of the other. Strange that it should be, but the black, the bitter seed brought forth a sweet and glorious flower which blooms for ever. He suffered and he reigned; he stopped to conquer, and he conquered for he stooped, and was exalted for he conquered.

Consider him further still. Do you mark him in your imagination nailed to yonder cross! O eyes! ye are full of pity, with tears standing thick! Oh! how I mark the floods gushing down his checks! Do you see his hands bleeding, and his feet too, gushing gore? Behold him! The bulls of Bashan gird him round, and the dogs are hounding him to death! Hear him! "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" The earth startles with affright. A God is groaning on a cross! What! Does not this dishonour Christ? No; it honours him! Each of the thorns becomes a brilliant in his diadem of glory; the nails are forged into his sceptre, and his wounds do clothe him with the purple of empire. The treading of the wine-press hath stained his garments, but not with stains of scorn and dishonour. The stains are embroideries upon his royal robes for ever. The treading of that wine-press hath made his garments purple with the empire of a world; and he is the Master of a universe for ever. O Christian! sit down and consider that thy Master did not mount from earth's mountains into heaven, but from her valleys. It was not from heights of bliss on earth that he strode to bliss eternal, but from depths of woe he mounted up to glory. Oh! what a stride was that, when, at one mighty step from the grave to the throne of The Highest, the man Christ, the God, did gloriously ascend. And yet reflect! He in some way, mysterious yet true, was exalted because he suffered. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." Believer, there is comfort for thee here, if thou wilt take it. If

Christ was exalted through his degradation, so shalt thou be. Count not thy steps to triumph by thy steps upward, but by those which are seemingly downward. The way to heaven is down-hill. he who would be honoured for ever must sink in his own esteem, and often in that of his fellow-men. Oh! think not of yon fool who is mounting to heaven by his own light opinions of himself and by the flatteries of his fellows, that he shall safely reach Paradise; nay, that shall burst on which he rests, and he shall fall and be broken in pieces. But he who descends into the mines of suffering, shall find unbounded riches there; and he who dives into the depths of grief, shall find the pearl of everlasting life within tis caverns. Recollect, Christian, that thou art exalted when thou art disgraced; read the slanders of thine enemies as the plaudits of the just; count that the scoff and jeer of wicked men are equal to the praise and honour of the godly; their blame is censure, and their censure praise. Reckon too, if thy body should ever be exposed to persecution, that it is no shame to thee, but the reverse; and if thou shouldst be privileged, (and thou mayest) to wear the blood-red crown of martyrdom, count it no disgrace to die. Remember, the most honourable in the church are "the noble army of martyrs." Reckon that the greater the sufferings they endured, so much the greater is their "eternal weight of glory;" and so do thou, if thou standest in the brunt and thick of the fight, remember that thou shalt stand in the midst of glory. If thou hast the hardest to bear, thou shalt have the sweetest to enjoy. On with thee, then - through floods, through fire, through death, through hell, if it should lie in thy path. Fear not. He who glorified Christ because he stooped shall glorify thee; for after he has caused thee to endure awhile, he will give thee "a crown of life which fadeth now away."

III. And now, in the last place, beloved, here is yet another comfort for you. THE PERSON who exalted Christ is to be noticed. "GOD also hath highly exalted him." The emperor of all the Russians crowns himself: he is an autocrat, and puts the crown upon his own head: but Christ hath no such foolish pride. Christ did not crown himself. "GOD also hath highly exalted him." The crown was put upon the head of Christ by God; and there is to me a very sweet reflection in this, - that the hand that put the crown on Christ's head, will one day put the crown on ours; - that the same Mighty One who crowned Christ, "King of kings, and Lord of lords,"

will crown us, when he shall make us "Kings and priests unto him for ever." "I know," said Paul, "there is laid up for me a crown of glory which fadeth not away, which God, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day."

Now, just pause over this thought - that Christ did not crown himself, but that his Father crowned him; that he did not elevate himself to the throne of majesty, but that his Father lifted him there, and placed him on his throne. Why, reflect thus: Man never highly exalted Christ. Put this then in opposition to it - "God also hath highly exalted him." Man hissed him, mocked him, hooted him. Words were not hard enough - they would use stones. "They took up stones again to stone him." And stones failed; nails must be used, and he must be crucified. And then there comes the taunt, the jeer, the mockery, whilst he hangs languishing on the death-cross. Man did not exalt him. Set the black picture there. Now put this, with this glorious, this bright scene, side by side with it, and one shall be a foil to the other. Man dishonoured him; "God also exalted him." Believer, if all men speak ill of thee, lift up thy head, and say, "Man exalted not my Master; I thank him that he exalts not me. The servant should not be above his master, nor the servant above his lord, nor he that is sent greater than he that sent him."

"If on my face for his dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be;
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For he'll remember me."

God will remember me, and highly exalt me after all, though man casts me down.

Put it, again, in opposition to the fact, that Christ did not exalt himself. Poor Christian! you feel that you cannot exalt yourself. Sometimes you cannot raise your poor depressed spirits. Some say to you, "Oh! you should not feel like this." They tell you, "Oh! you should not speak such words, nor think such thoughts." Ah! "the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith," - ay, and I will improve upon it, "nor a friend either." It is not easy to tell how another

ought to feel and how another ought to act. Our minds are differently made, each in its own mould, which mould is broken afterwards, and there shall never be another like it. We are all different, each one of us; but I am sure there is one thing in which we are all brought to unite in times of deep sorrow, namely, in a sense of helplessness. We feel that we cannot exalt ourselves. Now remember, our Master felt just like it. In the 22nd Psalm, which, if I read it rightly, is a beautiful soliloquy of Christ upon the cross, he says to himself, "I am a worm, and no man." As if he felt himself so broken, so cast down, that instead of being more than a man, as he was, he felt for awhile less than man. And yet, when he could not lift finger to crown himself, when he could scarce heave a thought of victory, when his eye could not flash with even a distant glimpse of triumph, - then his God was crowning him. Art thou so broken in pieces, Christian? Think not that thou art cast away for ever; for "God also hath highly exalted him" who did not exalt himself; and this is a picture and prophecy of what he will do for thee.

And now, beloved, I can say little more upon this text, save that I bid you now for a minutes meditate and think upon it. Oh! let your eyes be lifted up; bid heaven's blue veil divide; ask power of God - I mean spiritual power from on high, to look within the veil. I bid you not look to the streets of gold, nor to the walls of jasper, nor to the pearly-gated city. I do not ask you to turn your eyes to the white-robed hosts, who for ever sing loud hallelujahs; but yonder, my friends, turn your eyes,

"There, like a man, the Saviour sits;
The God, how bright he shines;
And scatters infinite delight
On all the happy minds."

Do you see him?

"The head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
That mighty Victor's brow.

No more the bloody crown,
The cross and nails no more:
For hell itself shakes at his frown,
And all the heavens adore."

Look at him! Can your imagination picture him? Behold his transcendent glory! The majesty of kings is swallowed up; the pomp of empires dissolves like the white mist of the morning before the sun; the brightness of assembled armies is eclipsed. He in himself is brighter than the sun, more terrible than armies with banners. See him! See him! O! hide your heads, ye monarchs; put away your gaudy pageantry, ye lords of this poor narrow earth! His kingdom knows no bounds; without a limit his vast empire stretches out itself. Above him all is his; beneath him many a step are angels, and they are his; and they cast their crowns before his feet. With them stand his elect and ransomed, and their crowns too are his. And here upon this lower earth stand his saints, and they are his, and they adore him; and under the earth, among the infernals, where devils growl their malice, even there is trembling and adoration; and where lost spirits, with wailing and gnashing of teeth for ever lament their being, even there, there is the acknowledgment of his Godhead, even though the confession helps to make the fire of their torments. In heaven, in earth, in hell, all knees bend before him, and every tongue confesses that he is God. If not now, yet in the time that is to come this shall be carried out, that ever creature of God's making shall acknowledge his Son to be "God over all, blessed for ever. Amen." Oh! my soul anticipates that blessed day, when this whole earth shall bend its knee before its God willingly! I do believe there is a happy era coming, when there shall not be one knee unbent before my Lord and Master. I look for that time, that latter-day glory, when kings shall bring presents, when queens shall be the nursing mothers of the church, when the gold of Sheba and the ships of Tarshish, and the dromedaries of Arabia shall alike be his, when nations and tribes of every tongue shall

"Dwell on his name with sweetest song,
And infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on his name."

Sometimes I hope to live to see that all-auspicious era - that halcyon age of this world, so much oppressed with grief and sorrow by the tyranny of its own habitants. I hope to see the time, when it shall be said, "Shout, for the great Shepherd reigns, and his unsuffering kingdom now is come" - when earth shall be one great orchestra of praise, and every man shall sing the glorious hallelujah anthem of the King of kings. But even now, while waiting for that era, my soul rejoices in the fact, that every knee does virtually bow, though not willingly, yet really. Does the scoffer, when he mouths high heaven, think that he insults God? He thinks so, but his insult dies long ere it reaches half-way to the stars. Does he conceive, when in his malice he forges a sword against Christ, that his weapon shall prosper? If he does, I can well conceive the derision of God, when he sees the wildest rebel, the most abandoned despiser, still working out his great decrees, still doing that which God hath eternally ordained, and in the midst of his wild rebellion still running in the very track which in some mysterious way before all eternity had been marked as the track in which that being should certainly move. "The wild steeds of earth have broken their bridles, the reins are out of the hands of the charioteer" - so some say; but they are not, or if they are, the steeds run the same round as they would have done had the Almighty grasped the reins still. The world has not gone to confusion; chance is not God; God is still Master, and let men do what they will, and hate the truth we now prize, they shall after all do what God wills, and their direst rebellion shall prove but a species of obedience, though they know it not.

But thou wilt say, "Why dost thou yet find fault; for who hath resisted such a will as that?" "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." Who is he that shall blame him? Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! He is God - know that, ye inhabitants of the land; and all things, after all, shall serve his will. I like what Luther says in his bold hymn, where, notwithstanding all that those

who are haters of predestination choose to affirm, he knew and boldly declared, "He everywhere hath sway, and all things serve his might." Notwithstanding all they do, there is God's sway, after all. Go on, reviler! God knoweth how to make all thy revilings into songs! Go on, thou warrior against God, if thou wilt; know this, thy sword shall help to magnify God, and carve out glory for Christ, when thou thoughtest the slaughter of his church. It shall come to pass that all thou dost shall be frustrated; for God maketh the diviners mad, and saith, "Where is the wisdom of the scribe? Where is the wisdom of the wise?" Surely, "Him hath God exalted, and given him a name which is above every name."

And now, lastly, beloved, if it be true, as it is, that Christ is so exalted that he is to have a name above every name, and every knee is to bow to him, will we not bow our knees this morning before his Majesty? You must, whether you will or no, one day bow your knee. O iron-sinewed sinner, bow thy knee now! Thou wilt have to bow it, man, in that day when the lightnings shall be loosed, and the thunders shall roll in wild fury: thou wilt have to bow thy knee then. Oh! bow it now! "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." O Lord of hosts! bend the knees of men! Make us all the willing subjects of thy grace, lest afterward, we should be the unwilling slaves of thy terror; dragged with chains of vengeance down to hell. O that now those that are on earth might willingly bend their knees lest in hell it should be fulfilled, "Things under the earth shall bow the knee before him."

God bless you, my friends, I can say no more but that. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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The Exodus

And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. - Exodus 12:41

It is our firm conviction and increasing belief, that the historical books of Scripture were intended to teach us by types and figures spiritual things. We believe that every portion of Scripture history is not only a faithful transcript of what did actually happen, but also a shadow of what happens spiritually in the dealings of God with his people, or in the dispensations of his grace towards the world at large. We do not look upon the historical books of Scripture as being mere rolls of history, such as profane authors might have written, but we regard them as being most true and infallible records of the past, and also most bright and glorious foreshadowings of the future, or else most wondrous metaphors and marvellous illustrations of things which are verily received among us, and most truly felt in the Christian heart. We may be wrong - we believe we are not; at any rate, the very error has given us instruction, and our mistake has afforded us comfort. We look upon the book of Exodus as being a book of types of the deliverances which God will give to his elect people: not only as a history of what he has done, in bringing them out of Egypt by smiting the first-born, leading them through the Red Sea, and guiding them through the wilderness, but also as a picture of his faithful dealings with all his people, whom by the blood of Christ he separates from the Egyptians, and by his strong and mighty hand takes out of the house of their bondage and out of the land of their slavery. Last Sabbath evening we had the type of the Passover - the Paschal Lamb; and we showed you then, how the sprinkled blood, and the eaten lamb, were types of the blood applied for our justification, and of the flesh received by inward communion with Jesus, the soul living and feeding upon him. We now take the Exodus, or the going of the children of Israel out of Egypt, as being a type and picture of the going out of all the vessels of mercy from the house of their bondage, and the deliverance of all the

lawful captives from the chains of their cruel taskmasters, by sovereign and omnipotent grace, through the Passover of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The land of Egypt is a picture of the house of bondage into which all God's covenant people will, sooner or later, be brought on account of their sin. All those whom God means to give an inheritance in Canaan, he will first take down into Egypt. Even Jesus Christ himself went into Egypt before he appeared publicly as a teacher before the world, that in his instance, as well as in that of every Christian, the prophecy might be fulfilled - "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." Every one who enjoys the liberty wherewith Christ doth make us free, must first feel the galling bondage of sin. Our wrists must be made to smart by the fetters of our iniquity, and our backs must be made to bleed by the lash of the law - the taskmaster which drives us to Jesus Christ. There is no true liberty which is not preceded by true bondage; there is no true deliverance from sin, unless we have first of all groaned and cried unto God, as did the people of Israel when in bondage in Egypt. We must all serve in the brick-kiln; we must all be wearied with toiling among the pots; or otherwise we could never realize that glorious verse - "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." We must have bondage before liberty; before resurrection there must come death; before life there must come corruption; before we are brought out of the horrible pit and the miry clay we must be made to exclaim, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing;" and ere, like Jonah, we can be fetched out of the whale's belly, and delivered from our sin, we must have been taken down to the bottoms of the mountains, with the weeds wrapped about our heads, shuddering under a deep sense of our own nothingness and fearing that the earth with her bars was about us for ever. Taking this as key, you will see that the deliverance out of Egypt is a beautiful picture of the deliverance of all God's people from the bondage of the law and the slavery of their sins.

I. First, consider THE MODE OF THEIR GOING OUT. When the children of Israel went out of Egypt it is a remarkable thing that they were forced out by the Egyptians. Those Egyptians who had enriched themselves with their slavery, said, "Get ye hence, for we be all dead

men;" they begged and entreated them to go; yea, they hurried them forth, gave them jewels that they might depart, and made them quit the land. And it is a striking thing, that the very sins which oppress the child of God in Egypt, are the very things that drive him to Jesus. Our sins makes slaves of us while we are in Egypt, and when God the Holy Spirit stirs them up against us, how do they beat us with cruel lashes, till our soul is worn with extreme bondage; but those very sins, by God's grace, are made the means of driving us to the Saviour. The dove fleeth not to its cote unless the eagle doth pursue it; so sins like eagles pursue the timid soul, making it fly into the clefts of the Rock Christ Jesus to hide itself. Once, beloved, our sins kept us from Christ; but now every sin drives us to him for pardon. I had not known Christ if I had not known sin; I had not known a deliverer, if I had not smarted under the Egyptians. The Holy Spirit drives us to Christ, just as the Egyptians drove the people out of Egypt.

Again: the children of Israel went out of Egypt covered with jewels and arrayed in their best garments. The Jews have ever on their feast days been desirous of wearing jewels and all kinds of goodly apparel; and when they were too poor to possess them, they would borrow jewels for the purpose. So it was at this remarkable Passover. They had been so oppressed that they had kept no festival for many a year; but now they all arrayed themselves in their best garments, and at the command of God did borrow of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; "and the things as they required: and they spoiled the Egyptians." Let none say that this was robbery. It would have been, had it not been commanded of God; but as a king can set aside his own laws, so God is above his laws, and whatsoever he orders is right. Abraham would have been guilty of murder in taking up his knife to slay his son, had not God commanded him to do so; but the fact of God having commanded the action, made it justifiable and right. But, moreover, the word "borrowed" here is by the best translators said to mean nothing more than that the children of Israel asked them for their jewels, and had no intention whatever of returning them, and entered into no agreement to do so; and it was most just, that they should do this, because they had toiled for the Egyptians for years, without having had any remuneration. Sometimes necessity has no law: how much more shall that God who is

above all necessities be the master of his own laws? The great Potentate, the only wise God, the King of kings, hath a right to make what laws he pleases; and let not vain man dare to question his Maker, when his Maker gives him a command. But the fact is very significant. The children of Israel did not go out of Egypt poorly clad; they went out with their best clothing on, and moreover, they had borrowed jewels of gold, and jewels of silver, and raiment; and they went gladly out of the land. Ah! beloved, that is just how a child of God comes out of Egypt. He does not come out of his bondage with his old garments of self-righteousness on: oh! no; as long as he wears those he will always keep in Egypt; but he marches out with the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ upon him, and adorned with the goodly graces of the Holy Spirit. Oh! beloved, if you could see a child of Israel coming out of the bondage of sin, you would say, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?" Is this the poor slave that was making bricks without straw? Is this the wretch who had nothing but rags and tatters on him? Is this the poor creature whose whole person was soiled with the mud of Egypt's river, and who laboured in Goshen's land without a wage or pay? Yes, it is he; and now he is arrayed like a king, and apparelled as a prince. Lo, each of these men of labour cometh like a bridegroom decked for his wedding, and their wives seem like royal brides clad in their bridal robes. Every child of God, when he comes out of Egypt, is arrayed in goodly apparel.

"Strangely, my soul, art thou arrayed,
By the great sacred Three;
In sweetest harmony of praise.
Let all thy powers agree."

Note, moreover, that these people obtained their jewels from the Egyptians. God's people never lose anything by going to the house of bondage. They win their choicest jewels from the Egyptians. "Strangely true it is, sins do me good," said an old writer once, "because they drive me to the Saviour; and so I get good by them." Ask the humble Christian where he got his humility, and ten to one he will say that he got it in the furnace of deep sorrow on account of sin. See another who is tender in conscience: where did he get that jewel from? It cam from Egypt, I'll be bound. We get more by being in bondage, under conviction of sin, that we

often do by liberty. That bondage state, under which thou art now labouring, thou poor way-worn child of sorrow, shall be good for thee; for when thou comest out of Egypt thou wilt steal jewels from the Egyptians; thou wilt have won pearls from thy very convictions. "Oh!" say some, "I have been for months and years toiling under a sense of sin, and cannot get deliverance." Well, I hope you will get it soon; but if you do not, you will have gained all the more jewels by stopping there, and when you come out, you will very likely make the best of Christians. What more noble preacher to sinners than John Bunyan? And who suffered more than he did? For years he was doubting and hesitating, sometimes thinking that Christ would save him, at other times thinking that he was never one of the elect, and continually bemoaning himself; but he got jewels while he was in bondage that he would never have obtained anywhere else. Who could have made a large collection of jewels like Pilgrim's Progress, if he had not lived in Egypt? It was because he tarried so long in Egypt that he gathered so many jewels. And oh! beloved, let us be content to stop a little while in distress; for the jewels that we shall win there will adorn us all our lives long, and we shall one night come out of Egypt, not with weeping, but with songs and crowns of rejoicing. We shall have "the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" the sackcloth shall be removed from our loins, and the ashes from our head, and we shall march forth decked with jewels, glittering with gold and silver.

But there is one more thought concerning the way of their coming out; and that is, they came out in haste. I think a child of God, whenever he has the opportunity of coming out of bondage, will quickly avail himself of it. When a man comes to me, and says, "I am under deep conviction of sin," and so on, and seems to be very well content, talking about to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, and saying, "I can repent when I please, and I can believe when I please," and always procrastinating! - Ah! I think to myself, that is not the Lord's deliverance, for when his people go forth out of Egypt, they are always in a hurry to get out. I never met with a poor sinner under a sense of sin, who was not in haste to get his burden off his back. No man has a broken heart, unless he wants to have it bound up directly. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart," says the Holy Ghost; he never say to-morrow; to-day is his continual cry, and every true-born Israelite will pant to get out of Egypt,

whenever he has the opportunity. He will not stop to knead his dough, and make his bread to carry with him; but he will carry the unleavened bread on his shoulders, he will be in such a hurry to get away. He who hateth the noisomeness of the dungeon, longeth to hear the wards of the lock creak, that he may find liberty; he who hath been long in the pit hasteth to escape; he who hath suffered the task-master's whip fleeth like a dove unto his window, that he may find peace and deliverance in Christ Jesus.

II. But having noticed three points of similarity in the emigration of the Israelites and the deliverance of God's people, we would lead your attention, secondly, to a remark concerning THE MAGNITUDE OF THIS DELIVERANCE. Did it never strike you what a wonderful exodus of the people of Israel this was? Do you know how many people went out? According to the very lowest calculations, there must have been two millions and a half, all assembled together in one place, and all coming out of the country at one time. And then, besides these, there went out with them an exceeding great company - a mixed multitude. The number must have been so large that it is impossible to imagine it. Suppose the people of London should all go out at once to march through a wilderness; it would be a marvellous thing in history, such as we can hardly conceive of; but here were, to say the least, two millions of people, all at one time coming out from the midst of Egypt, and going forth from the country. "They journeyed," it is said, "from Rameses to Succoth." Rameses was where they were employed in building a city for the king. They stayed in Succoth, or booths. Because such an immense multitude could not find houses, they therefore made booths; and hence the children of Israel ever afterwards kept "the feast of tabernacles," to commemorate their building of the booths at Succoth, when they first of all came out of Egypt. What a mind Moses must have had, to direct so great an army; or rather what a spirit must that have been that rested on him, so that he could lead them all to one place, and then guide them all through the wilderness; if you bear in mind this mighty number, you will be astonished to think what a quantity of manna it must have required to feed them, and what a stream of water that must have been which followed them! Talk of the armies of Xerxes, or the host of the Persians; speak of the mighty armies that kings and potentates have assembled!

Here was an army that outvied them all. But oh! beloved, how much grandeur is there in the thought of the multitudes Christ redeems with his blood. Christ did not die to save a few; "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be abundantly satisfied." "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." "A multitude which no man can number" shall stand before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Oh! wondrous the stars of heaven, nor the dust of the earth, nor the sand of the sea; but let us remember that God hath promised to Abraham - "As the sand upon the sea shore, even so shall thy seed be." "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" They lick up the earth like water, and the land is utterly devoured before them. Oh! mighty God! how great is that deliverance which bringeth out a host of thine elect, more countless than the stars and as innumerable as the sands upon a thousand shores! all hail to thy power that doeth all this!

You will have another idea of the greatness of this work, when you think of the different stations which the children of Israel must have occupied. I suppose they were not all equally destitute; they were not all toiling in the same brick-kilns, but some of them would be in one place, some in another - some working in the king's court, some for the meaner Egyptians - dispersed every where; but whatever they might be, they all came from hence. If Pharoah had slaves in his halls, they marched out the self-same day from his golden-gated palace, at Memphis or at Thebes. They all came forth that same day from their different situations, and guided by God they all came to one spot, where they built their booths, and called it Succoth. As when the autumn doth decline, and the winter approacheth, we have seen the chattering swallows gather upon the house-top, prepared for distant flights beyond the purple sea, where they might find another summer in another land, so did these Israelites from all their countries thus assemble, and stand together, about to take their flight across a trackless wilderness to that land of which God had told them saying, "Behold, I will bring you into a land that floweth with milk and honey." Oh! great and glorious works of God! "great are thy works, O Lord, and marvellous are thy doings; and that my soul knoweth right well."

I would have you, beloved, particularly remember one thing; and that is,

that great as this emigration was, and enormous as were the multitudes that quitted Egypt, it was only one Passover that set them all free. They did not want two celebrations of the supper; they did not need two angels to fly through Egypt; it was not necessary to have two deliverances: but all in one night, all by the Paschal Lamb, all by the Passover supper, they were saved. Look at yonder host above! See ye the blood-washed throng of souls, chosen of God and precious? Can you tell their number? Can you count the small dust of the beatified ones before the throne? Ah! no; but here is a thought for you. They did not want two Christs to save them; they did not require two Holy Spirits to deliver them; nor did it need two sacrifices to bring them there.

"Ask them whence their victory came,
They with united breath
Ascribe their victory to the Lamb,
Their triumph in his death."

One agonizing sacrifice, one death on Calvary, one bloody sweat on Gethsemane, one shriek of "It is finished." consummated all the work of redemption. Oh! the precious blood of Christ! I love it when I think it saves one sinner; but oh! to think of the multitude of sinners that it saves! Beloved, we do not think enough of our Lord Jesus Christ; we have not half such an estimation of his precious person as we ought to have. We do not value his blood at the right price. Why, poor sinner, thou art saying this morning, "This blood cannot save me." What! not save thee, when it is engaged to save thousands upon thousands, and myriads of myriads? Shall the shepherd who gathereth the whole flock together, and leadeth them unto the pastures lose a single lamb? Thou sayest, perhaps, "I am so little." For that very reason then, thou dost not want so much of his power to take care of thee. "But," says one, "I am so great a sinner." Ay, then, so much the better, for he "came to save sinners, of whom I am chief," said Paul; and he came to save thee. Ah! do not fear, ye sons of God; he who brought the Israelites all out in one night can bring you all out, though you are in the veriest bondage. Perhaps there is one of you who not only has to make bricks without straw, but has to make twice as many bricks as any one else, you think, and your taskmaster has a whip which goes right round you, and cuts the flesh off you every time; you have worse

bondage than any one, your slavery is more intense, your oven hotter, your pots harder to make. Very well, I am glad of it: how sweet liberty will be to thee! and I will tell you, you shall not be left in Egypt; for if you were, what would old Pharaoh say? "He said he would bring them all out, but he has not; there is one left;" and he would parade that poor Israelite through the streets, he would take him through Memphis and Thebes, and say, "There is one that God would not deliver; there is one I had so tight in my grasp that he could not get him out!" Ah! master devil! you shall not say that of one of the Lord's people; they shall all be there, the great and the small; this unworthy hand shall take the hand of the blessed St. Paul; they shall all be in heaven, shall all be redeemed, shall all be saved; but al, mark you, through one sacrifice, one covenant, one blood, one Passover.

III. This bring us to speak more fully of THE COMPLETENESS OF THEIR DELIVERANCE. Our text says, - "It came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." Our dear Arminian friends think that some of the Lord's people will not come out of Egypt, but will be lost at last. Ah! well, as good Hart says -

"If one poor saint may fall away,
If follows so may all;"

and none of us are safe and secure. Therefore, we do not give way to that. But all the hosts came out of Egypt, every one of them; not a soul was left behind. There is a poor man that was lame. Ah! you see him throw away his crutches. There is a poor woman sick; ay, but she suddenly rises from her bed. There is another palsied, who can by no means lift himself up, but his frame in a moment becomes firm, "for there was not one feeble person in all their tribes." - Psalm 105:37. There is a poor little babe who knows nothing about it; but still it leaves Egypt, carried by its mother. The old greyheaded sire tottered not on his staff. Though eighty years of age, yet he was a son of Israel, and out he came. There was a youth who had just begun to have his shoulders galled; but though he was young the time was come for him, and out he came. They all came out, every one of them; there was not one left behind. I do not suppose they had any

hospitals there; but if they had, I am sure they did not leave any of them in the hospital, but all were healed in an instant. There was one Israelite who had rebelled against the government of Moses, and said, "Who made you a judge and a divider over us?" But they did not leave him behind; even he came out. All of them came out; nor do we find that there was some poor shrivelled creature whose arms and legs were almost useless, and who was half an idiot, whose brain was nearly gone, left behind. So beloved, if you are "the meanest lamb in Jesus' fold," you are "one in Jesus now;" though you have very little learning, and very little common sense, you will come out of Egypt. If the Lord has put you there in bondage, and you have been made to groan there, he will make you sing by-and-by, when you are redeemed from it. There is no fear of your being left behind; for if you were, Pharoah would say, "He delivered the strong ones, but he was not able to fetch out the weak;" and then there would be laughter in hell against the might and omnipotence of God. They all came out.

But not only so; they all had their cattle with them. As Moses said, "Not a hoof shall be left behind." They were to have all their goods, as well as their persons. What does this teach us? Why, not only that all God's people shall be saved, but that all God's people ever had shall be restored. All that Jacob ever took down to Egypt shall be brought out again. Have I lost a perfect righteousness in Adam? I shall have a perfect righteousness in Christ. Have I lost happiness on earth in Adam? God will give me much happiness here below in Christ. Have I lost heaven in Adam? I shall have heaven in Christ; for Christ came not only to seek and to save the people that were lost, but that which was lost; that is, all the inheritance, as well as the people; all their property. Not the sheep merely, but the good pasture that the sheep had lost: not only the prodigal son, but all the prodigal son's estates. Everything was brought out of Egypt; not even Joseph's bones were left behind. The Egyptians could not say that they had a scrap of the Israelites' property - not even one of their kneading troughs, or one of their old garments. And when Christ shall have conquered all things to himself, the Christian shall not have lost one atom by the toils of Egypt, but shall be able to say, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" O hell, where is thy triumph? Thou has not a flag nor a pennon to show of thy victory; there is not a casque or a

helmet left upon the battle-field; there is not a single trophy which thou mayest raise up in hell in scorn of Christ. He hath not only delivered his people, but they have gone out with flying colours, taking their shields with them. Stand and admire and love the Lord, who thus delivers all his people.

IV. This brings us to notice, in the fourth place, THE TIME WHEN THE ISRAELITES CAME OUT OF EGYPT. "It came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." God had promised to Abraham that his people should be in bondage four hundred and thirty years, and they were not in bondage one day more. As soon as God's bond became due, though it had been drawn four hundred and thirty years before, he paid the bill; he required no more time to do it in, but he did it at once. Christopher Ness says, they had to tarry for the fulfillment of the promise till the night came; for though he fulfilled it the selfsame day, he made them stay to the end of it, to prove their faith. He was wrong there, because scripture days begin at night. "The evening and the morning were the second day." So that God did not make them wait, but paid them at once. As soon as the day came, beginning with our night, as the Jewish day does now, and the scriptural day always did - as soon as the clock struck - God paid his bond. We have heard of some landlords who come for their rent at twelve o'clock precisely. Well, we admire a man's honesty if he pays him exactly at that minute; but God is never behind hand in fulfilling his promises, not by the ticking of a clock. Though his promise seem to tarry, wait for it; you may be mistaken as to the date; if he has promised anything on a certain day, he will not keep you waiting till the morrow. The selfsame day that the Lord had promised, the Israelites came out. And so all the Lord's people shall come out of bondage at the predestined moment: and they cannot possibly come out of bondage before the appointed time. O thou poor distressed heir of heaven, groaning under sin, and seeking rest, but finding none, believe that it is the Lord's will that thou shouldst be a little longer where there is a smoking furnace. Wait a little he is doing thee good. Like Jesus of old, he is speaking hardly to thee, to try thy faith; he is telling thee now that thou art a dog, because he wants to hear thee say, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs." He would not keep thee waiting, if thine eagerness did

not thereby get fresh vigour; he would not keep thee crying, if he did not mean to make it a sign of better grace to you for the future. Therefore wait; for you shall come out of Egypt, and have a joyous rescue in that day when they shall come with singing unto Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.

But now, beloved, we must finish up in a very solemn manner, by reminding you of the companions that came out of Egypt with the children of Israel. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, there were certain persons in Egypt, dissatisfied with the king - very likely culprits, condemned persons, debtors, bankrupts, and such like persons, who were tired of their country, and who, as is wittily said of those who are transported, "left their country for their country's good." But though these people went with the children of Israel, mark you, they were not of them. They escaped, but the door was not opened to let them out; it was only opened to let out the children of Israel. It is said that the mixed multitude fell a lusting; it was the mixed multitude that taught them to worship the golden calf; it was the mixed multitude that always led them astray. And that mixed multitude have their representatives now. There are many men that came out of the land of Egypt who never were Israelites; and there are many that join with us in church fellowship, and eat that spiritual bread, and drink of that spiritual rock that followed them; and yet with many of them God is not well-pleased, just as there were many of old with whom he was not well-pleased, and who were overthrown in the wilderness. "Ah!" says one, "but I thought if they had been in Egypt, certainly if they came out they must have been Christians; for you have used the metaphors." Ay, yes, but mark how these people were in Egypt. This mixed multitude was never in bondage in Egypt. It was Israel that had to feel the task-master's whip, and to make the bricks without straw. But these fellows had nothing to do. They were Egyptians themselves - true-born Egyptians - "heirs of sin and children of wrath;" they never had any real bondage, and therefore they could not rejoice as the true Israelite did, when they were set free from the yoke of Pharaoh. These people are represented amongst us by certain persons, who will tell us, "Ah! I know I have been a sinner." That is as much as to say you have been an Egyptian, and that is all: "but I cannot say, I have felt my sin, and utterly abhorred it and wept over it." They come and say, "I am a sinner,"

hear something about Jesus Christ, catch at it with a fancied faith - not with the faith that unites with the Lamb and brings us true salvation, but with a notional, pretended faith, and they get deliverance; and some of these people are marvellously happy; they do not have doubts and fears; they are at ease, like Moab; they have not been emptied from vessel to vessel. They can tell us about Egypt, of course; they know as much about it as the child of God. If the child of God describes the brick-kiln, and how they made bricks without straw, he has seen it, though he has not felt it; and he can talk about it, perhaps better than the poor Israelite; for the poor Israelite has sometimes been smitten on the mouth, it may be, so that he stammers, and cannot speak so well as the other, who never had a blow. He knows all about the bondage; perhaps he has invented some of it, in order to try the poor Israelite; and he can describe very accurately the going out of Egypt and the journey through the wilderness. But here is the difference, mark you, between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The Egyptians did not sprinkle the blood on the door-posts; and we do not read of the mixed multitude eating the paschal lamb, for it is written, "No stranger shall eat thereof." Some persons are continually saying, "I believe I am going to heaven;" but they have never sprinkled the blood, never eaten the paschal Lamb, never had fellowship with Christ, and never had vital union with him.

O ye members of Christian churches! there are many of you who have a feigned experience and a feigned religion. How many there are of you who have the externals merely of godliness! ye are white-washed sepulchres, outwardly fair and beautiful, like the garnished gardens of a cemetery; but inwardly ye are full of dead men's bones and rottenness! Be persuaded, I beseech you, to get no deliverance any way except by the blood of the Lamb, and by really feasting on Christ. Many a man gets a deliverance by stifling his conscience. "Ah!" says one of these mixed multitude, "here am I in the prison; and this is the night when the children of Israel go out of Egypt; Oh! if I might go out!" What does he do? Why, the keeper is frightened; he has lost his eldest son, and the prisoner says, "Let me out!" and he bribes the keeper to let him go. And there is many a man that get out of Egypt by bribing his conscience. "There, master conscience," he says, "I will never get drunk any more; I will always go to church; there is my shop, that is always open on Sunday

- I will put two shutters up, and that is almost as good as closing it entirely; and I will not do the business myself - I will get a servant to do it for me." And out he comes! But he had better remain in Egypt than get out like that. There are some again that get out by main force; the keeper falls down dead, and so they get out of prison. There are men who not only bribe, but kill their conscience; they go so far that their conscience is almost dead, and when he is in a fit one day they rush forth, and escape; and so they have "peace, peace, where there is no peace." They wrap themselves up in the folds of their own delusions, and invent for themselves refuges of lies, where they do place their trust. O ye mixed multitude! ye are the ruin of the churches; ye set us a lusting; the pure Israelite's blood is tainted by union with you; you sit as God's people sit, and yet you are not his people; you hear as God's people hear, and yet you are "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." You take the sacrament as sweetly as others, while you are eating and drinking damnation to yourself; you come to the church-meeting, and you sit in the private assembly of the saints; but even when you are there, you are nothing but a wolf in sheep's clothing, entering the flock when you ought not to be there.

My dear hearers, do try yourselves, to see whether you are real Israelites. Oh! could Christ say to you, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." Have you the blood on your door-post? Have you eaten of Jesus? Do you live on him? Do you have fellowship with him? Has God the Holy Ghost brought you out of Egypt? or have you come out yourself? Have you found refuge in his dear cross and wounded side? If you have, rejoice, for Pharaoh himself cannot bring you back again; but if you have not, I pray my Master to dash your peace into atoms, fair and lovely as it may be; I beseech him to send the winds of conviction and the floods of his wrath, that your house may fall now, rather than it should stand to your death, and then, in the last solemn hour, the edifice of your own hands should totter. Mixed multitude! hear ye this! ye assembled gatherings of professors! "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your-own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" But if he be not in you, then are ye reprobates still, whom God abhorreth. The Lord bring all his people out of Egypt, and deliver all his children from the house of bondage.

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Exposition: 1 John 3:1-10

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

As dear Dr. Hawker said concerning this, there is a chapter in every word and a sermon in every letter. How it opens with a "Behold!" because it is such a striking portion of sacred Scripture, that the Holy Ghost would have us pay particular attention to it. "Behold!" says he, "read other Scriptures if you like, with a glance, but stop here. I have put up a way-mark to tell you there is something eminently worthy of attention buried beneath these words." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us." Consider who we were, and who we are now; ay, and what we feel ourselves to be even when divine grace is powerful in us. And yet, beloved, we are called "the sons of God." It is said that when one of the learned heathens was translating this, he stopped and said, "No; it cannot be; let it be written 'Subjects,' not 'Sons,' for it is impossible we should be called 'the sons of God.'" What a high relationship is that of a son to his father! What privileges a son has from his father! What liberties a son may take with his father! and oh! what obedience the son owes to his father, and what love the father feels towards the son! But all that, and more than that, we now have through Christ. "Behold!" ye angels! stop, ye seraphs! here is a thing more wonderful than heaven with its walls of jasper. Behold, universe! open thine eyes, O world. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it

knew him not." Well, we are content to go with him in his humiliation, for we are to be exalted with him.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God." That is easy to read; but it is not so easy to feel. "Now are we the sons of God." How is it with your heart this morning? Are you in the lowest depths of sorrow and suffering? "Now are you a son of God." Does corruption rise within your spirit, and grace seem like a poor spark trampled under foot? "Beloved, now are you a son of God." Does your faith almost fail you? and are your graces like a candle well nigh blown out by the wind! Fear not, beloved; it is not your graces, it is not your frames, it is not your feelings, on which you are to live: you must live simply by naked faith on Christ. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." With all these things against us, with the foot of the devil on our neck, and the sword in his hand ready to slay us—beloved now in the very depths of our sorrow, wherever we may be—now, as much in the valley as on the mountain, as much in the dungeon as in the palace, as much when broken on the wheel of suffering as when exalted on the wings of triumph—"beloved, now are we the sons of God." "Ah!" but you say, "see how I am arrayed! my graces are not bright; my righteousness does not shine with apparent glory." But read the next: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him." We are not so much like him now, but we have some more refining process to undergo, and death itself, that best of all friends, is yet to wash us clean. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

"And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law for sin is the transgression of the law.

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."

Believer, read these words in two senses. He was manifested to take away thy sins that thou hast committed; and that he accomplished, when "the

just for the unjust," he sustained the penalties of them. And he was manifested to take away the power of thy sins; that is to say, to conquer thy reigning lusts, to take away thine evil imaginations, to purify thee, and make thee like himself. Well, beloved, what a mercy it is that some one was manifested to take away our sins from us! for some of us have been striving a long, long while, to conquer our sins, and we cannot do it. We thought we had driven them out, but they had "chariots of iron," and we could not overcome them; they lived "in the hill country," and we could not get near them. As often as we worsted them in one battle, they came upon us thick and strong, like an army of locusts; when heaps and heaps had been destroyed they seemed as thick as ever. Ah! but there is a thought—they shall all be taken away. "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins;" and so he will. The time will come when you and I shall stand without spot or blemish before the throne of God: for they are "without fault before the throne of God" at this moment, and so shall we be ere long.

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

This plain, simple verse, has been twisted by some who believe in the doctrine of perfection, and they have made it declare that it is possible for some to abide in Christ, and therefore not to sin. But you will remark that it does not say, that some that abide in Christ do not sin; but it says that none who abide in Christ sin. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." Therefore this passage is not to be applied to a few who attain to what is called by our Arminian friends the fourth degree—perfection; but it appertains to all believers; and of every soul in Christ it may be said, that he sinneth not. In reading the Bible, we read it simply as we would read another book. We ought not to read it as a preacher his text, with the intention of making something out of every word; but we should read it as we find it written: "Whosoever abideth in Christ sinneth not." Now we are sure that cannot mean that he does not sin at all, but it means that sins not habitually, he sins not designedly, he sins not finally, so as to perish. The Bible often calls a man righteous; but that does not mean that he is perfectly righteous. It calls a man a sinner, but it does not imply that he may not have done some good deeds in his life; it means that that is

the man's general character. So with the man who abides in Christ: his general character is not that he is a sinner, but that he is a saint—he sinneth not openly wilfully before men. In his own heart, he has much to confess, but his life before his fellow creatures is such a one that it can be said of him: "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; but whosoever sinneth [the sins of this world, in which the multitude indulge] hath not seen him, neither known him."

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

That is the sign of it. Works are the fruits of grace. "He is righteous,"—not in himself; for mark how graces come in here—"He is righteous, even as HE is righteous." It will not allow our righteousness to be our own, but it brings us to Christ again. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous," not according to his own works, but "even as HE is righteous." Good works prove that I have perfect righteousness in Christ; they do not help the righteousness of Christ, nor yet in any way make me righteous. Good works are of no use whatever in the matter of justification: they only use they are, is, that they are for our comfort, for the benefit of others, and for the glory of God. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil."

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

It were well if we always remembered that practical godliness is the soul of godliness; that it is not talking religion, but walking religion which proves a man to be sincere; it is not having a religious tongue, but a

religious heart; it is not a religious mouth, but a religious foot. The best evidence is the salvation of the soul. Avaunt! talkative; go thy way, thou mere professing formalist! Your ways lead down to hell, and your end shall be destruction; for "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

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Exposition Of The Doctrines Of Grace

The proceedings were commenced by singing the 21st Hymn -

Saved from the damning power of sin,
The law's tremendous curse,
We'll now the sacred song begin
Where God began with us.

We'll sing the vast unmeasured grace
Which, from the days of old,
Did all his chosen sons embrace,
As sheep within the fold.

The basis of eternal love
Shall mercy's frame sustain;
Earth, hell, or sin, the same to move
Shall all conspire in vain.

Sing, O ye sinners bought with blood,
Hail the Great Three in One;
Tell how secure the cov'nant stood
Ere time its race begun.

Ne'er had ye felt the guilt of sin,
Nor sweets of pard'ning love,
Unless your worthless names had been
Enroll'd to life above.

O what a sweet exalted son
Shall rend the vaulted skies,
When, shouting, grace, the blood-wash'd throng
Shall see the Top Stone rise.

The Rev. George Wyard, of Deptford, offered prayer.

The REV. C. H. Spurgeon in opening the proceedings said, we have met together beneath this roof already to set forth most of those truths in which consists the peculiarity of this Church. Last evening we endeavoured to show to the world, that we heartily recognised the essential union of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, this afternoon and evening, it is our intention, through the lips of our brethren, to set forth those things which are verily received among us, and especially those great points which have been so often attacked, but which are still upheld and maintained,—truths which we have proved in our experience to be full of grace and truth. My only business upon this occasion is to introduce the brethren who shall address you, and I shall do so as briefly as possible, making what I shall say a preface to their remarks.

The controversy which has been carried on between the Calvinist and the Arminian is exceedingly important, but it does not so involve the vital point of personal godliness as to make eternal life depend upon our holding either system of theology. Between the Protestant and the Papist there is a controversy of such a character, that he who is saved on the one side by faith in Jesus, dare not allow that his opponent on the opposite side can be saved while depending on his own works. There the controversy is for life or death, because it hinges mainly upon the doctrine of justification by faith, which Luther so properly called the test doctrine, by which a Church either stands or falls. The controversy again between the believer in Christ and the Socinian, is one which affects a

vital point. If the Socinian be right, we are most frightfully in error; we are, in fact, idolaters, and how dwelleth eternal life in us? and if we be right, our largest charity will not permit us to imagine that a man can enter heaven who does not believe the real divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are other controversies which thus cut at the very core, and touch the very essence of the whole subject. But, I think we are free to admit, that while John Wesley, for instance, in modern times zealously defended Arminianism, and on the other hand, George Whitfield with equal fervour fought for Calvinism, we should not be prepared either of us, on either side of the question, to deny the vital godliness of either the one or the other. We cannot shut our eyes to what we believe to be the gross mistakes of our opponents, and should think ourselves unworthy of the name of honest men, if we could admit that they are right in all things and ourselves right too. An honest man has an intellect which does not permit him to believe that "yes" and "no" can both subsist at the same hour and both be true. I cannot say, "It is," and my brother point blank say, "It is not," and yet both of us be right on that point. We are willing to admit, in fact, we dare not do otherwise, that opinion upon this controversy does not determine the future of even the present state of any man; but still, we think it to be so important, that in maintaining our views, we advance with all courage and fervency if spirit, believing that we are doing God's work and upholding most important truth. It may not be misunderstood, we only use the term for shortness. That doctrine which is called "Calvinism" did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Spirit of God, from the diligent study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them of the Holy Ghost, from Jesus Christ the great founder of the Christian dispensation. We use the term then, not because we impute any extraordinary importance to Calvin's having taught these doctrines. We would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood, and which on the whole would be as consistent with fact. And then again, this afternoon, we shall have very likely to speak of Arminians, and by that, we would not for a moment insinuate that all who are in membership with the Arminian body, hold those particular views. There are Calvinists in connection with Calvinistic Churches, who are not

Calvinistic, bearing the name but discarding the system. There are, on the other hand, not a few in the Methodist Churches, who, in most points perfectly agree with us, and I believe that if the matter came to be thoroughly sifted, it would be found that we are more agreed in our private opinions than in our public confessions, and our devotional religion is more uniform than our theology. For instance, Mr. Wesley's hymn-book, which may be looked upon as being the standard of his divinity, has in it upon some topics higher Calvinism than many books used by ourselves. I have been exceedingly struck with the very forcible expressions there used, some of which I might have hesitated to employ myself. I shall ask your attention while I quote verses from the hymns of Mr. Wesley, which we can all endorse as fully and plainly in harmony with the doctrines of grace, far more so than the preaching of some modern Calvinists. I do this because our low-doctrine Baptists and Morisonians ought to be aware of the vast difference between themselves and the Evangelical Arminians.

HYMN 131, verses 1, 2, 3.

"Lord, I despair myself to heal:
I see my sin, but cannot feel;
I cannot, till thy Spirit blow,
And bid the obedient waters flow.

'Tis thine a heart of flesh to give;
Thy gifts I only can receive:
Here, then, to thee I all resign;
To draw, redeem, and seal,—is thine.

With simple faith on thee I call,
My Light, my Life, my Lord, my all:
I wait the moving of the pool;
I wait the word that speaks me whole."

HYMN 133, verse 4.

"Thy golden sceptre from above

Reach forth; lo! my whole heart I bow;
Say to my soul, Thou art my love;
My chosen midst ten thousand, thou."

This is very like election.

HYMN 136, verses 8, 9, 10.

"I cannot rest, till in thy blood
I full redemption have:
But thou, through whom I come to God,
Canst to the utmost save.

From sin, the guilt, the power, the pain,
Thou wilt redeem my soul:
Lord, I believe, and not in vain;
My faith shall make me whole.

I too, with thee, shall walk in white;
With all thy saints shall prove,
What is the length, and breadth, and height,
And depth of perfect love."

Brethren, is not this somewhat like final perseverance? and what is meant by the next quotation, if people of God can perish at all?

HYMN 138, verses 6, 7.

"Who, who shall in thy presence stand,
And match Omnipotence?
Ungrasp the hold of thy right hand,
Or pluck the sinner thence?

Sworn to destroy, let earth assail;
Nearer to save thou art:
Stronger than all the powers of hell,
And greater than my heart."

The following is remarkably strong, especially in the expression "force." I give it in full:—

HYMN 158

"O my God, what must I do?
Thou alone the way canst show;
Thou canst save me in this hour;
I have neither will nor power:
God, if over all thou art,
Greater than my sinful heart,
All thy power on me be shown,
Take away the heart of stone.

Take away my darling sin,
Make me willing to be clean;
Make me willing to receive
All thy goodness waits to give.
Force me, Lord, with all to part;
Tear these idols from my heart;
Now thy love almighty show,
Make even me a creature new.

Jesus, mighty to renew,
Work in me to will and do;
Turn my nature's rapid tide,
Stem the torrent of my pride;
Stop the whirlwind of my will;
Speak, and bid the sun stand still;
Now thy love almighty show,
Make even me a creature new.

Arm of God, thy strength put on;
Bow the heavens, and come down;
All my unbelief o'erthrow;
Lay th' aspiring mountain low:

Conquer thy worst foe in me,
Get thyself the victory;
Save the vilest of the race;
Force me to be saved by grace."

HYMN 206, verses 1, 2.

"What am I, O thou glorious God!
And what my father's house to thee,
That thou such mercies hast bestow'd
On me, the vilest reptile, me!
I take the blessing from above,
And wonder at the boundless love.

Me in my blood the love pass'd by,
And stopp'd, my ruin to retrieve;
Wept o'er my soul thy pitying eye;
Thy bowels yearn'd, and sounded, "Live!"
Dying, I heard the welcome sound,
And pardon in thy mercy found."

Nor are these all, for such good things as these abound, and they constrain me to say, that in attacking Arminianism we have no hostility towards the men who bear the name rather than the nature of that error, and we are opposed not to any body of men, but to the notions which they have espoused.

And now, having made these remarks upon terms used, we must observe that there is nothing upon which men need to be more instructed than upon the question of what Calvinism really is. The most infamous allegations have been brought against us, and sometime, I must fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue; and, to this day, there are many of our opponents, who, when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw, call that John Calvin, and then shoot all their arrows at it. We are not come here to defend your man of straw—shoot at it or burn it as you will, and, if it suit your convenience, still oppose doctrines which were never taught, and rail at fictions which, save

in your own brain, were never in existence. We come here to state what our views really are, and we trust that any who do not agree with us will do us the justice of not misrepresenting us. If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly and then overthrow them, but why should they first caricature our opinions and then afterwards attempt to put them down? Among the gross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper, is the wicked calumny that we hold the damnation of little infants. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere, in some corner of the earth, a miscreant who would dare to say that there were infants in hell, but I have never met with him, nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person. We say, with regard to infants, Scripture saith but little, and, therefore, where Scripture is confessedly scant, it is for no man to determine dogmatically. But I think I speak for the entire body, or certainly with exceedingly few exceptions, and those unknown to me, when I say, we hold that all infants are elect of God and are therefore saved, and we look to this as being the means by which Christ shall see of the travail of his soul to a great degree, and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the lost. Whatever views our friends may hold upon the point, they are not necessarily connected with Calvinistic doctrine. I believe that the Lord Jesus, who said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," doth daily and constantly receive into his loving arms those tender ones who are only shown, and then snatched away to heaven. Our hymns are no ill witness to our faith on this point, and one of them runs thus:

"Millions of infant souls compose
The family above."

"Toplady, one of the keenest of Calvinists, was of this number. "In my remarks," says he, "on Dr. Nowell, I testified my firm belief that the souls of all departed infants are with God in glory; that in the decree of predestination to life, God hath included all whom he decreed to take away in infancy, and that the decree of reprobation hath nothing to do with them." Nay, he proceeds farther, and asks, with reason, how the anti-Calvinistic system of conditional salvation and election, or good works foreseen, will suit with the salvation of infants? It is plain that

Arminians and Pelagians must introduce a new principle of election; and in so far as the salvation of infants is concerned, become Calvinists. Is it not an argument in behalf of Calvinism, that its principle is uniform throughout, and that no change is needed on the ground on which man is saved, whether young or old? John Newton, of London, the friend of Cowper, noted for his Calvinism, holds that the children in heaven exceed its adult inhabitants in all their multitudinous array. Gill, a very champion of Calvinism, held the doctrine, that all dying in infancy are saved. An intelligent modern writer, (Dr. Russell, of Dundee,) also a Calvinist, maintains the same views; and when it is considered that nearly one-half of the human race die in early years, it is easy to see what a vast accession must be daily and hourly making to the blessed population of heaven."

A more common charge, brought by more decent people,—for I must say that the last charge is never brought, except by disreputable persons,—a more common charge is, that we hold clear fatalism. Now, there may be Calvinists who are fatalists, but Calvinism and fatalism are two distinct things. Do not most Christians hold the doctrine of the providence of God? Do not all Christians, do not all believers in a God hold the doctrine of his foreknowledge? All the difficulties which are laid against the doctrine of predestination might, with equal force, be laid against that of Divine foreknowledge. We believe that God hath predestinated all things from the beginning, but there is a difference between the predestination of an intelligent, all-wise, all-bounteous God, and that blind fatalism which simply says, "It is because it is to be." Between the predestination of Scripture and the fate of the Koran, every sensible man must perceive a difference of the most essential character. We do not deny that the thing is so ordained that it must be, but why is it to be, but that the Father, God, whose name is love, ordained it; not because of any necessity in circumstances that such and such a thing should take place. Though the wheels of providence revolve with rigid exactness, yet not without purpose and wisdom. The wheels are full of eyes, and everything ordained is so ordained that it shall conduce to the grandest of all ends, the glory of God, and the next to that the good of his creatures. But we are next met by some who tell us that we preach the wicked and horrible doctrine of sovereign and unmerited reprobation. "Oh," say they, "you

teach that men are damned because God made them to be damned, and that they go to hell, not because of sin, not because of unbelief, but because of some dark decree with which God has stamped their destiny." Brethren, this is an unfair charge again. Election does not involve reprobation. There may be some who hold unconditional reprobation. I stand not here as their defender, let them defend themselves as best they can; I hold God's election, but I testify just as clearly that if any man be lost he is lost for sin; and this has been the uniform statement of Calvinistic ministers. I might refer you to our standards, such as "The Westminster Assembly's Catechism," and to all our Confession, for they all distinctly state that man is lost for sin, and that there is no punishment put on any man except that which he richly and righteously deserves. If any of you have ever uttered that libel against us, do it not again, for we are as guiltless of that as you are yourselves. I am speaking personally—and I think in this I would command the suffrages of my brethren—I do know that the appointment of God extendeth to all things; but I stand not in this pulpit, nor in any other, to lay the damnation of any man anywhere but upon himself. If he be lost, damnation is all of man; but, if he be saved, still salvation is all of God. To state this important point yet more clearly and explicitly, I shall quote at large from an able Presbyterian divine:

"The pious Methodist is taught that the Calvinist represents God as creating men in order to destroy them. He is taught that Calvinists hold that men are lost, not because they sin, but because they are nonelected. Believing this to be a true statement, it is not wonderful that the Methodist stops short, and declares himself, if not an Arminian, at least an AntiPredestinarian. But no statement can be more scandalously untrue. It is the uniform doctrine of Calvinism, that God creates all for his own glory; that he is infinitely righteous and benignant, and that where men perish it is only for their sins.

In speaking of suffering, whether in this world or in the world to come; whether it respects angels or men, the Westminster standards (which may be considered as the most authoritative modern statement of the system) invariably connect the punishment with previous sin, and sin only. "As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God as a righteous

judge FOR FORMER SINS doth blind and harden, from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings and wrought upon in their hearts, but sometimes also with draweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves even under those means which God useth for the softening of others." The Larger Catechism, speaking of the unsaved among angels and men, says, "God according to his Sovereign power and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favour as he pleaseth) hath passed by and fore-ordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice." Again, "the end of God appointing this day (of the last judgment) is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate who are wicked and disobedient." This is no more than what the Methodist and all other Evangelical bodies acknowledge—that where men perish it is in consequence of their sin. If it be asked, why sin which destroys, is permitted to enter the world, that is a question which bears not only on the Calvinist, but equally on all other parties. They are as much concerned and bound to answer it as he; nay, the question is not confined to Christians. All who believe in the existence of God—in his righteous character and perfect providence, are equally under obligation to answer it. Whatever may be the reply of others, that of the Calvinist may be regarded as given in the statement of the Confession of Faith, which declares that God's providence extendeth itself even to the first fall, and other sins of angels and men, &c.; "yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin." It is difficult to see what more could be said upon the subject; and if such be the undoubted sentiments of Calvinists, then what misrepresentation can be more gross than that which describes them as holding that sinners perish irrespective of their sin, or that God is the author of their sin? What is the declaration of Calvin? "Every soul departs (at death) to that place which it has prepared for itself while in this world."

It is hard to be charged with holding as sacred truth what one abhors as horrid blasphemy, and yet this is the treatment which has been perseveringly meted out to Calvinists in spite of the most solemn and indignant disclaimers. Against nothing have they more stoutly protested than the thought that the infinitely holy, and righteous, and amiable Jehovah is the author of sin; and yet how often do the supporters of rival systems charge them with this as an article of faith?

A yet further charge against us is, that we dare not preach the gospel to the unregenerate, that, in fact, our theology is so narrow and cramped that we cannot preach to sinners. Gentlemen, if you dare to say this, I would take you to any library in the world where the old Puritan fathers are stored up, and I would let you take down any one volume and tell me if you ever read more telling exhortations and addresses to sinners in any of your own books. Did not Bunyan plead with sinners, and whoever classed him with any but the Calvinist? Did not Charnock, Goodwin, and Howe agonise for souls, and what were they but Calvinist? Did not Jonathan Edwards preach to sinners, and who more clear and explicit on these doctrinal matters. The works of our innumerable divines teem with passionate appeals to the unconverted. Oh, sirs, if I should begin the list, time should fail me. It is an indisputable fact that we have laboured more than they all for the winning of souls. Was George Whitfield any the less seraphic? Did his eyes weep the fewer tears or his bowels move with the less compassion because he believed in God's electing love and preached the sovereignty of the Most High? It is an unfounded calumny. Our souls are not stony; our bowels are not withdrawn the compassion which we ought to feel for our fellowmen; we can hold all our views firmly, and yet can weep as Christ did over a Jerusalem which was certainly to be destroyed. Again, I must say, I am not defending certain brethren who have exaggerated Calvinism. I speak of Calvinism proper, not that which has run to seed, and outgrown its beauty and verdure. I speak of it as I find it in Calvin's Institutes, and especially in his Expositions. I have read them carefully. I take not my views of Calvinism from common repute but from his books. Nor do I, in this speaking, even vindicate Calvinism as if I cared for the name, but I mean that glorious system which teaches that salvation is of grace from first to last. And again, then, I say it is an utterly unfounded charge that we dare not preach to sinners.

And then further, that I may clear up these points and leave the less rubbish for my brethren to wheel away, we have sometimes heard it said, but those who say it ought to go to school to read the first book of history, that we who hold Calvinistic views are the enemies of revivals. Why, sirs, in the history of the Church, with but few exceptions, you could not find a revival at all that was not produced by the orthodox faith. What was the great work which was done by Augustine, when the Church suddenly woke up from the pestiferous and deadly sleep into which Pelagian doctrine had cast it? What was the Reformation itself but the waking up of men's minds to those old truths? However far modern Lutherans may have turned aside from their ancient doctrines, and I must confess some of them would not agree with what I now say, yet, at any rate, Luther and Calvin had no dispute about Predestination. Their views were identical, and Luther, "On the bondage of the will," is as strong a book upon the free grace of God as Calvin himself could have written. Hear that great thunderer while he cries in that book, "Let the Christian reader know then, that God foresees nothing in a contingent manner; but that he foresees, proposes, and acts, from his eternal and unchangeable will. This is the thunder stroke which breaks and overturns Free Will." Need I mention to you better names than Huss, Jerome of Prague, Farrel, John Knox, Wickliffe, Wishart, and Bradford? Need I do more than say that these held the same views, and that in their day anything like an Arminian revival was utterly unheard of and undreamed of. And then, to come to more modern times, there is the great exception, that wondrous revival under Mr. Wesley, in which the Wesleyan Methodists had so large a share; but permit me to say, that the strength of the doctrine of Wesleyan Methodism lay in its Calvinism. The great body of the Methodists disclaimed Palagianism, in whole and in part. They contended for man's entire depravity, the necessity of the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and that the first step in the change proceeds not from the sinner, but from God. They denied at the time that they were Pelagians. Does not the Methodist hold as firmly as ever we do, that man is saved by the operation of the holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost alone? And are not many of Mr. Wesley's sermons full of that great truth, that the Holy Ghost is necessary to regeneration? Whatever mistakes he may have made, he continually preached the absolute necessity of the new

birth by the Holy Ghost, and there are some other points of exceedingly close agreement; for instance, even that of human inability. It matters not how some may abuse us, when we say man could not of himself repent or believe; yet, the old Arminian standards said the same. True, they affirm that God has given grace to every man, but they do not dispute the fact, that apart from that grace there was no ability in man to do that which was good in his own salvation. And then, let me say, if you turn to the continent of America, how gross the falsehood, that Calvinistic doctrine is unfavourable to revivals. Look at that wondrous shaking under Jonathan Edwards, and others which we might quote. Or turn to Scotland—what shall we say of M'Cheyne? What shall we say of those renowned Calvinists, Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Wardlaw, and before them Livingstone, Haldane, Erskine, and the like? What shall we say of the men of their school, but that, while they held and preached unflinchingly the great truths which we would propound to-day, yet God owned their word, and multitudes were saved. And if it were not perhaps too much like boasting of one's own work under God, I might say, personally I have never found the preaching of these doctrines lull this Church to sleep, but ever while they have loved to maintain these truths, they have agonised for the souls of men, and the 1600 or more of whom I have myself baptized, upon profession of their faith, are living testimonies that these old truths in modern times have not lost their power to promote a revival of religion.

I have thus cleared away these allegations at the outset; I shall now need a few minutes more to say, with regard to the Calvinistic system, that there are some things to be said in its favour, to which of course I attach but little comparative importance, but they ought not to be ignored. It is a fact that the system of doctrines called the Calvinistic, is so exceedingly simple and so readily learned, that as a system of Divinity it is more easily taught and more easily grasped by unlettered minds than any other. The poor have the Gospel preached to them in a style which assists their memories and commends itself to their judgments. It is a system which was practically acknowledged on high philosophic grounds by such men as Bacon, Leibnitz, and Newton, and yet it can charm the soul of a child and expand the intellect of a peasant. And then it has another virtue. I take it that the last is no mean one, but it has another—that when it is preached there is a something in it which excites thought. A man may

hear sermons upon the other theory which shall glance over him as the swallow's wing gently sweeps the brook, but these old doctrines either make a man so angry that he goes home and cannot sleep for very hatred, or else they bring him down into lowliness of thought, feeling the immensity of the things which he has heard. Either way it excites and stirs him up not temporarily, but in a most lasting manner. These doctrines haunt him, he kicks against the pricks, and full often the word forces a way into his soul. And I think this is no small thing for any doctrine to do, in an age given to slumber, and with human hearts so indifferent to the truth of God. I know that many men have gained more good by being made angry under a sermon than by being pleased by it, for being angry they have turned the truth over and over again, and at last the truth has burned its way right into their hearts. They have played with edge-tools, but they have cut themselves at last.

It has this singular virtue also—it is so coherent in all its parts. You cannot vanquish a Calvinist. You may think you can, but you cannot. The stones of the great doctrines so fit into each other, that the more pressure there is applied to remove them the more strenuously do they adhere. And you may mark, that you cannot receive one of these doctrines without believing all. Hold for instance that man is utterly depraved, and you draw the inference then that certainly if God has such a creature to deal with salvation must come from God alone, and if from him, the offended one, to an offending creature, then he has a right to give or withhold his mercy as he wills; you are thus forced upon election, and when you have gotten that you have all: the others must follow. Some by putting the strain upon their judgments may manage to hold two or three points and not the rest, but sound logic I take it requires a man to hold the whole or reject the whole; the doctrines stand like soldiers in a square, presenting on every side a line of defence which it is hazardous to attack, but easy to maintain. And mark you, in these times when error is so rife and neology strives to be so rampant, it is no little thing to put into the hands of a young man a weapon which can slay his foe, which he can easily learn to handle, which he may grasp tenaciously, wield readily, and carry without fatigue; a weapon, I may add, which no rust can corrode and no blows can break, trenchant, and well annealed, a true Jerusalem blade of a temper fit for deeds of renown. The coherency of the parts,

though it be of course but a trifle in comparison with other things, is not unimportant. And then, I add,—but this is the point my brethren will take up—it has this excellency, that it is scriptural, and that it is consistent with the experience of believers. Men generally grow more Calvinistic as they advance in years. Is not that a sign that the doctrine is right. As they are growing riper for heaven, as they are getting nearer to the rest that remaineth for the people of God, the soul longs to feed on the finest of the wheat, and abhors chaff and husks. And then, I add—and, in so doing, I would refute a calumny that has sometimes been urged,—this glorious truth has this excellency, that it produces the holiest of men. We can look back through all our annals, and say, to those who oppose us, you can mention no names of men more holy, more devoted, more loving, more generous than those which we can mention. The saints of our calendar, though uncanonized by Rome, rank first in the book of life. The names of Puritan needs only to be heard to constrain our reverence. Holiness had reached a height among them which is rare indeed, and well it might for they loved and lived the truth. And if you say that our doctrine is inimical to human liberty, we point you to Oliver Cromwell and to his brave Ironsides, Calvinists to a man. If you say, it leads to inaction, we point you to the Pilgrim Fathers and the wildernesses they subdued. We can put our finger upon every spot of land, the wide world o'er, and say, "Here was something done by a man who believed in God's decrees; and, inasmuch as he did this, it is proof it did not make him inactive, it did not lull him to sloth."

The better way, however of proving this point is for each of us who hold these truths, to be more prayerful, more watchful, more holy, more active than we have ever been before, and by so doing, we shall put to silence the gainsaying of foolish men. A living argument, is an argument which tells upon every man; we cannot deny what we see and feel. Be it ours, if aspersed and calumniated, to disprove it by a blameless life, and it shall yet come to pass, that our Church and its sentiments too shall come forth "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

ELECTION.
BY THE

Rev. JOHN BLOOMFIELD,
OF MEARD'S COURT, SOHO.

My dear Christian friends, those who best know my cast of mind and ministry will readily believe me when I say I would rather have spoken on the majesty and mystery of the person of Christ, or I would rather have spoken on the perfection and intrinsic worth of the mediation of Christ, or on the great attraction of Christ as a gracious and omnipotent Saviour, than on the subject that has been assigned to me. The subject that has been given me is that of the doctrine of eternal and personal election; I have to prove that the doctrine of election is a scriptural truth; and, at the commencement of my few remarks on this profound subject, allow me to say that I hold and firmly believe the Bible to be revelation from God, that the revelations of God's mind are essentially and infallibly true, that its ancient historical records are of the greatest value, that its prophecies are to be studied and to be venerated, that the doctrines of the Bible are in harmony with the majesty, wisdom, holiness and goodness of their Author. Now it should not be a point with us whether a doctrine is like or disliked, whether it is believed or disbelieved, but whether it is a doctrine according to godliness, whether it is the doctrine of the Word of God. Truth has never been popular in this world: Jesus Christ when on earth was by no means popular. Truth never will be popular in this world while men are influenced by sin, and enmity against God. Perhaps no doctrine has met with such bitter opposition as the doctrine on which I have to speak. It has been fearfully misunderstood for a want of prayerful and independent study of the Holy Scriptures, or perhaps from the miserable misrepresentations that have been given of it by some public men. It is a

truth which has been bitterly opposed; we may oppose a doctrine which we cannot with all our puny efforts depose. We may dispute in our blindness and enmity a doctrine which we cannot refute. We believe firmly that the doctrine of election to salvation in Jesus Christ is a doctrine of the Scriptures. We believe in sovereign love, but not in sovereign hatred. We believe in salvation by the grace of God without works, but not in damnation without sin. We believe firmly in election to salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but we discard from our creed the miserable, wretched doctrine of reprobation without sin. Is the doctrine of election a Scriptural doctrine? Can we prove it from the word of God? It is one thing to believe it to be a doctrine of Divine revelation, and it is another thing to have the sanctifying grace and power of it in our hearts. The election we read of in the Scriptures is inseparably connected with holiness, and we believe in no election to salvation without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He who has appointed salvation as an end has appointed the methods by which that end shall be accomplished. Perhaps no man possessed of his reasoning powers questions the truth that God has predestinated harvest as long as this world shall continue. But without sowing of seed, without the agricultural labour that is given to the land, we should have no harvest, because he who predestinated harvest predestinated the sowing of the seed as much. And God has appointed us not unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ. I shall endeavour now to prove, from the quotation of a few Scriptures, that the doctrine of eternal and personal election is a Scriptural and Divine truth. Jesus Christ himself was said to be "chosen of God and precious." He is God's elect, for Jehovah himself says, "Behold my servant, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." Angels that continue in their unfallen dignity and felicity are termed elect angels. Elect angels are employed as ministering spirits to those that shall be heirs of salvation. Elect angels will be employed in the gathering of God's elect into the heavenly world. The Jewish nation was a chosen nation, and as such they were privileged with the oracles of God, and stood as a representative people. They were chosen not because of their personal worth, they were chosen not because of their goodness, but they were chosen to be a separated people, a people that should be God's peculiar treasure, and should be holiness unto the Lord; of them it was said, "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God—the Lord hath chosen thee

to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Jesus Christ himself, in the 24th chapter of Matthew, speaks of certain days being shortened because of God's elect. The Psalmist craved to be remembered with the favour that God was pleased to bear towards his people, that he might see the good of his chosen. And Jesus Christ himself said to his disciples, "Ye have not chose me, but I have chosen you." And the Apostle Paul very often in his writings has brought out this great and profound doctrine. He says, "There is a remnant according to the election of grace." He speaks to the Ephesian Church, and says, "Ye are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world that ye may be holy, and that ye may stand before God without blame in love." God hath in the exercise of his sovereignty chosen a people in Christ to salvation before time began—it was before the foundation of the world, here is its antiquity—it is in Christ according to the riches of God's grace, and it is to holiness and salvation. He, in his addresses to the Church at Thessalonica, said he could but thank God "that they were chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth." Peter speaks of the people of God as a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. He wrote to the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. More Scriptures might be given upon this subject, but I think they would be unnecessary. If we would only give our attention to the simple teachings of the Spirit of God by the prophets, by the Psalmist, by Christ, and by the Apostles, we could not have one moment's doubt as to the doctrine of Divine election being a Scriptural truth.

My second point is to show that God has chosen his people to the highest possible relation to himself, and to the enjoyment of the most precious blessings in Christ. All spiritual relations stand in Christ; all spiritual relations originated in God's grace; and all spiritual relations are standing manifestations of the sovereignty of God's favour and of the immutability of God's love. If we are the sons of God, what has constituted us the sons of God? We are sons of God by God's sovereign love; it is by an act of adoption, it is by an act of Jehovah's will, that we are constituted his sons and his daughters. Adoption is relation established to which we have no natural right; adoption is one thing, and the spirit of adoption is another. Now Christ is God's first-born, and all the family are chose in him; Christ

is the glorious Head of the Church, and all the family of God are chosen members in him; Christ is the everlasting Priest of his Church, and he represents all the family, just as the Jewish priest represented by his breast-plate and in the fulfilment of his office the whole of the Jewish nation. All relation to God then stands in Christ, originated in the sovereignty of Jehovah's will, and is expressive of the infinite love of Jehovah's heart. We are chose to salvation—that is the end; the means by which that end is accomplished is by the "sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth." We are chose to usefulness; every Christian should seek to be useful; every Christian in his right mind is a witness for God; every Christian, as he is influenced by Christian principles, bears testimony to the dignity of the relation that God has established, and bears testimony to the holiness of the principles by which his heart is influenced; every Christian should be a living gospel, his life should bear testimony to the holiness of that Christianity that he studies and is influenced by. We are chosen to eternal life, but it is eternal life through Christ. Without faith there is no evidence of interest in Christ, without faith there is no enjoyment of salvation by Christ. Without faith, a man has no evidence of interest in the Lamb's Book of Life; but he who believes in Christ, however weak and trembling his faith has evidence in his own heart that his name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life; and his conduct corresponding with the holiness of the gospel, he carries in his life a witness to his interest in all the purposes of heaven, and in all the redemptive excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ. The great evidence of interest in election is holiness. A man to talk of believing in election, and going to heaven, because he is one of God's elect, and yet living in sin, and in enmity to God, this can never, never be. We are chosen unto salvation, it is said, "through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth;" and, without this sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, there is no holiness; and, "without holiness, no man can see the Lord." Without holiness, no man would be capable of serving God in heaven; without holiness, no man would be capable of beholding the glories of Jesus Christ there; without holiness, no man can serve God with power and success here; without holiness, no man can have fellowship with God, and so have fellowship with us, for truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. It is only by practical life of consistency with faith in Christ Jesus, that we have evidence of our interest in

election. We are chosen, not because we are holy, but that we might be holy; we are chosen, not because we are good, but that by the principles of the everlasting Gospel, we might become so; we are chosen, not because we are saved, but that we may be saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I hold, dear friends, that the great doctrine of election should be preached. It should be preached, because it is part of a grand system of truth. Truth is not one doctrine, but it is a grand system, and you cannot leave out one part without impairing its beauty, nor leave out one part of this system without weakening its strength. The beauty of truth lies in its perfection, and in that harmony of its connection; the strength of truth lies in the unity of its parts, and it is like gold dust—it is all precious. If Election be not a truth inspired by the Spirit of the living God—if it be not a truth proclaimed by the prophets that were inspired—if it be not a truth published by the Apostles—if it be not a truth found in the teachings of the word of God, let us never say one word about it; but if it was truth in the days of the Apostles, then it is no less a truth now. What the Apostles preached, I hold, we ought to preach in the spirit of love, in the spirit of faith, in the spirit of meekness, entirely depending on the power of the Holy Spirit to give us success in the conversion of immortal souls. One moment longer, and I have done. There is nothing in the doctrine of election that is discouraging to a penitent, seeking sinner. There is everything in the Gospel to welcome the returning prodigal to his Father's house; there is everything to meet the necessities of an awakened conscience; there is everything in the Gospel to satisfy the longing of a penitent soul. I know some may say, "I fear, Sir, I shall not be saved because I am not one of God's elect." Art thou a sinner? art thou a penitent sinner? art thou a seeking sinner? If thou art a seeking, penitent sinner, you cannot imagine how welcome you are to the provisions of infinite love. Every truth in the Gospel is open to you; every promise in the Gospel is open to you; every invitation in Scripture speaks to you. If thou art a sinner seeking mercy, let this cheer thy heart—that God delighteth in mercy. If thou art seeking salvation, Jesus is a willing and an able Saviour, and he has said, "All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." There is nothing, dear friends, in the doctrine of election as it stands in the Scriptures that should discourage any penitent in seeking after mercy through Jesus Christ. I know, in the miserable misrepresentation of this

great and glorious truth, men might well be discouraged from seeking mercy through the Saviour. But see it in its Scriptural connection; see it in the simplicity of it as it is put before us by the great Apostles; see it in the teachings of the Saviour himself, and there is nothing in it but that which welcomes a penitent sinner. It is a great encouragement to a seeking soul. Does the farmer who sows his seed sow that seed with less or more encouragement because he knows that God has ordained that harvest shall be? He sows his seed with a heart brimfull with hope, because God has promised that a harvest shall be as long as the world continues. Only let the means be used according to the Holy Scriptures; only let the poor awakened, penitent sinner renounce everything but Christ and him crucified, mercy will roll into his troubled heart and fill his spirit with peace, and he shall come off more than conqueror, shouting, Victory through the blood of the Lamb—Victory, victory through Jesus Christ.

HUMAN DEPRAVITY
BY THE

Rev. EVAN PROBERT,
OF BRISTOL.

My Christian friends, you are quite aware that the subject which is to engage our further attention this afternoon, is HUMAN DEPRAVITY—a subject about which there are different opinions, which I shall not attempt to examine at the present time, but I shall confine myself to the teachings of God's word, which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and from which we learn what man was when he came from the

hands of his Maker, and what he is now as a fallen creature. It is explicitly declared by the sacred writers, that God made man upright, and therefore his condition was one of perfect innocence and high moral excellence. There was no tendency to evil in any part of his nature, nothing that deviated in the least from the rule of moral rectitude. Whatever his duty was, it was to him his invariable and delightful employment. But, alas! man in honour did not long continue. Through the insinuating wiles of the devil, our first parents were induced to violate the positive command of their Maker, the observance of which was the condition of their happiness, and, as punishment for their transgression, they were driven out of Paradise, and became liable to be cut off by the sentence of death, and consigned to everlasting misery; and, in consequence of our connection with Adam, as our federal head and representative, we became subject to the dreadful consequences of his fall. This is evident from the testimony of the Apostle Paul, in the fifth Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. There we read, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so that death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And, again, "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, and by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners." It is evident from these passages that God viewed Adam in the covenant of works as the head and representative of his natural posterity, and consequently, when he fell we fell in him, and became subject to the tremendous consequences of his fall. Here it may be asked, what are the consequences of his fall? what were they to him, and what are they to us? To answer this question, we must ascertain what the Apostle means when he uses the words death, judgment, and condemnation. I think that he uses these words in opposition to the grace of God, to justification of life, and to the reign of the redeemed in life by Jesus Christ. These are the benefits which result from the grace of God through Christ, and which stand opposed to the evils which sin has introduced into our world; and, as it cannot be supposed that these benefits relate to temporal life, or solely to the resurrection of the body, it cannot be that the evils involved in the words, death, judgment, and condemnation, relate simply to temporal death, but they must be considered as including temporal, legal, and spiritual death.

From the very hour that Adam transgressed, he became mortal,—the

sentence of death was pronounced upon him, and the seeds of depravity were sown in his system; thus the fair and beautiful and glorious creature began to fade, wither, and die, and all his posterity became mortal in him, and have from that day to this come into the world dying. Whatever the case of man might have been if he had not sinned we cannot say. This however we know, that he would not have died; for death is the result of the federal failure of the father of our race. "Dust thou art," God said to him, "and unto dust shalt thou return." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." "In Adam all died." So that it may be said to every one of Adam's sons and daughters, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

But Adam by his transgression not only brought temporal death upon himself and his posterity, he also brought legal death. Having violated the law that was given him to observe, he became under the curse of that law, which involved not only temporal death and expulsion from Paradise, but an exposure to suffer the just demerits of his transgression; and, in consequence of our connection with him as our federal head, we are under the curse of the same law—"By one man's disobedience judgment came upon all men to condemnation;" and further, "By the offence of one many were made sinners." The very moment our progenitor transgressed, all his descendants became subject to the curse. The holy nature of God abhorred the apostate race; the curse of his holy and righteous law has ever rested upon that race; judgment has been given and recorded against us as a fallen world, in the court of Heaven, and unless it is reversed it must fall upon us with all its tremendous consequences.

We are also, in consequence of Adam's transgression, become the subjects of spiritual death, which consists not merely in the deprivation of the principle of life; but in having become depraved creatures, all the faculties of our souls and members of our bodies are depraved, so that it may be said of us, as the prophet says of the Jewish nation, "The head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot unto the head there is no soundness." What! no soundness in any part? nothing good in any part? nothing spiritually good? nothing if cherished and fostered that will not lead to God, to Heaven, and to happiness? Nothing whatever. Let no one mistake me. I do not mean to say for a single moment, that sin has

destroyed any of the faculties of man's soul, for they are all there. They all exist as they did when they were produced; but I mean to say, that sin has deprived man of the principle of spiritual life, and made him a depraved and debased creature; and we believe that we can prove this from the word of God, as well as from observation.

First,—From the conduct of little children. Children begin to sin very early in life. If there were any good in us, it would show itself in infancy, before good habits became corrupted, and evil principles were produced by our connection with the world. But do little children prefer good? Are they inclined to the good and the excellent? Do you see from the earliest period of their existence that they are desirous of good? On the contrary, I say, as soon as they begin to act, they prove by their action, that in them there is a depraved nature, from which they act. "Madness," says a wise man, "is bound up in the heart of a child," they go astray from the womb telling lies. But it may be said, in the way of objection, that this may arise from the unfavourable circumstance in which some children are placed. No doubt, unfavourable circumstances have a bad influence upon the minds of children; but it is not so with the whole race. Point out to me, one child who is disposed from infancy to seek that which is good, that which is holy. And surely, if the tendency of infants from their earliest history is to evil, it is a proof that it must arise from the evil propensities within them, which grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength.

Secondly,—We have further proof of human depravity from the aversion of sinners to come to Christ. They are invited to come, persuaded to come, and are assured that they shall find pardon, acceptance, and salvation. But they cannot be induced to come to him; and why will they not come? Is it because he is not willing to receive them, or because there is anything in him to prevent them? No, but it is because of the deep-rooted depravity in their hearts. The heart is averse to all that is good, and therefore rejects the Saviour and turns away from him. Hence he complained when in our world, "How often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." What more needed to be added? Man turns away in proud disdain from all the blessings of the

gospel, and the glories of heaven brought before him, and rushes on with steady purpose to damnation. "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Oh, to how many in this land may it be said, "They hate knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of his counsel, they despised all his reproof."

Thirdly,—We have further evidence of native depravity from the testimony of Scripture. In the first place, let me refer you to the fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis, and the third verse. There we read, that Adam, after he had lived one hundred and thirty years, begat a son in his own likeness after his image. Mind, the image in which Adam was created was the image of God, but that image he had lost before he begat Seth; therefore, the image in which Seth was born must have been the image of his progenitor, as a fallen and depraved creature. Let me refer you, in the second place, to the third chapter of the Gospel of John. "He that is born of the flesh," said the Saviour to Nicodemus, "is flesh, and he that is born of the Spirit is spirit." To be born of the flesh, according to the wisest interpretation of that passage, is to be born of a depraved nature; to be born of the Spirit is to be born of the Holy Spirit of God—which birth, the Saviour told Nicodemus he must experience before he could see the kingdom of God. And again, we have several passages in proof of this point. In the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the fifth verse of that chapter, the Apostle says, "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin by the law which worked in us to bring forth fruit unto death." "When we were in the flesh," means this—when we were in an unrenewed depraved state. In the same chapter he says, at the 14th verse, "We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin;" as if he had said, "I am as a sinner, a depraved creature." In accordance with this the Apostle says, at the 18th verse of the same chapter, "In me—that is, in my flesh—there dwelleth no good thing." No love to God, no holy aspirations! No, none whatever. At the beginning of the eighth chapter the same Epistle, we find the terms "flesh" and "Spirit" placed in opposition to each other, "Who walk not after the flesh," says the Apostle, describing Christians, "but after the Spirit." To be in the flesh is to be in a depraved state, to be in the Spirit is to be a partaker of his grace; to walk after the flesh is to walk after the dictates of corrupt principles and

propensities, to walk after the Spirit is to be governed by spiritual principles and by the Holy Spirit of God; and the Apostle, in writing to the Galatians, says to them, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." These passages, I think, prove beyond all contradiction, that man as a fallen creature, is a depraved creature, destitute of any good. There are many other passages of Scripture that confirm this doctrine, such as the following, "Who can bring a clean thing out of a unclean." Not one. What is man that he should be clean, or the son of man that he should be just. "Behold," says a Psalmist, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Read the account of man before the deluge, and there we find that every imagination and the thought of his heart were only evil, and that continually. The same account is given of him after the flood. The deluge could not wipe away the stains of moral pollution, could not destroy in man the deep-rooted depravity of his heart. "The heart," says Jeremiah, "is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it." I think that what our blessed Lord said to the Jews of old, is applicable to every unconverted man under heaven—"But I know you that ye have not the love of God in you." Some of you may be more humane than others, more benevolent than other, more compassionate than other, as men, and as women, but one has as much of the love of God in him as others. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," against the being of God, against the government of God, against the gospel of God, against the purposes of God. The enmity of the human heart is unconquerable by any human agency whatever. It is mortal enmity, it strikes at the being of God, and, therefore, as President Edwards, of America, justly observes, "that when it found God in our nature, in our world, it put him to death on the accursed tree." Such, my brethren, is the enmity of the heart of man, such is its deeprooted depravity, that in him there is no good thing. We can never speak too bad of what sin has done for us, and we can never speak too much, or too well, of what God has done for us, in the person of his Son, and in us, by the agency of his Holy Spirit.

Fourthly—The doctrine of human depravity may be proved from those passages which assert the universal necessity of redemption by Jesus Christ. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel, "because he shall save his people from their sins," "In him we have redemption through his

blood," says St. Paul, "even the forgiveness of sin according to the riches of his grace." Now, the work of redemption pre-supposes the sinful state of man, and implies a deliverance from that state and from the punishment to which man is exposed. Hence it is said of Christ, that he came into the world to save sinners, to seek and to save that which was lost, and that he died—the just for the unjust—that he might bring us to God. Now, if redemption by Christ is necessary, it is evident that man is a sinner; and, if man is a sinner, it is evident that man has a depraved nature. You cannot make anything else of it. Say what you like about man and about his excellencies, you must come to this conclusion, that he is a condemned and a depraved creature, or else he would not need redemption through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifthly,—The passages that assert the universal necessity of the new birth prove this very truth—"Except a man be born of water," said the Saviour, "and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again." But if a man has some good in him, and if that good could be cherished, and be increased, and worked up so as to make men fit for heaven, what need of the new birth? what need of the Spirit of all grace to renew him in the spirit of his mind? Whenever, my brethren, you pray to God for the Spirit to change the human heart, whether you believe the doctrine or not, you imply it in your petition before the mercy-seat. They are represented by the sacred writers as having been called from darkness into light, as having an unction from the Holy One whereby they know all things, and those of them who have been called readily acknowledge that they were once foolish, once deceived and deceiving, once depraved — very depraved; and not only so, but the very best of Christians in the world confess with humility the depravity of their hearts, and I believe that the man who knows himself best is the man who is most ready to confess this and to humble himself before God—"Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And while Christians feel this, their language is, "Create within me a clean heart, oh God! and renew a right spirit within me; purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Apply the blood of sprinkling to my guilty conscience, and let the Spirit of all grace work in my polluted and depraved heart, and form me to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and

meet my immortal spirit for the inheritance of the saints in light, and of angels in glory. My dear friends, I need not say more. I should not think there is an individual here this afternoon who is not disposed to agree with me, when I say that man is fallen creature, is a depraved creature, is a condemned creature: he is under the curse of God's righteous law, and at the same time the subject of the reigning power of depravity, the subject of the effects of sin throughout his whole nature; and that, as a sinner, let it be recorded in high heaven there is no good in man's nature until God puts it there, and you will never be brought, by beloved hearers, into a right state of mind before God, until you are brought to feel that you have nothing, and that you must have all in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Oh! Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" But here are blessed tidings, "But in me is their help found." Does not this subject, my hearers, teach us, in the first place, the amazing long suffering of God towards our race. God might, as soon as man sinned, without the least imputation of injustice to his character, have cut him down, because the fall was the result of his criminal choice, and attended by the most aggravating circumstances; but God has borne with us, and is bearing still, which shows that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, oh! house of Israel?" And does not the subject teach us also the helplessness of man as a sinner? He is unable to atone for his sins or to renew his heart. Many attempts have been made to atone for human transgression, and to cleanse and purify the human heart, but they have all failed, not one has succeeded. No sacrifice, short of an infinite one, could satisfy Divine justice and magnify the broken law. No power, short of the omnipotent energy of the Eternal Spirit, can renew the human heart. But, while man is a helpless creature he is not a hopeless creature. We do not say to him there is no hope. Oh, no! I rejoice in that thought at this very moment. God has remembered us in our lowest state, he has laid help upon one that is mighty, one who, by his passive and active obedience, has magnified the law and made it honourable, satisfied the claims of Divine justice, so that God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ; and while he made atonement for our transgressions, he has procured for us the Spirit of all grace to renew our nature, to transform us into the likeness of himself, and to prepare us in the use of means for the inheritance of the saints in

light. Those of us who are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and, I trust, most of us are—would to God that I could believe that we all are—let us pray for a larger measure of the Spirit, upon ourselves, individually, and upon the world around us. Surely, my hearers, my dear brother who has to occupy this platform, and who has to unfurl to you the banner of the cross, will need a large measure of the Holy Spirit. May He come upon his head, and upon his heart; and may he never ascend this platform but in His strength, and under His guidance, and in His light; may he never preach a sermon without its being blessed to the conversion of souls, and the building up of the Church; and may you, as a Christian Church, continue earnest in pray

er for the Spirit to come, and it is the Spirit will reconcile us to each other, the Spirit will remove differences between Arminians and Calvinists, the Spirit will bring us to see, by-and-by, eye to eye, and this world will be filled with the glory of God. May the Lord command his blessing upon these remarks, for his name's sake. Amen.

The Meeting then adjourned till half-past six. After the friends had assembled—

The REV. C. H. SPURGEON said, I wish to make one or two observations before I introduce to you the speakers of this evening. Controversy is never a very happy element for the child of God: he would far rather be in communion than engaged in defence of the faith or in attack upon error. But the soldier of Christ knows no choice in his Master's commands. He may feel it to be better for him to lie upon the bed of rest than to stand covered with the sweat and dust of battle; but as a soldier he has learned to obey, and the rule of his obedience is not his personal comfort but his Lord's absolute command. The servant of God must endeavour to maintain all the truth which his Master has revealed to him, because, as a Christian soldier, this is part of his duty. But while he does so, he accords

to others the liberty which he enjoys himself. In his own house of prayer he must and will maintain that which he believes to be true. He does not feel himself at all out of temper or angry when he hears that in other places there are some holding different views of what the truth is, who as honestly, and perhaps as forcibly, endeavour to maintain their views. To our own Master we stand or fall; we have no absolute judge of right or wrong incarnate in the flesh on earth to-day. Nor is even the human judgment itself an infallible evidence of our being, for since the fall, no powers of mortals are free from imperfection. Our judgment is not necessarily a fully enlightened one, and we ourselves therefore let another man's judgment also be his guide unto God; but we must not forget that every man is responsible to the Most High for the use of that judgment, for the use of that mental power which God has given him, by which he is to weigh and balance the arguments of either side. I have found commonly that, with regard to the doctrine of grace which we preach, there are a great many objections raised. One of the simplest trades in the world is the raising of objections. You never need, if you wish to set up in that line of business, to look abroad for capital or resources; however poor and penniless a man may be, even in wits, he can easily manufacture difficulties. It is said "that a fool may raise objections which a thousand wise men could not answer." I would not hesitate to say that I could bring objections to your existence to-night, which you could not disprove. I could sophisticate and mystify until I brought out the conclusion that you were blind, and deaf, and dumb, and I am not sure that by any process of logic you would be able to prove that you were not so. It might be clear enough to you that you could both speak, and see, and hear. The only evidence, however, I suppose that you could give, would be by speaking, and seeing, and hearing, which might be conclusive enough; but if it were left to be a mere matter of word-fighting for schoolmen, I question whether the caviller might not cavil against you to the judgment-day in order to dispute you out of the evidence of your very senses. The raising of difficulties is the easiest trade in all the world, and, permit me to add, it is not one of the most honourable. The raising of objections has been espoused, you know, by that great and mighty master of falsehood in the olden times, and it has been carried on full often by those whose doubts about the truth sprung rather from their hearts than from their heads. Some difficulties, however, ought to be met, and let me now remove one

or two of them. There are some who say, "Provided the doctrines of grace be true, what is the use of our preaching?" Of course I can hardly resist a smile while I put this splendid difficulty—it is so huge a one. If there are so many who are to be saved, then why preach? You cannot diminish, you cannot increase the number, why preach the Gospel? Now, I thought my friend Mr. Bloomfield anticipated this difficulty well enough. There must be a harvest,—why sow, why plough? Simply because the harvest is ordained in the use of the means. The reason why we preach at all is because God has ordained to save some. If he had not, we could not see the good of preaching at all. Why! we should come indeed on a fool's errand if we came here without the Master's orders at our back. His elect shall be saved—every one of them,—and if not by my instrumentality or that of any brother here present, if not by any instrumentality, then would God sooner call them by his Holy Spirit, without the voice of the minister, than that they should perish. But this is the very reason why we preach, because we wish to have the honour of being the means, in the hand of God, of calling these elect ones to himself. The certainty of the result quickens us in our work, and surely it would stay none but a fool in his labour. Because God ordains that his word shall not return unto him void, therefore, we preach that word, because, "as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it to bring forth and bud, even so doth the word of the Lord accomplish his purpose;" therefore, we would have our doctrine to drop as the rain and distil as the dew, and as the small rain upon the tender herb. But, there are some again who say, "To what purpose after all, is your inviting any to come, when the Spirit of God alone constrains them to come; and why, especially, preach to those whom believe to be so depraved that they cannot and will not come?" Ay, just so, this is a serious difficulty to everything except faith. Do you see Ezekiel yonder; he is about to preach a sermon. By his leave, we will stop him. "Ezekiel, where are you about to preach?" "I am about," saith he, "to preach to a strange congregation—dead, dry bones, lying in a mass in a valley." "But, Ezekiel, they have no power to live." "I know that," saith he. "To what purpose, then, is your preaching to them? If they have no power, and if the breath must come from the four winds, and they have no life in themselves, to what purpose do you preach?" "I am ordered to preach," saith he, "commanded;" and he does so. He prophesies, and afterward

mounting to a yet higher stage of faith, he cries, "Come from the four winds, oh breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." And the wind comes, and the effect of his ministry is seen in their life. So preach we to dead sinners; so pray we for the living Spirit. So, by faith, do we expect his Divine influence, and it comes,—cometh not from man, nor of man, nor by blood, nor by the will of the flesh, but from the sovereign will of God. But not withstanding it comes instrumentally through the faith of the preacher while he pleads with man, "as though God did beseech them by us, we pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." But if ten thousand other objections were raised, my simple reply would be just this, "We can raise more objections against your theory, than you can against ours." We do not believe that our scheme is free from difficulties; it were uncandid if we were to say so. But we believe that we have not the tithe of the difficulties to contend with that they have on the opposite side of the question. It is not hard to find in those texts which appear to be most against us, a key, by which they are to be harmonized; and we believe it to be utterly impossible, without wresting Scripture, to turn those texts which teach our doctrine, to teach any other thing whatsoever. They are plain, pointed, pertinent. If the Calvinistic scheme were the whole sum and substance of all truth, why then surely, if it held everything within some five or six doctrines, you might begin to think that man were God, and that God's theology were less than infinite in its sweep. What are we, that we should grasp the infinite? We shall never measure the marches of eternity. Who shall compass with a span the Eternal God, and who shall think out anew his infinite thoughts? We pretend not that Calvinism is a plumb-line to fathom the deeps; but we do say, that it is a ship which can sail safely over its surface, and that every wave shall speed it onwards towards its destined haven. To fathom and to comprehend is neither your business nor mine, but to learn, and then, having learned, to teach to others, is the business of each Christian man; and thus would be do, God being our helper. One friend kindly suggests a difficulty to me, which, having just spoken of, I shall sit down. That amazing difficulty has to do with the next speaker's topic, and, therefore, I touch it. It says in the Scriptures, that Paul would not have us destroy him with our meat for whom Christ died. Therefore, the inference is—only mark, we don't endorse the logic—the inference is, that you may destroy some with your meat for whom Christ died. That inference I

utterly deny. But then, let me put it thus. Do you know, that a man may be guilty of a sin which he cannot commit. Does that startle you? Every man is guilty of putting God out of existence, if he says in his heart, "No God." But he cannot put God out of existence; and yet, the guilt is there, because he would if he could. There be some who crucify the Son of God afresh. They cannot,—he is in heaven, he is beyond their reach. And yet, because their deeds would do that, unless some power restrained, they are guilty of doing what they can never do, because the end and aim of their doings would be to destroy Christ, if he were here. Now, then, it is quite consistent with the doctrine that no man can destroy any for whom Christ died, still to insist upon it that a man may be guilty of the blood of souls. He may do that which, unless God prevented it,—and that is no credit to him,—unless God prevented it, would destroy souls for whom Jesus Christ died. But, again I say, I have not come here to-night to anticipate and to answer all objections; I have only done that, that some troubled conscience might find peace. This was not a meeting of discussion, but for the explaining of our views, and the teaching them simply to the people. I now shall call upon my beloved brother to take up the point of particular redemption.

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION
BY THE

Rev. J. A. SPURGEON,
OF SOUTHAMPTON.

I think it is well that the death of Christ and its consequent blessings should occupy one place in our discussion here to-night; for not only is it

the central truth in the Calvinistic theory, but the death of Christ is the centre point of all history and of all time. The devout of all ages have stood and gazed with anxious glance into these deep mysteries, searching what, or what manner of things the Holy Spirit did by them testify and reveal; and we know that hereafter, in yon world of glory, the redeemed shall sing of these things for ever, and shall find in the Redeemer and in his work, fresh matter for love and for praise as eternity shall roll on. We take our stand between the two, and I think the language of our hearts to-night is akin to all ages of the Church of Christ,—“God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now the grand result of the death of our Lord—though not the only result—the grand result of that death, so far as man is concerned, is the redemption which it ultimately achieves; and, with regard to the extent of that redemption, we believe the Scriptures are plain and speak most clearly, when they tell of a final day of manifestation, when the redeemed from amongst men shall take their stand before the Redeemer, to sing of him who, as the good shepherd, hath laid down his life for his sheep, and has purchased unto himself a peculiar people—his body, the Church. Now, we believe that, in reaching that grand and final result there are many steps that must be taken, and we think that, from these preliminary steps, there are multitudes that gain rich handfuls of blessings who shall not however reap the full harvest of glory. We believe that the whole world is flooded with blessings, and that the stream rolls broad and clear from the hill-foot of Calvary, and laves the feet alike of the godly and of the ungodly, the thankful and the thankless. But from the riven side of Christ there comes forth one stream—the river of life, whose banks are trodden only by the feet of the multitude of believers, who wash and are clean, who drink and live for evermore. We speak to-night of Christ's death in its various relations, so as to touch upon and include sundry things which cannot be properly classed under the title of particular redemption; but we feel we are driven to this course, so as to be able to do justice to ourselves and to our leading theme.

Now, we have three sets of truths before us, and these three sets of truths we must deal with. (1.) We have, first of all, a God holy and righteous, loving and gracious, a God who has been most grievously wronged and

injured, and a God who must be honoured alike by the giving him all the glory of which he has been robbed, and by the bearing of his just expression of holy indignation at the wrong that has been done unto him. We have a God jealous in the extreme, and yet, strange enough, declaring that he passes by iniquity and forgiveth transgression and sin. We have a God truthful, who has sworn "that the soul that sinneth it shall die," and who yet speaks to those souls, and says, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die." A God whom we know must be just, and must execute upon the ungodly that which they have justly merited, and who yet strangely says, "Come and let us plead together, and though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as wool, and though they be like crimson I will make them white as snow." That is one set of truths—strange, and apparently contradictory. Then we have another. (2.) We have a world lost, and yet swathed in an atmosphere of mercy. We have a world dark with the darkness of death, and yet everywhere we find it more or less under the influence of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which came a light unto darkness, that did not and could not comprehend it. And we have, moreover, a world rebellious, and serving another master than the right one, and yet nevertheless beneath the feet of him who has been made Head over all things for his body's sake, which is the Church. (3.) And then, once more, we have a Church peculiar in its unmerited privileges, chose from before all time to inherit the kingdom given to it before the world began—a kingdom that can never be trodden upon save by the spotless and the deathless; and yet the inheritors are by nature dead in trespasses and in sins—lost, ruined—without a God and without a hope in the world. How are all those strange and apparently contradictory things to be solved? One clue, we find, is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The work involves its ultimate end, which is redemption, and of that work we are about to speak here to-night.

We speak first of those blessings which come from the death of Christ, and are for all men; the whole world is under a mediatorial government, the whole spirit of which is a government of long-suffering, graciousness, tenderness, and mercy, such as could not have been exercised had Christ never died. A government there might have been, but it must be, we think, a government akin to that which is found in the place where those are found who make their bed in hell. We find, moreover, that the direct

and indirect influences of the Cross of Christ have pervaded the whole world, and none can tell how full oft its gentle spirit has come like oil upon the troubled waters; or what man, with his wild passions, would have been without the ameliorating influence of the Cross. We possibly may be able to tell, when we look across the impassable gulf into a Gehenna beneath, and see sin unchecked working out its dire results; and, we believe that whatever comes short of that darkness, whose very light is darkness, is due to that light which radiates from the Cross of Christ, and whatever is short of hell streams from Calvary. And then, further still, we have a Bible, a revelation filled with the love and mercy of God to man—a Bible in which our Lord himself could show, beginning at Moses, and in all the prophets, that which did testify concerning himself; and, apart from Jesus Christ and his death, there could have been no such revelation of God's character unto the human race. A revelation there might have been, but it would have been a revelation of Sinai's horrors and terrors, without even the spark of hope which comes forth from that dispensation there set forth. There might have been a revelation, I say, but it would have been a revelation that would not have wound up as this does with a blessing. It would have ended like the Old Testament with a curse; it would have begun with the same. It would have been worse than Ezekiel's roll of woes which is filled all over with terrible lamentation, and with awful sorrow and woe. And again, there is a positive overture of mercy, a true and faithful declaration of good tidings unto every creature, and we do believe that it is our duty to preach the Gospel unto every creature; and the Gospel runs thus—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, for he who believeth and is baptized shall be saved." That overture we hold to be no mockery, but made in good faith; and that overture is not the overture of a shadow, but the presentation of solid, substantial blessings; and for the rejection of that, not God, but man is answerable, and for the rejection of that he will be lost. "For this the condemnation, that they have not believed on him whom God hath sent." And, then, lastly, we find that as the purchase of the death of Christ there is a Church, and that Church is sent forth into the world with orders to bless it and to do good unto all men. It is bidden to go forth as a light in the midst of darkness; it is bidden so to live as to be the salt of the whole earth. Now, we say that each one of these blessings is no small gift from God to man—no mean result of the death

of our Master; and, combined, we think they would form a boon worthy of a God; and, as we put our hand upon it, we think we can give a full and true expression, and with an emphasis surpassed by none, to that glorious text—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." And we think, upon our system, and upon ours alone, we can give full truthfulness and emphasis to the remainder—"That whosoever believeth in him shall have everlasting life." Now, upon redemption proper, the latter part of our theme, we will pass on to speak. And, first, what do we mean by redemption? Most certainly we do not mean the POSSIBILITY OF REDEMPTION, for we have learned to distinguish between the possibility of a thing and a thing itself. We feel this, that we do not preach and cannot preach, gathering our teaching from the Bible, a possibility of redemption. We proclaim a redemption. Nor do we mean by redemption a contingency of redemption, which, again, is contingent upon a third thing. We have learned to distinguish between a contingency and a certainty. We proclaim a certain redemption, and we speak of that which is not possible but positive, not contingent but certain. Neither do we mean by redemption such an outgrowth of the man's own power or goodness as shall enable him to burst his way through every bondage and to get forth free; such an elevation of human nature, whether by the education of others, or by his own works, as to enable him at last to stand free. If we meant that, we should use the word escape, but not the word redemption. And again, if we meant, as some, alas! have seemed to mean, God's foregoing his claim upon man; God's waiving man's liabilities, and God's giving up that which we believe, as a holy God, he cannot surrender; if we meant that, we should speak of emancipation—of pure pardon and forgiveness. But we do not. We mean redemption. And then, again, we do not mean by redemption the meeting of the debts, either in prospective or in the present. We do not mean that the man shall, either in the present or in the future, bear any part of the penalty; and, by some goodness, either in the present or foreseen, satisfy God's claim upon him. If we meant that, I think we should use altogether another word than the word redemption. What do we mean by redemption? We mean, by redemption, the work of one being which is done for another, but generally a helpless one, in order to give him a perfect freedom. And when we speak of redemption, mark you, we speak of a thing that is the result of that work. We distinguish between redemption and redemption

work. What we mean, by redemption, is just this—the grand result and end of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we could as well speak of redemption apart from the redeemed, as we could speak of life apart from a living creature. Life and living creatures are co-extensive, and so is redemption and the redeemed. If you take down any book that will give you an explanation of the word "redemption," I think you will find three things put therein. It is a ransom, a rescue, and a release. Now, I take the whole three words to be the fulness of the meaning of one word. It is such a ransom, and such a rescue, as result in a complete and full release. Whatever stops short of that thing, is, of course, not the thing itself; the thing itself that we mean, is the positively being redeemed and made free. Now, just by way of simplifying the subject, let me speak of the Redeemer, and of the redemption work, and of those who are redeemed.

First, the Redeemer, who is he? We believe him to be the Word that was with God, equal unto God, and was God,— who became flesh and dwelt among us. At the same time, the flesh did not become, in any sense, Deity, neither did the Deity, in any sense, become carnal. They formed another person, and that person the God-man, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Now, what is he? And here I just ask that question, in order to meet some objections, and, if I can, to put on one side two or three theories that seem to fight against ours. I hear a voice, saying, in reply to that question, what is he? Why, he is God's idea of humanity; he is God, who has taken up humanity from its fallen state, raised it up not only to the place where he first put it, but, beyond, even to the height to which he hoped it would ascend, or possibly something beyond it. And, now, from henceforth, such is the union betwixt common humanity, that the lost, in their degradation, have but to look to their common humanity exalted, realize their identity with it, and to feel themselves, by that deed, raised to the same standard, and redeemed, and free for evermore. To which, we reply, there is enough of truth in that lie to keep it alive, and that is all. We do believe that our Master did lay hold of humanity; we do believe that he has honoured and dignified the human race, by taking that upon him, and by becoming flesh like unto ourselves. But we cannot see how that the gazing upon that can open blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, give live to the dead, and procure the discharge of our sins, any more than we can see how that the gazing upon an Olympic game would give to the

physically lame, physical strength, or could give to those who were physically dead, life from their physical death.

And, again, I hear other voices replying to that question. They say, "he is the great example of self-denial, and of the submission of the human will to the Divine. And what redemption is, is this—that man now can look to that great display of self-denial, can catch of its spirit, and can imitate it, and by that deed of subjection, making the will to succumb to the will of the Divine, they may, at least, emancipate themselves, and go forth free." To which we reply, once more, there is enough of truth in that just to cement the error together, and to give it a plausible appearance to the sons of men, but there is nothing more. It is true that our Saviour was the Sent One of the Father. It is true, he came, saying, "Lo! I come to do thy will." He declares he was not doing his own will, but the will of him that sent him. And he winds up by saying, "Not my will, but thine be done." But, after all, we cannot, and dare not accept that submission of Christ's will to the Father, as being a satisfaction for sin; neither can we see, how, by the imitation of that, we can, in any sense, wipe away the sins of the past, or free ourselves from the penalty that is yet to come.

But now to answer for ourselves. What is our Lord Jesus Christ? And we say, that in life he is the great example and copy; in death, he is the substitute; and in both, the federal head—the elder brother and kinsman of his Church.

But now time warns me that I must pass on to the second thought—the work of redemption. First of all, we gaze at that part of the work which is Godward, and that we call atonement; and, when you ask me—What is the character of the atonement? I reply—It has a twofold nature, to correspond with the twofold character of sin. Sin is a transgression of the law, and a consequent insult to him who is the lawmaker. But it is something more than that: the power by which he has transgressed has been perverted; it was given to him to obey the law that he might glorify God. And to make, therefore, a satisfaction for sin, there must be a bringing to the law obedience; there must be the bearing of the sanction because of the disobedience; there must be the rendering to God the glory due to him; and there must be the bearing of his just displeasure and the

expression of his holy wrath and indignation. That Christ has done: he came, and his whole life was obedience to the law, for he was obedient even unto death; and in that death he bore the sanction of the law—for he was made a curse, it being written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." His whole life was spent to glorify God, and at its close he could say, "I have glorified thee, and I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do:" and his death was the bearing of the just displeasure of God towards the sinner, and in the agony of his heart he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In these things we behold, therefore, the presentation of the obedience due, the giving to God the glory due, the bearing of God's displeasure, and the enduring of the curse of the law. And now the question would be put to me as to the value of atonement. We believe that its value depends not so much upon the Being appeased, nor upon the beings to be atoned for, as upon the Being who makes the atonement. The value of Christ's atonement is the value of himself. He gave himself for us. If he had stood as the surety for the whole world, he could not be more. He gave himself; what more could he bestow? The value of the atonement is the value of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his flesh he can take man's place, and by his Divinity he can give, and must give anyhow, an infinite value to the work that he, in mortal flesh, performs. For one soul, therefore, it must be infinite—for more or less it cannot be. Infinite it is, and infinite it must be, and we have no part or parcel with those who would say, that if Judas was to have been saved, Judas' amount of penalty would have had to have been paid, in addition to what has been borne and paid by Christ. He took the place, the room, and stead of the church, and then all that he was worth went in that church's place and stead. More he could not do, if he had taken the place of the whole world. But, you ask me, is there any limit to the atonement at all? I say I think there is; and the limit seems to be, not in the value, but in the purpose. The limit seems to be this theory—for whom did he die? in whose place and stead did he stand? If he stood in the place and stead of the whole world, then he made atonement for the sins of the whole world, and the whole world will be saved. If he stood in the place and stead of his Church, then he made atonement for his Church, and the whole Church will be saved. We believe that Christ took the place and stead of every believer, that the believer's sin was put on him, and thus the ex-sinner can go forth free. But I hear a voice saying, "I challenge substitution, and

I object to that." So be it. I ask you, did Christ die for sin at all? It must be answered,—Yes. Then for whose sin did he die? If his own, then he suffered righteously. Did he die for the sins of the whole world? then justice cannot demand this again. Did he die for part of the sins of the whole world? then the rest of the sins will still condemn the world; then must have Christ died in vain. We believe that he took all the sins of some men. It was not a fictitious condemnation; it was not a fancy sin made for the occasion; it was a positive sin that had been committed by God's people, and is transferred from them to him who laid down his life for his sheep; loving us, and giving himself for and in the stead or in the place of his people.

But, then, we say this work of redemption comprised something more than thus paying down the ransom, and the bearing of the penalty. It is, moreover, a rescue; for sin has not only made men this to have insulted God and broken God's law, it has transferred them unto bondage under the allegiance of one—"the strong man armed." They must be freed from that. Christ came, has destroyed death, and through death him also who has the power of death, even the devil; making an open show of them upon his cross, ascending up on high a victor, leading captivity captive. And then, I think, there is yet something further. Sin has affected the man himself, made him to need in his own person a releasing from the dominion, power, and corruption of sin. This Christ has secured by his covenant with the Father. But that which I take to comprise effectual calling and final perseverance, I shall leave to my brethren who shall speak afterwards. And now as to the persons redeemed—who are they? The Church, we say, whether you look at the Church as elect from all eternity, or the Church believing in time, or the Church as glorified hereafter. We look at them all as one, and we say these are the redeemed, these are they for whom redemption has been procured. We cannot add to their number, we cannot diminish them; for we believe that those whom God foreknew, he did predestinate; that those whom he did predestinate, he also called: for whom he calls he justifies, for whom he justifies he also glorifies; the whole are one,—and for these redemption has been made.

Now, if I may be permitted the time, I will just touch upon one or two,

objections, and then I will conclude. I hear some one saying, "But by that, sir, you surely must limit God's love." I reply, is God loving when he punishes any and doth not save all? Then is he loving also when he purposes to do that, for whatever justifies the deed justifies the purpose which gives the morality to the deed. And then I hear another objection—"How can you, sir, upon that theory, go to preach the Gospel unto every creature?" You have heard that answered—we have got the order; but, I reply yet further: I could not go and preach the Gospel upon any other theory, for I dare not go on that fool's errand of preaching a redemption that might not redeem, and declaring a salvation that might not save. I could not go and say to a man, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And he would answer me, "Do you think you are going to heaven?" "Yes." "Why?" "Because Christ died for me." "But he died for us all, and my chances therefore are as good as yours." And he might reply to me after he had accepted my declaration, and after he had believed, and begun to rejoice, after all he might say, "Is there any real reason why I should rejoice, some for whom Christ died are in hell, and I may also go there. I cannot begin to rejoice in your news till I feel myself in glory. It is rather a faulty piece of good news, because it is nothing positive; it is a grand uncertainty you have proclaimed to me." Now, what we preach, is the Gospel to every creature, and that we take to be this—If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved; if you do not, you will be lost, and lost for ever. You are not redeemed—you are not saved,—there is not, in another word, salvation and redemption for those who are lost for ever. But we add, "We are what we are by Divine grace; we have believed; if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be as we are—will be able to boast as we do, humbly in the Lord our God;" or in other words—If you believe, and are baptized, you will be saved; if you do not believe, you will be lost, and lost for ever.

EFFECTUAL CALLING
BY THE

Rev. JAMES SMITH,
OF CHELTENHAM.

My Christian friends, our minds have been occupied to-day with some of the loftiest subjects that can engage the thoughts of man. Our attention has been directed to the infinitely wise and true God, and we have been endeavouring to conceive of him as the great, the infinite, the eternal; the great, the infinite, the eternal intellect, who, of himself, conceiveth the grandest schemes, and infallibly provides for their accomplishment, so that there can be no mistake, no failure. We know that every wise intellect forms its plan before it provides its mean, or attempts to carry out the idea conceived in the mind.

And the great doctrine of election, to which our attention was directed this afternoon, answers to the formation of the plan in the infinite mind of God. He foresaw, clearly, that the whole human race, represented by the first man, would fall into sin, and left to themselves, would certainly perish. To prevent a catastrophe so fearful, he determined in his infinite mind, to have a people for himself, a people that would comprise the vast majority of the fallen inhabitants of this world. They were all present before his mind; their names were registered in his book, which book was delivered into the hands of the Lamb, the Son of God, who accepted the book at the hands of his Father, and, as it were, signed it with his own name, so that it has been designated, "The Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And Jesus looked upon this act as the committing of the people to himself, on purpose that he might take the charge of them, on purpose that he might carry out the Father's will respecting them, and gain eternal laurels and honours to himself, by placing them in splendor, majesty, and glory before his Father's face for ever. We therefore find him frequently when speaking with his Father, and referring to this act in the eternal counsels, saying, "Thine they were and thou gavest them me. Keep those whom thou hast given me by thine

own name, that they may be one as we are." But election interferes not with man as standing in Adam, but with man as under sin the result of Adam's fall. It ensured their restoration, but it did not interfere with their fall, and consequently the elect, with the rest, all fell in the first man. The entire mass of human nature became depraved, polluted, rotten to the heart's core; so depraved, so polluted, so rotten, that nothing could effect a change but the omnipotent energy of the omnipotent God. There is that in depravity in every form, that defies the touch of any one but the Infinite; that refuses to succumb to anything but to Omnipotence itself. The heart of man is foul as the heart of Satan; the nature of man is foul as the nature of Satan; and the sin of man is worse than the sin of Satan. Satan, the great archangel, that fell from heaven, did a tremendous deed when he set mind in opposition to Deity; but man set not merely mind, but matter with mind, in opposition to the eternal God. God could once look upon the world and say, "Though mind is in rebellion, matter is not in opposition;" but after the fall of man, mind and matter alike were corrupt, were depraved, were in opposition to the Eternal. Every man's heart steams with enmity against God; every man's spirit rises in rebellion against God; and, as you have heard tonight, the verdict of every man's conscience in its fallen state is, "No God, no God;" and if the Eternal could be voted out of existence by the suffrages of his fallen creatures, every hand would be up, every heart would give its verdict, and every voice would vote for the annihilation of the Most High. The will of man strong, the will of man stern, the will of man determined, and opposed to the will of God, will yield to nothing but that which is superior to itself; it laughs at authority, it turns with disgust from holiness, it refuses to listen to invitation, and, in this state, man—universal man, is found. In this state, man, the entire mass of man, with the exception of those who had been saved on credit, and had been changed by the sacred influences of the Spirit—in this state man was found when Christ came into our world. He came and, as ye have heard, assumed humanity, and united it with Deity. The two natures constituted the one person of the glorious Mediator; that glorious Mediator stood the representative of his people; that Mediator stood the Surety of his family; that Mediator stood the Substitute of the multitude of his fallen ones. That Mediator came to be the sacrifice to which sin was to be transferred, by which sin was to expiated and removed out of the way, that God's mercy might freely flow,

and from the sinner's conscience, that he might have peace and joy.

But as the election of the Father did not interfere with the falling of man's nature, so the redemption of the Son did not change the nature that had fallen. It was therefore necessary, that as the Father sent the Son, the Son should send the Comforter; and as it required an infinite victim to atone for man's guilt, it required an infinite agent to change man's fallen nature. As to the Father, the atonement must be made as the moral governor, as the maintainer of the rights of the eternal throne; so from the Father, through the Son, must the Holy Spirit descend to renew, to transform, to remodel, to fit human nature to gaze upon the unveiled glories of Deity, and to render to God the homage due unto his name. And this just brings me to my point—EFFECTUAL CALLING. This implies, that there is a calling that may not be effectual. Yes, there is a call that extends to the whole human family. As it is written, "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men." There is a call that refers to humanity as sinful, and to sinners as such, however fallen and depraved they may be. Repentance or a change of mind, repentance and remission of sins, are to be preached amongst all nations, and the disciples were to begin at Jerusalem; and, beginning at Jerusalem the slaughter-house of the Son of God, and the slaughter-house of the prophets, and of the saints,—beginning there, they said, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." But the people were like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, and refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer—charm he never so wisely. The Baptist had come and cried, "Repent," and sternly, and impressively he preached, but they paid little regard,—at least, little regard that tended to life. And the Son of God, with all that was soft, and winning, and captivating, came and preached; but they turned away, and he said, "To whom shall I like the men of this generation—they are like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows—We have piped unto you, but ye have not danced, and we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented." Now, this call must be given, because God commands it; this call must be given, because God works by it. In giving the general, the universal call to all that hear the gospel, we obey the high mandate of the Eternal God; we do honour and homage to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we employ an instrument—a weapon, if you

please—by which the Spirit of God operates upon the human mind; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, and the casting down of imaginations, and every high thing, and the bringing into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ. The general call leads to the special, to the particular, or what we designate, the "effectual call." We speak to men as men, and we reason with them; we speak to sinners as sinners, and we expostulate with them; but while we reason, and while we expostulate, we have the promise of the presence of the Master—"I am with you;" we have the promised presence of the Eternal Paraclete, who was sent to empower, sent to accompany, and sent to work by the Lord's servants; and, while we speak and give the call as we are commanded and commissioned, the Holy Spirit works—the infinite power of the Eternal Spirit comes into contact,—direct, immediate contact, with the mind of man. There is a power that goes with the word—distinct from the word—when it is accompanied by the energy of the Eternal Spirit; and that power produces in the heart, life—a spiritual, a Divine, an immortal life—a life that man dead in sin had not; a life which a man once having loseth not, for it is eternal; a life that was given us in Christ before the world was; a life preserved for us by Christ all through the past ages that have rolled away; a life that is communicated from the loving heart of Him who is the great depository of grace, and conducted by the Holy Ghost into the heart that is called by grace. Has the Spirit accompanying the word produced life? From that life springs conviction: not the cold conviction awakened occasionally in the mind of man, by the reasoning of man, by reflecting upon his past misconduct, or by the flashing of the forked lightnings of the law; but a conviction that is produced by the Holy Spirit bringing the law into contact with the conscience—the Gospel into contact with the heart. In the sinner's conscience God erects a tribunal, in the sinner's conscience God sits as judge, and to the tribunal, before the just judge, man is summoned to appear; and in the heart, in the soul, in the nature of man, there is a miniature of the judgment that is to take place at the completion and winding up of the present dispensation. The man is arraigned as a sinner, the man is convicted as a culprit, the man is condemned as a criminal; he stands before God, and he has nothing to say; every excuse has withered like the leaves of autumn, every excuse is carried away like the chaff from the summer's threshing-floor, every rag

that the man boasted of is torn from him, and he stands, a naked sinner, before a heart-searching God. The penetrating eye of the Omniscient darts into the innermost recesses of his soul, and the gentle fingers of the Spirit turns over one fold of the heart after the other; the process may be long, or the operation may be quick, but sooner or later the man is brought to this.—"In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." He had once started at the Scriptural representation of man's fallen and depraved nature; he had once wondered that from the lip of truth had proceeded the startling words, "From within, out of the heart, proceed murders, adulteries, blasphemies, false witnesses, and abominable idolatries." He never could have thought that evil so dreadful, he never could have thought that sins so fearful, he never could have thought that principles so diabolical, could have been found in a nature like his; but there they are, and he has nothing to object—but, under the power of the deep conviction that is produced, he is filled with terrible alarm. If he casts his eye back, there are the crimes of his life; if he casts his eye forward, there is the tremendous judgment; if he lifts up his eyes to Heaven, there is the pure and holy God that he has insulted; and if he turns his eyes within, all is dark and vain and wild. He is filled with alarm—alarm that perhaps keeps him awake by night, and haunts and harasses him by day, until he is prepared to do anything, prepared to go anywhere, if he may but escape the just judgment of his God. He is by this discipline prepared to submit to God's method of salvation; he is prepared to give up proposing conditions according to which he would be saved; he no longer goes about to work out a righteousness of his own, but he is ready to submit himself to the righteousness of God. Being, therefore, conscious of his criminality, burdened with his guilt, trembling at the prospect of his destiny, he falls prostrate before the high throne of the Eternal, smites upon his breast, and cries "God be merciful to me a sinner," as if no such a sinner had ever appealed to God's mercy, as if no such culprit had ever stood before God's throne; before God he says, "If there can be mercy in thy heart sufficient to reach a case so dismal and so desperate, God be merciful to me;" and after having pleaded with earnestness, after having supplicated with intense emotion, and after having, perhaps, become a little bold, he is startled at his own temerity, and receding, as it were, from the position that he had taken, he cries—

"Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy in thy heart for me,
O God of spotless purity?"

And, perhaps, like David, he groans in his heart, and mourns in his soul, until his bones wax old, through his roaring all the day long. But, no relief, no help is found, until, at length, he begins to make confession of his sin, and, as he confesses, the Spirit of God unveils and unfolds the gospel mystery, and, as in the days of the law, when the victim was brought to the Priest, and the man placed his hand upon its head, between its horns, and pressed with his might and confessed over it all his transgressions, all his iniquities, and all his sins, so the man lays his hand of faith upon the victim's head, and there confesses his sin. As he confesses, a change takes place in his feelings, the burden begins to disperse, a little bright light in the cloud attracts his attention, and, as he looks upward, he seems to catch the loving Father's eye, and feels an encouragement within him to approach unto God; and, as he approaches, still confessing, still pleading, still deploring, still resting his hand upon the victim's head, and trusting in the atonement you have heard of, and on that alone, he seems to hear strange music, delightful melody, and that music is the commencement of the sound of the trump of the Jubilee, when the oppressed one is to go free, and as he listens to the sound the chains drop from his hands, and the burden from his shoulders, the trouble is removed from his heart, and he lifts up his eyes, streaming perhaps with tears, to heaven, and says, "Oh Lord, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me:" and looking around, on those about him, in the language of wonder, astonishment, and gratitude, he says, "Behold, behold a mystery, behold a miracle, behold one of the greatest wonders of the universe; behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and not be afraid, for Jah Jehovah is my strength, and my song, he also is become my salvation." He has now peace flowing into his heart like a river, he has now a consciousness that God has accepted him in the beloved, and he now experimentally knows the truth, tastes the sweetness, and feels the power of the apostolic testimony, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

He has now experienced the effectual call. It has been a call from darkness into marvellous light, from bondage into glorious liberty; out of prison the man comes to reign; from the dunghill he is lifted up to sit among the princes, even among the princes of God's people. And, now, as I must conclude, just observe, the origin of this call is the free, the sovereign, the distinguishing grace of God. It originates, not in man's will, nor in man's disposition, nor in man's station in society, but of His will, and of His will alone, who is the great sovereign ruler of the universe, is this change effected; of man it cannot be, for it includes a new creation; a resurrection; and the inhabitants of God. Generally speaking, the instrumentality by which God works is the gospel, but in every instance the agent that produces the change is the holy and eternal Spirit of God. He quickens the soul dead in trespasses and sins, he enlightens the understanding that was in the midnight darkness of nature, he disposes the will which before ran counter to the will of God; he teaches the understanding that was once averse to everything pure and holy, and then gently, and lovingly, and sweetly he leads the soul to the Cross to gaze upon the wondrous Sufferer, he then leads the soul to the Church to confess Christ and him crucified, and then leads it in the paths of righteousness for his own name's sake. The calling is high, for it is from the High and Holy One; it is heavenly, in contrast with the earthly calling of the descendants of Abraham of old; it is an evidence of distinguishing love; and thanks, eternal thanks to God, it is irreversible; for the gifts and the callings of God are without repentance. From death to life we pass; from darkness into light we come; out of bondage into liberty we spring; from sin to the knowledge and enjoyment of holiness we are introduced; then at last from earth to heaven. Into the grace of Christ we are called, and we stand in his favour. Into the fellowship of Christ we are called, and when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. The Father draws; the Spirit quickens; the Son receives; and when locked in the arms of the Son of God, our effectual calling is realized and enjoyed. Its author, is God; its subjects, are the elect; its nature, is holy; and its end, is glorious. Thus, you perceive, my friends, all originated in God's thought, which thought sprung into a perfect plan, to carry out which plan provision was made, and this plan will be perfectly carried out to the praise of the glory of his grace. Thus, whether you think of election, whether you think of redemption, or whether you think of

effectual calling,

"Give all the glory to his holy name,
For to him all the glory belongs;
Be your's the high joy still to sound forth his praise
And crown him in each of your songs."

The REV. C. H. SPURGEON.—I think it was John Newton, who, speaking about good Calvinistic doctrine compared it to lumps of sugar; but he said, he did not so much give to his people the lumps of sugar, as diffuse the whole of it throughout his sermons; just as people do not eat sugar, but put it in their tea. Now, some of you have not yet grown patient enough to listen, I think, to a doctrine, however fully it may be brought out. Our people want anecdotes, illustrations, parables, and metaphors; even the best and sublimest things keep our minds on such a stretch when we listen to them, that there is good need that illustrations should yield us some relief. To-day was set apart that these doctrines might be fully brought out; this has been done, and there remains but one, and that my friend Mr O'Neil is to take, namely the final perseverance of the saints. Before he speaks, just one or two words. Has it never struck you that the scheme of doctrine which is called Calvinistic has much to say concerning God? It commences and ends with the Divine One. The angel of that system stands like Uriel in the sun; it dwells with God; he begins, he carries on, he perfects; it is for his glory and for his honour. Father, Son, and Spirit co-working, the whole Gospel scheme is carried out. Perhaps there may be this defect in our theology; we may perhaps too much forget man. I think that is a very small fault, compared with the fault of the opposite system, which begins with man, and all but ends with him. Man is a creature; how ought God to deal with him? That is the question some theologians seem to answer. The way we put it is—God is the Creator, he has a right to do as he wills; he is Sovereign, there is no law above him, he has a right to make and to unmake, and when man hath sinned, he has a right to save or to destroy. If he can save, and yet not impair his justice, heaven shall ring with songs; if he destroy, and yet his goodness be not marred, then hell itself with its deep bass of misery, shall swell the mighty rollings of his glorious praise. We hold that God should be most prominent in all our teachings; and we hold this to be a

gauge by which to test the soundness of ministers. If they exalt God and sink the sinner to the very dust, it is all well; but if they lower the prerogatives of Deity, if he be less sovereign, less just, or less loving than the Scripture reveals him to be, and if man be puffed up with that fond notion that he is anything better than an unclean thing, then such theology is utterly unsound. Salvation is of the Lord, and let the Lord alone be glorified.

THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST JESUS;
BY THE

Rev. WILLIAM O'NEILL,
MINISTER OF NEW BROAD STREET CHAPEL, LONDON.

My dear Brethren and Friends.

Most unexpectedly did the kind invitation of my esteemed brother, Mr Spurgeon, come to me, to take part in the present service of this beautiful house. And after I had engaged to come I sincerely wished that I had not. I felt, however, that it would not be proper to retire from the engagement, but seek to meet in a becoming spirit, both towards God's truth and God's people. I will now try to do this. I utter here, of course, my own sentiments. As I am not responsible for anything that has been or may be said by another speaker, so I alone am responsible for what I shall say. But though I am not the delegate or representative of any church, denomination, or community, I doubt not that my declaration of faith on the matter at hand will be, in all substantial points, that of a very large number who love Jesus and are living in His service. That I desire to

believe what the Bible teaches, and that I am sincere in my convictions, I know to be true: but that there are thousands of excellent Christians on the other side admits of no doubt, and should not be questioned by any one. Of their deep sincerity, love to God and his Gospel, zeal and devotedness in holy things, self-denying labours in the Divine service, and the cultivation and manifestation of Christian graces, I would and do speak with the most earnest approval. I give them as much credit for sincerity as I claim for myself; and I do this not as a favour, but as a piece of simple justice. Yet we differ—differ as to what the Sacred Oracles teach on the doctrine now before us; and it is competent and right for all men to examine, each one for himself, which of our opinions is that which is taught in the Bible, for certainly both are not taught there.

The question—Is it possible for sincere Christians, truly regenerated persons, to be finally separated from Jesus, to lose the favour of God their Father, and be eternally shut out from His smile and Home?—is one of no small moment. It involves issues of the most momentous nature, and cannot but be unspeakably interesting to every believer in Christ. We say, with unfaltering tongue, that of all the dead, every one who was ever renewed in heart is now in heaven; and that reconciliation with God on earth, through Christ Jesus, will, in every case, end in the everlasting salvation of the soul. Did God, then, tell us that all who are here now are His regenerated people, (would that they were!) we should believe that when the roll of the finally saved shall be called, every one of them would answer to that call by saying, "Here am I, Lord: Thy right arm, and the effectual operation of Thy Spirit and grace has done it all, and now I am to be for ever happy, for ever sinless, for ever safe." It is hardly necessary to say, that we believe this view of the case to be in entire harmony with the teaching of God's Book. To the law and to the testimony, if we, or others, speak not on this and on all other matters according to that Word, it is because there is no light in us or in them. (Isaiah viii. 20.)

Having called public attention to this doctrine lately in a small book,* in which I have sought to obey the Master's command,—“Search the scriptures,”—I will now, with your kind permission, direct attention to a few portions of the Divine Word that, we believe, fully establish the doctrine of the saints' final preservation and perseverance. On each of

those texts my words must be few, as the time allotted to me is short.

Hear then the Holy Spirit's teaching when speaking by the prophet Samuel:—"For the LORD will not forsake His people for His great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people." (1 Sam. xii. 22) This, we think, is conclusive. What Christian does not know, and knowing, does not mourn over, the untrustworthiness of his own heart? And feeling fully assured that it is impossible for him to vanquish "the world, the flesh, and the devil," how welcome to his heart is the declaration, "The LORD will not forsake His people." No; He thought proper to renew their hearts, to quicken them into spiritual life, and He will mercifully continue to carry on His good work in their souls till it be perfected in glory. The reason why "He will not forsake His people" is stated here most explicitly; just as much so as is the declaration of His unchangeable love. It is not that they were less sinful by nature or practice than others; or because of any moral qualities that were found in them; but "because it pleased the Lord to make them His people." Hear another portion: God, speaking by his prophet Isaiah, says,—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands." (Isaiah xlix. 15, 16.) This we regard as a most interesting, as well as a most consolatory portion of Scripture. "Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." This was not only an error in creed,—it was also a dishonourable estimate of the Divine character, and to it the Gracious One replies in these words:—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee." The affection of a right-minded mother for her tender and helpless offspring is one of the strongest that is experienced by human beings. But, though strong, very strong, it may, alas! give way. It is, at best, only a creature's love, and therefore changeable; while that love which is exercised by God towards His believing children is, like Himself, unchangeable. These words prove, and were designed to prove, most conclusively, that the love of the Divine Father towards His adopted sons and daughters is not a fluctuating or changing thing. What other, or what lower interpretation can we put upon the words, "YET WILL NOT I FORGET THEE?" And not forgetting

them is, in this case, equivalent to His continuing to care for, to keep, and tenderly regard them.

Hear God again speaking by the same prophet:—"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee." These words deserve to hold a prominent place among those which God has spoken for the comfort and joy of His people. Their obvious design is—to sustain believers under the chastening hand of God, and to do this by considerations drawn from His own character, and not from anything in themselves. Vain, brethren, is it to trust, or put confidence in our own false hearts. They are weak as helpless infancy. To lean on them will only be evidence of our folly and of our sin. We are not to find consolation in our gifts, in our graces, in our labours, in our resolutions, or in our experience, nor by the grace of God will we do so. But when chastised by the everloving and good Father,—when smarting under his parental and deserved stripes,—we may feast our souls on His blessed words—words that fire those souls with confidence, hope, and love.—"In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee." Such, brethren, are GOD'S utterances! These are the words of One who is unchangeable in affection; of One who says, —Oh! blessed be his adorable name for that saying,—"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal. iii. 6.)

I name another passage:—"For there shall arise," says Jesus, "false Christ's, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

(Matt. xxiv. 24.) The plain and obvious meaning of this latter clause is, that it is not possible to deceive, or allure to their final ruin, the adopted sons and daughters of God, those whom He has chosen to be His. Nothing less, we believe, was intended by the Gracious Speaker, and we see not how any other meaning can be consistently given to the language which He here uses. The words, "If it were possible," only say, in another form, "It is not possible."

I now name such texts as connect faith, or believing in Christ, with salvation, of which the following are a few:—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am the bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (John ii. 16, v. 24, vi. 47, 50, 51, 57; Rom. i. 16.) The plain teaching of these, and many similar passages, is, that every believer in Jesus hath everlasting life. They teach this or they teach nothing. Is this be not their meaning, what is? But, can that which is everlasting cease to be? Can it come to an end? No words can more plainly assert than these do, that whosoever believeth in Jesus **SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION**; that all believers in him shall enjoy "everlasting life." We take these gracious assurances as proving, to the fullest extent, the doctrine for which we plead. If the belief of the Gospel be not followed, in every instance, by eternal blessedness, what did Paul mean when he said, "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth?" (Rom. i. 16.) If, at the last day, a single one be unsaved of those who had believed the Gospel, who had been united to Christ by faith in His name—the apostle's words must needs be falsified—his teaching is not true. This, at least, is our opinion. No amount of adverse criticism can set aside the evidence that such verses as these furnish in support of the blessed doctrine which we now defend.

Hear Christ again:—"My sheep," he says, "hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand. My Father who gave them Me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." We regard this entire passage as one of the most delightful and consoling in the Scriptures. It teaches most unequivocally,—in the plainest, strongest, and most conclusive terms,—that Christ's believing ones "SHALL NEVER PERISH;" that no enemy, human or hellish, shall be able to wrench them out of His or His Father's covenanted and secure grasp. Infinite power, no less than infinite love—both existing in their God and Saviour—stand guarantee for their security! Neither men nor demons shall be able to defeat or overturn the purpose of Divine grace concerning them! Difficulties, many and sharp, may surround them; and temptations, fierce and fiery, may assault their souls; but Divine love, wisdom, grace, and power shall be ever on their side. Jesus, the "faithful and true witness," says, "THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH." Elsewhere He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 17) The spiritual life of believers is in HIS keeping, and He here declares that it is as secure as His own. If He dies, and continues not to be their "Advocate with the Father," (1 John ii. 1) their Intercessor "at the right hand of God," (Rom. viii. 34) then may they die also, but not otherwise. In perfect keeping with his Lord's words are those which Paul uses, when referring to the same subject. "For if," he says, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. v. 10) That is, we shall be preserved in that state of reconciliation by Christ's intercessory life at God's right hand in heaven. He, the God-man, lives there as Mediator, for them: He holds and exercises "all power in heaven and on earth" for the welfare and safety of His church. And they cannot die while He lives. The power that is to destroy the spiritual life of the weakest saint must first destroy the life of that saint's Head. "Their life," as the Holy Spirit by Paul elsewhere teaches, "is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3). Where, brethren, could it be safer, or as safe? In whose care or keeping could it be so secure? It is "hid with Christ in God." Not only so, but the Apostle goes on to say, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him IN GLORY." This, to say the least of it, is a glorious statement and declaration. Can

language, we ask, go beyond that which is used in these texts to guarantee the eternal salvation of every believer in Jesus? The Head and members shall never be separated. They are bound up in an inseparable and an unchanging union.

Hear a Divine lesson given in another place:—"Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 30).

When it is said, "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called," we must interpret the word "called" to mean very much more than invited; for the Apostle goes on to say, "Whom He called, them He also justified." We know that this is only true of those who believe in Jesus—who are effectually called or drawn, by the combined operations of the Word and Spirit of God, into the blessed fellowship and joys of the Gospel (1 Cor. i. 9). That those, and only those, who believe in Christ are justified, is the uniform lesson of the Divine Word (John iii. 16, 36; Acts xiii. 39, 40; Rom. i. 16, iii. 22, 28). Let it be noted that Paul affirms three things here. The first is—"Whom He did predestinate, them He also called." The second is—"Whom He called, them He also justified." And the third is—"Whom He justified, them He also glorified." What, then, does he mean by the expression "glorified?" Does he, or can he mean anything less than the enjoyment of everlasting life? We say, then, that were only a single individual out of the whole number of those who have been, or shall be "justified" by faith in Jesus, to come short of heaven, the declaration would not be true that "Whom He justified, them He also glorified."

Hear another Divine proclamation relative to the security of God's people:—"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38, 39). These, brethren, are notes of the most triumphant character, relative to the ultimate blessedness of believers in Jesus. The terms which are here used are such as leave no doubt as to what the Holy Spirit, speaking by Paul, meant to teach. We deliberately affirm that language has no power to assert the doctrine for which we contend more conclusively than is here done.

Words have no meaning, nor are they of any use in communicating thought, if these words were not used by a man who believed as we do on the matter in hand. And we are entirely willing to believe or disbelieve with the Apostle Paul, neither more nor less.

I quote him again. Hear what he wrote to the Church at Philippi:—"Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." I well remember how greatly this strengthened my own soul when, in the morning of my religious life, I was passing through much mental conflict. And are not these words well calculated to comfort the hearts of those who, through grace, have believed in the Saviour? Is there any room for objecting criticism here, or is there any ambiguity in the language employed? No, there is none whatever: the Apostle was "confident of this very thing." What "very thing?" Why, that wherever the Divine Spirit had commenced this "good work" of grace in the soul, He would complete it. No other power could have begun it, and no other power is competent to carry it forward to completion. That He who commences that "good work" is able to finish it, no professing Christian will deny: that He will finish it, this verse most clearly teaches. The Apostle Paul was "confident of THIS VERY THING;" and so are we.

Let us give attention to other words of the same sacred penman. Addressing one of the primitive Churches, he says:—"We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thes. ii. 13). This is a most important portion of Scripture in relation to the question—What is the end of election? In what does it, or is it to terminate? What does it secure? Are its subjects merely chosen to enjoy the light of the gospel, the means of grace, and no more? Or, are they chosen to enjoy, in its full measure, everlasting life; the priceless favour and blissful fellowship of God here and for ever? This question is definitely settled by the language of inspiration employed here. The Apostle declares that the choice is "to salvation;" or, in other words, which he also uses in this place, "to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." This means, of course, eternal life in heaven, as well as all that precedes and prepares for it on

earth. But how can this be realized? How can it be said, they were "chosen to salvation," if they may all apostatize finally from Jesus, fall out of the Divine favour, and be for ever numbered with the lost? The thing is, of course, impossible. If not saved,—fully and for ever,—it would not be true to say they were chosen "to salvation."

I beg to name one passage more. Speaking of believers, a divinely inspired teacher says:—"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter, i. 5). Here we are distinctly taught what the Divine Being is doing and will continue to do for His believing people. The Apostle asserts, that they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." If so, nothing is more certain than that they shall reach it, and enjoy it for ever. Had Peter believed that it was possible for any number of them to become outcasts from God, and die in their sins, he would never have employed the language which is found here. The declaration that believers are "kept" or garrisoned in (for such is the meaning of the term here employed) "by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation," settles the point with us, and leaves us nothing more to desire in the shape of statement or promise. This is, indeed, a glorious declaration. Fellow pilgrims, let it fill you with the highest joy, as it gives you the fullest assurance that you are safe in the grasp and guardianship of Jehovah of hosts.

We hold and teach too, that the certain enjoyment of everlasting life is inseparably connected with continued faith in the Divine testimony concerning sin, Jesus, and His salvation. They shall be preserved in the exercise of faith in the Redeemer, until they shall enter upon the possession of the heavenly inheritance. This is clearly taught here, and nothing less.

I have now referred to a few out of the many portions of God's word which teach the doctrine for which we contend. God's people shall be preserved, and will persevere to the end, for they were given to Christ in the everlasting covenant, that covenant which is "ordered in all things and sure:" the stability of which is as safe as the oath, and promise, and power of God can make it (Psalm lxxxix. 30, 34; Heb. vi. 18, 19). They are "loved by Him with an everlasting love" (Jer. xxxi. 3); they are "chosen to

salvation" (Eph. i. 4; 2 Thes. ii. 13); and God, their gracious and reconciled Father, "will rest in His love" (Zeph. iii. 17). Their safety, as believers in Jesus, is secured by the word and promise of the "God that cannot lie." He has said that He will never leave them nor forsake them (Heb. xiii. 2); that they shall never perish" (John x. 28); and that He will confirm them unto the end" (1 Cor. i. 8).

For this purpose the ever-availing intercession of Jesus is employed. He is at the right hand of God as their Brother, Representative, and Advocate. He prays for them that their faith fail not (Luke xxii. 32). They are, each and all, borne on His heart, and pleaded for in His gracious and ever-successful intercession. "Father," says he, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (John xvii. 24). Oh, what priceless joy do these words afford to the believer's heart! No weapon that is formed against them shall prosper. Their Almighty King will vanquish all their spiritual foes. He will so aid them that they shall contend victoriously against "the world, the flesh, and the devil." They shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved them (Rom. viii. 37). They shall be the saved of His right arm, and the everlasting monuments and trophies of His grace, love, and power. They are "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession" (2 Cor. i. 21, 22; Eph. i. 13, 14). Having received the "earnest," the pledge which guarantees the fulfilment of their Heavenly Father's covenant to save them, they are perfectly and for ever secure.

We build our faith in this doctrine on God's plain teaching. We extort no meaning from His word which cannot be found there by the simple and ordinary reader of it. We take its statements in their plain and grammatical sense, just as they would be interpreted by any unprejudiced expounder of language. We should be content to abide by the interpretation of them which would be given by any man, infidel or other, who felt no interest in our controversy, and who was entirely careless relative to our differences of opinion. One unequivocal passage teaching this doctrine would be, or should be sufficient to establish it, and to bring our opinions into harmony with Divine teaching; but we are not confined to one, or five, or ten; we have line upon line, promise upon promise,

assurance upon assurance, and declaration upon declaration to this effect. So that we would fain ask,—If the doctrine be not taught in the portions of Scripture that I have named, what is taught in them? What is their import? What do they teach? Or, what language or terms would be thought sufficient to teach it? It is our firm conviction that no doctrine of religion is more clearly taught in the Bible than is this. It is expressed as plainly as words can possibly do it.

And are we, with these inspired declarations before us, to suppose it possible for wicked men or demons to say, when pointing to numbers of the lost,—"The Most High began to build up His kingdom in their souls, but He was not able to finish it! He quickened them into spiritual life,—renewed, pardoned, justified, and sanctified them; but now they are torn from His grasp, His enemies were able—contrary to the words of Jesus (1 John x. 21)—'to pluck them out of His hand,' and they have done it."

This would, indeed, make short work of many plain and positive declarations found in the Bible: it would prove, beyond doubt, that its promises, and assurances, and declarations are of very little value.

Let me, before I close, say—and say with the fullest emphasis possible—that we believe as firmly as any man living, as firmly as we believe any truth taught in the Bible, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14). We know no other evidence of being in Christ, or of being a Christian, than that which is furnished by a life and behaviour becoming the Gospel. And though holiness is not the cause of God's first or continued love to His people, it is the effect and fruit of that love, and a main part of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus—that salvation to which they are chosen (Eph. i. 4); and he who is satisfying himself with the notion that he is safe for eternity, while he is living in any known sin, is turning the grace of our God into licentiousness, and is a deadly enemy of the Cross of Christ. The blessed doctrine which the Bible teaches, and in which we glory, is—the doctrine of the saints' final perseverance, and that doctrine was never designed to comfort any man who is not living a life of faith in the Son of God, intensely anxious to please God in all things, and to be the holy and happy subject of that mind which was in Jesus.

Very interesting, then, is the question, when asked in no wrong spirit—Are there few that be saved? If GOD does not hold up His people, if He does not keep them by His grace and power, they will be very few indeed—a child may count them, and, in fact, have none, not one, to count. But let no man charge our views with being "narrow," or "embracing only a few," or contemplating the eternal salvation of "a very limited number" of our race, for, according to the view which we hold and teach, they will be a numberless number. We believe, and our hearts swell with high and holy joy in believing, that every child of man who loved God,—every one of Adam's race who was renewed in heart,—all who were ever on the Lord's side,—will be found among the saved. Not one will be lost. Not one will be missed from the eternal banquet. Not one, will be outside the gates of the holy city. All, all shall be there, and there for ever, and ever, and ever!

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
He will not, He cannot, give up to His foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
He'll never! no, never! no, never forsake!"

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Expiation

Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin. - Isaiah 53:10

Both Jews and Gentiles knew pretty well what an offering for sin meant. The Gentiles had been in the habit of offering sacrifices. The Jews, however, had by far the clearer idea of it. And what was meant by a sin-offering? Undoubtedly, it was taken for granted by the offerer, that without shedding blood there was no remission of sin. Conscious of guilt, and anxious for pardon, therefore he brought a sacrifice, the blood of which should be poured out at the foot of the altar—feeling persuaded that without sacrifice there was no satisfaction, and without satisfaction there was no pardon. Then the victim to be offered was, on all occasions, a spotless one. The most scrupulous care was taken that it should be altogether without blemish; for this idea was always connected with a sin-offering, that it must be sinless in itself; and being without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, it was held to be a competent victim to take the offender's place. That done, the victim being selected, the offerer put his hand upon the sin-offering—and this indeed was the essence of the whole transaction—putting his hand on the victim, he confessed his sin, and a transference took place, in type at least, from the offender to the victim. He did, as it were, put the sin from off his own shoulders on to those of the lamb, or the bullock, or the he-goat which was now about to be slaughtered. And, to complete the sin-offering, the priest draws his knife and kills the victim which must be utterly consumed with fire. I say this was always the idea of a sin-offering,—that of a perfect victim; without offense on its own account, taking the place of the offender; the transference of the offender's sin to that victim, and that expiation in the person of the victim for the sin done by another.

Now, Jesus Christ has been made by God an offering for sin; and oh that to-night we may be able to do in reality what the Jew did in metaphor! May we put our hand upon the head of Christ Jesus; as we see him offered up upon the cross for guilty men, may we know that our sins are

transferred to him, and may we be able to cry, in the ecstasy of faith, "Great God, I am clean; through Jesus' blood I am clean."

I. In trying now to expound the doctrine of Christ's being an offering for sin, we will begin by laying down one great axiom; which is, that SIN DESERVES AND DEMANDS PUNISHMENT.

Certain divines have demurred to this. You are aware, I suppose, that there have been many theories of atonement; and every new or different theory of atonement involves a new or different theory of sin. There are some who say that there is no reason in sin itself why it should be punished, but that God punishes offenses for the sake of society at large. This is what is called the governmental theory,—that it is necessary for the maintenance of good order that an offender should be punished, but that there is nothing in sin itself which absolutely requires a penalty. Now, we begin by opposing all this, and asserting, and we believe we have God's warrant of it, that sin intrinsically and in itself demands and deserves the just anger of God, and that that anger should be displayed in the form of a punishment. To establish this, let me appeal to the conscience—I will not say to the conscience of a man who has, by years of sin, dwindled it down to the very lowest degree, but let me appeal to the conscience of an awakened sinner,—a sinner under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And are we ever in our right senses, brethren, till the Holy Spirit really brings us into them? May it not be said of each of us as it was of the prodigal, "He came to himself?" Are we not beside ourselves till the Holy Spirit begins to enlighten us? Well, ask this man, who is now really in the possession of his true senses, whether he believes that sin deserves punishment; and his answer will be quick, sharp, and decisive. "Deserve it," saith he, "ay, indeed; and the wonder is that I have not suffered it. Why, sir, it seems a marvel to me that I am out of hell, and Wesley's hymn is often on my lips,—

"Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am out of hell."

"Yes, sir," says such a sinner, "I feel that if God should smite me now, without hope or offer of mercy, to the lowest hell, I should only have what

I justly deserve; and I feel that if I be not punished for my sins, or if there be not some plan found by which my sin can be punished in another, I cannot understand how God can be just at all: how shall he be Judge of all the earth, if he suffer offenses to go unpunished?" There has been a dispute whether men have any innate ideas, but surely this idea is in us as early as anything, that virtue deserves reward, and sin deserves punishment. I think I might venture to assert that if you go to the most degraded race of men, you would still find, at least, some traces of this—shall I call it tradition? or is it not a part of the natural light which never was altogether eclipsed in man? Man may put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; darkness for light, and light for darkness; but this follows him as a dog at the heels of its master,—a sense that virtue should be rewarded, and that sin must be punished. You may stifle this voice, if you will, but sometimes you will hear it; and terribly and decisively will it speak in your ears to say to you, "Yes, man, God must punish you; the Judge of all the earth cannot suffer you to go scot free." Add to this another matter; namely, that God has absolutely declared his displeasure against sin itself. There is a passage in Jeremiah, the forty-fourth chapter and the fourth verse, where he calls it "That abominable thing which I hate." And then, in Deuteronomy, the twenty-fifth chapter, at the sixteenth verse, he speaks of it as the thing which is an abomination to him. It must be the character of God, that he has a desire to do towards his creatures that which is equitable. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" If there is anything in them which deserves reward, rest assured he will not rob them of it; and, on the other hand, he will do the right thing with those who have offended, and if they deserve punishment, it is according to the nature and character of a just and holy God that punishment should be inflicted. And we think there is nothing more clear in Scripture than the truth that sin is in itself so detestable to God that he must and will put forth all the vigor of his tremendous strength to crush it, and to make the offender feel that it is an evil and a bitter thing to offend against the Most High. Beware, ye who forget God in this matter, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. Sin must be punished.

The other idea, that sin is only to be punished for the sake of the community, involves injustice. If I am to be damned for the sake of other

people, I demur to it. No, sir: if I am to be punished, Justice says; at any rate, that it shall be for my own sins, but if I am to be eternally a castaway from God's presence merely as a sort of trick of government to maintain the dignity of his law, I cannot understand the justice of this. If I am to be cast into hell merely that I am to teach to others the tremendousness of the divine holiness, I shall say there is no justice in this; but if my sin intrinsically and of itself deserves the wrath of God, and I am sent to perdition as the result of this fact, I close my lips, and have nothing to say. I am speechless; conscience binds my tongue. But if I am told that I am only sent there as a part of a scheme of moral government, and that I am sent into torment to impress others with a sense of right, I ask that some one else should have the place of preacher to the people, and that I may be one of those whose felicity it shall be to be preached to; for I see no reason in justice why I should be selected as the victim. Really, when men run away from the simplicities of the gospel in order to make Jehovah more kind, it is strange how unjust and unkind they make him. Sinner, God will never destroy you merely to maintain his government, or for the good of others. If you be destroyed, it shall be because you would not come to him that you might have life; because you would rebel against him; because sin from stern necessity did, as it were, compel the attribute of divine justice to kindle into vengeance, and to drive you from his presence for ever. Sin must be punished.

The reverse of this doctrine, that sin demands punishment, may be used to prove it; for it is highly immoral, dangerous, and opens the floodgates of licentiousness to teach that sin can go unpunished. O sirs, it is contrary to fact. Look ye! Oh! if your eyes could see to-night the terrible justice of God which a being executed now,—if these ears could but hear it,—if ye could be appalled for a moment with

" The sullen groans and hollow moans
And shrieks of tortured ghosts,"

you would soon perceive that God is punishing sin! And if sin deserve not to be punished, what is Tophet but injustice on a monstrous scale? What is it but an infinite outrage against everything which is honest and right, if these creatures are punished for anything short of their own deserts. Go

and preach this in hell, and you will have quenched the fire which is forever to burn, and the worm of conscience will die. Tell them in hell that they are not punished for sin, and you have taken away the very sting of their punishment. And then come to earth, and go, like Jonah went, though with another message than Jonah carried, through the highways and the broadways, the streets and thoroughfares of the exceeding great city, and proclaim that sin is not to be punished for its own intrinsic desert and baseness. But if you expect your prophecy to be believed, enlarge the number of your jails, and seek for fresh fields for transportation in the interests of society; for if any doctrine can breed villains, this will. Say that sin is not to be punished, and you have unhinged government; you have plucked up the very gate of our commonweal; you have been another Samson to another Gaza; and we shall soon have to rue the day. But, sirs, I need not stop to prove it; it is written clearly upon the consciousness of each man, and upon the conscience of every one of us, that sin must be punished. Here are you and I to-night brought into this dilemma. We have sinned; we all like sheep have gone astray; and we must be punished for it. It is impossible, absolutely, that sin can be forgiven without a sacrifice. God must be just, if heaven falls. If earth should pass away and every creature should be lost, the justice of God must stand, it cannot by any possibility be suffered to be impugned. Let this, then, be fully established in our minds.

You need not to be told, as for the first time, that God in his infinite mercy has devised a way by which justice can be satisfied, and yet mercy can be triumphant. Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, took upon himself the form of man, and offered unto Divine Justice that which was accepted as an equivalent for the punishment due to all his people.

II. Now, the second matter that I wish to bring under your notice is this,—
THAT THE PROVISION AND ACCEPTANCE OF A SUBSTITUTE FOR SINNERS IS AN ACT OF GRACE.

It is no act of grace for a person to accept a pecuniary debt on my behalf of another person. If I owe a man twenty pounds, it is no matter to him whatever who shall pay the twenty pounds so long as it is duly paid. You know that you could legally and at once demand a receipt and an

acquittance from any one who is your creditor, so long as his debt is discharged, though it is discharged by another, and not by you. It is so in pecuniary matters, but it is not so in penal matters. If a man be condemned to be imprisoned, there is no law, there is no justice which can compel the lawgiver to accept a substitute for him. If the sovereign should permit another to suffer in his stead, it must be the sovereign's own act and deed. He must use his own discretion as to whether he will accept the substitute or not; and if he do so, it is an act of grace. In Gods case, if he had said in the infinite sovereignty of his absolute will, "I will have no substitute, but each man shall suffer for himself, he who sinneth shall die," none could have murmured. It was grace, and only grace which led the divine mind to say, "I will accept of a substitute. There shall be a vicarious suffering; and my vengeance shall be content, and my mercy shall be gratified."

Now, dear friends, this grace of God is yet further magnified not only in the allowance of the principle of substitution, but in the providing of such a substitute as Christ—on Christ's part that he should give up himself, the Prince of Life to die; the King of glory to be despised and rejected of men; the Lord of angels to be a servant of servants; and the Ancient of days to become an infant of a span long. Think of the distance

"From the highest throne in glory
To the cross of deepest woe,"

and consider the unexampled love which shines in Christ's gift of himself. But the Father gives the Son. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." To give your wealth is something, if you make yourself poor; but to give your child is something more. When the patriot mother tears her son from her bosom, and cries, "Go, my first-born, to your country's wars; there, go and fight until your country's flag is safe, and the hearths and homes of your native land are secure," there is something in it; for she can look forward to the bloody spectacle of her son's mangled body, and yet love her country more than her own child. Here is heroism indeed; but God spared not his own Son, his only-begotten Son, but freely delivered him up for us all. "God commendeth

his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I do implore you, do not look upon the sacrifice of Christ as an act of mere vengeance on the Father's part. Never imagine, oh! never indulge the idea, that Jesus died to make the Father complacent towards us. Oh, no, dear friends: Jesus' death is the effect of overwhelming and infinite love on the Father's part; and every blow which wounds, every infliction which occasions sorrow, and every pang which rends his heart, speaks of the Father's love as much as the joy, the everlasting triumph, which now surrounds his head.

Let us add, however, to this, that, although Jesus Christ's dying as a substitute does give to him lawful right to all promised privileges, and does make him, as the covenant head of his people a claimant of the divine mercy, yet it does not render any of the gifts which we receive from God the less gifts from God. Christ has died; but still everything that we receive comes to us entirely as a gratuitous outflow of God's great heart of love. Never think you have any claim to anything because Christ purchased it. If you use the word claim at all, let it always be in so humble and modified a sense that you understand that you are still receiving, not of debt, but of grace. Look upon the whole transaction of a substitute, and of Christ becoming the second Adam, as being a matter of pure, rich, free, sovereign grace, and never indulge the atrocious thought, I pray you, that there was justice, and justice only here; but do magnify the love and pity of God in that he did devise and accomplish the great plan of salvation by an atoning sacrifice.

III. But now to go a step further, and with as much brevity as possible. The Lord having established the principle of substitution, having provided a substitute, and having through him bestowed upon us gratuitously innumerable mercies, let us observe **THAT JESUS IS THE MOST FITTING PERSON TO BE A SUBSTITUTE, AND THAT HIS WORK IS THE MOST FITTING WORK TO BE A SATISFACTION.**

Let every sinner here who desires something stable to fix his faith upon, listen to these simple truths, which I am trying to put as plainly as possible. You do understand me, I trust, that God must punish sin; that he must punish you for sin unless some one else will suffer in your stead;

that Jesus Christ is the person who did suffer in the room and place of all those who ever have believed on him who do believe in him, or ever shall believe in him, —making for those who believe on him a complete atonement by his substitution in their place. Now we say that Christ was the best person to be a substitute; for just consider what sort of a mediator was needed. Most absolutely he must be one who had no debt of his own. If Christ had been at all under the law naturally, if it had been his duty to do what it is our duty to do, it is plain he could only have lived for himself; and if he had any sin of his own, he could only have died for himself, seeing his obligations to do and to suffer would have been his just due to the righteousness and the vengeance of God. But on Christ's part there was no natural necessity for obedience, much less for obedience unto death. Who shall venture to say that the Divine Lord, amidst the glories of heaven, owed to his father anything? "Who shall say it was due to the Divine Father that Christ should be nailed to the accursed tree, to suffer, bleed, and die, and then be cast into the grave? None can dare to say such a thing. He is himself perfectly free, and therefore can he undertake for others. One man who is drawn for the militia cannot be a substitute for another person so drawn, because he owes for himself his own personal service. I must, if I would escape, and would procure a substitute, find a man who is not drawn, and who is therefore exempt. Such is Jesus Christ. He is perfectly exempt from service, and therefore can volunteer to undertake it for our sake. He is the right person.

There was needed, also, one of the same nature with us. Such is Jesus Christ. For this purpose he became man, of the substance of his mother, very man, such a man as any of us. Handle him, and see if he be not flesh and bones. Look at him, and mark if he be not man in soul as well as in body. He hungers; he thirsts, he fears, he weeps, he rejoices, he loves, he dies. Made in all points and like unto us, being a man, and standing exactly in a man's place, becoming a real Adam,—as true an Adam as was the first Adam, standing quite in the first Adam's place,—he is a fit person to become a substitute for us.

But please to observe (see if you cannot throw your grappling-hooks upon this), the dignity of his sacred person made him the most proper person

for a substitute. A mere man could at most only substitute for one other man. Crush him as you will, and make him feel in his life every pang which flesh is heir to, but he can only suffer what one man would have suffered. He could not, I will venture to say, even then have suffered an equivalent for that eternal misery which the ungodly deserve; and if he were a mere man, he must suffer precisely the same. A difference may be made in the penalty, when there is a difference in the person; but if the person be the same, the penalty must be precisely and exactly the same in degree and in quality. But the dignity of the Son of God, the dignity of his nature, changes the whole matter. A God bowing his head, and suffering and dying, in the person of manhood, puts such a singular efficacy into every groan and every pang that it needs not that his pangs should be eternal, or that he should die a second death. Remember that in pecuniary matters you must give a quid pro quo, but that in matters of penal justice no such thing is demanded. The dignity of the person adds a special force to the substitution; and thus one bleeding Saviour can make atonement for millions of sinful men, and the Captain of our salvation can bring multitudes unto glory.

It needs one other condition to be fulfilled. The person so free from personal service, and so truly in our nature, and yet so exalted in person, should also be accepted and ordained of God. Our text gives this a full solution, in that it says, "He shall make his soul an offering for sin." Christ did not make himself a sin-offering without a warrant from the Most High: God made him so. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." It was the sovereign degree of heaven which constituted Christ the great substitute for his people. No man taketh this office upon himself. Even the Son of God stoopeth not to this burden uncalled. He was chosen as the covenant-head in election; he was ordained in the divine decree to stand for his people. God the Father cannot refuse the sacrifice which he has himself appointed. "My son," said good old Abraham, "God shall provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." He has done so in the Saviour; and what God provides, God must and will accept.

I wish to-night that I had power to deal with this doctrine as I would. Poor trembling sinner, look up a moment. Dost thou see him there—him whom God hath set forth? Dost thou see him in proper flesh and blood

fastened to that tree? See how the cruel iron drags through his tender hands! Mark how the rough nails are making the blood flow profusely from his feet! See how fever parches his tongue, and dries his whole body like a potsherd! Hearest thou the cry of his spirit, which is suffering more than his body suffers—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is none other than God's only-begotten Son; this is he who made the worlds; this is the express image of his Father's person, the brightness of Jehovah's glory! What thinkest thou, man? Is there not enough there to satisfy God? Truly it has satisfied God: is there not enough there to satisfy thee? Cannot thy conscience rest on that? If God's appointed Christ could suffer in thy stead, is it not enough? What can Justice ask more? Wilt thou now trust Christ with thy soul? Come, now, sir, wilt thou now fall flat at the foot of the cross, and rest thy soul's eternal destiny in the pierced hands of Jesus of Nazareth? If thou wilt, then God has made him to be a sin-offering for thee; but if thou wilt not, beware, lest he whom thou wouldst not have to be thy Saviour should become thy Judge, and say, "Depart, thou cursed one, into everlasting fire in hell!"

IV. We come now to our fourth remark,—THAT CHRIST'S WORK, AND THE EFFECTS OF THAT WORK, ARE NOW COMPLETE.

Christ becomes a substitute for us. We have seen how fit and proper a person he was to be such. We hinted that from the dignity of his person the pains he suffered were a good and sufficient equivalent for our own suffering on account of sin. But now the joyous truths come up that Christ's work is finished. Christ has made an atonement so complete that he never need suffer again. No more drops of blood; no more pangs of heart; no more bitterness and darkness, with exceeding heaviness, even unto death, are needed.

"'Tis done—the great transaction's done."

The death-knell of the penalty rings in the dying words of the Saviour,—"It is finished." Do you ask for a proof of this? Remember that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. If he had not completed his work of penalty-suffering, he would have been left in the tomb till now; our preaching would have been in vain, and your faith would have been in

vain; ye would have been yet in your sins. But Jesus rose. God's sheriff's officer let him out of "durance vile" because the account had been discharged, and God's great Court of King's Bench sent down the mittimus to let the captive go free. More than that: Christ has ascended upon high. Think you he would have returned thither with unexpiated sin red upon his garments? Do you suppose he would have ascended to the rest and to the reward of an accomplished work? What! sit at his Father's right hand to be crowned for doing nothing, and rest until his adversaries are made his footstool, when he has not performed his Father's will! Absurd! Impossible! His ascension in stately pomp, amidst the acclamations of angels, to the enjoyment of his Father's continued smile, is the sure proof that the work is complete.

Complete it is, dear brethren, not only in itself, but, as I said, in its effects; that is to say, that there is now complete pardon for every soul which believeth in Christ. You need not do anything to make the atonement of Christ sufficient to pardon you. It wants no eking out. It is not as if Christ had put so much into the scale and it was quivering in the balance; but your sins, for all their gravity, utterly ceased their pressure through the tremendous weight of his atonement. He has outweighed the penalty, and given double for all your sins. Pardon, full and free, is now presented in the name of Jesus, proclaimed to every creature under heaven, for sins past, for sins present, and for sins to come; for blasphemies and murders; for drunkenness and whoredom; for all manner of sin under heaven. Jesus Christ hath ascended up on high, and exalted he is that he may give repentance and remission of sin. Ye have no need of shillings to pay the priests; nor is baptismal water wanted to erect the pardon: there is no willing, doing, being, or suffering of yours required to complete the task. The blood has filled the fountain full: thou hast but to wash and be clean, and thy sins shall be gone forever.

Justification, too, is finished. You know the difference. Pardon takes away our filth, but then it leaves us naked; justification puts a royal robe upon us. How no rags of yours are wanted; not a stitch of yours is needed to perfect what Christ has done. He whom God the Father hath accepted as a sin offering hath perfected forever thou who are set apart. Ye are complete in Christ. No tears of yours, no penance, no personal

mortifications, nay, no good works of yours, are wanted to make yourself complete and perfect. Take it as it is. O sirs! may you have grace to take it as it is freely presented to you in the gospel. "He that believeth on him is not condemned;" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Trust Christ—implicitly trust Christ; and all that he did shall cover you, while all that he suffered shall cleanse you.

Remember, too, that acceptance is finished. There are the Father's arms, and here are you, a black sinner to-night. I do not know you, but it may be you have trodden the pavements, or you have gone further than that, and added drunkenness to shame; you have gone to the lowest vice, perhaps to robbery,—who knoweth what manner of person may step into this place?—but the great arms of the Eternal Father are ready to save you as you are, because the great work of Christ has effected all that is wanted before God for the acceptance of the vilest sinner. How is it that the Father can embrace the prodigal? Why! he is fresh from the swine-trough! Look at him: look at his rags; how foul they are! We would not touch them with a pair of tongs! Take him to the fire and burn the filth! Take him to the bath and wash him! That lip is not fit to kiss; those filthy lips cannot be permitted to touch that holy cheek of the glorious Father! Ah! but it is not so. While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him,—rags and poverty and sin and filth and all,—and he did not wait till he was clean, but ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him, just as he was. How could he do that? Why, the parable does not tell us; for it did not run on with the subject to introduce the atonement. But this explains it,—when God accepts a sinner, he is, in fact, only accepting Christ. He looks into the sinner's eyes, and he sees his own dear Son's image there, and he takes him in. As we have heard of a good woman, who, whenever a poor sailor came to her door, whoever he might be, would always make him welcome, because, she said, "I think I see my own dear son who has been these many years away, and I have never heard of him; but whenever I see a sailor, I think of him, and treat the stranger kindly for my son's sake." So my God, when he sees a sinner long for pardon and desirous of being accepted, thinks he sees his Son in him, and accepts him for his Son's sake. Do not imagine that we preach a gospel in this place for respectable, godly people. No: we preach a gospel here for sinners. I heard, the other day, from one who told me that he believed we were

saved by being perfect, that when we committed sin we at once fell out of God's mercy. Well now, supposing that were true, it would not be worth making a large splutter about. It would not be worth angels singing "Glory to God in the highest" about it, I should think. Any fool might know that God would accept a perfect man. But this is the thing of marvel, for which heaven and earth shall ring with the praises of the Mediator, that Jesus Christ died for the ungodly,—that Jesus Christ gave himself for their sin; not for their righteousness, not for their good deeds. If he had looked to all eternity, he could not have seen anything in us worthy of so great a suffering as that which he endured; but he did it for charity's sake,—for love's sake.

And now, in his name,—oh that I could do it with his voice and with his love and with his fervor!—I do beseech you to lay hold upon him. No matter who you may be, I will not exclude you from the invitation. Hast thou piled thy sins together till they seem to provoke heaven? Do thy sins touch the clouds? Yet come, and welcome; for God has provided a sin-offering. Has man cast thee out? Say, poor woman, does the dreary river seem to invite thee to the fatal plunge? God has not cast thee out. O thou who feelest in thine own body the effect of thy sin, till thou art loathing thyself, and wishing thou hadst never been born—perhaps thou sayest, like John Bunyan, "Oh that I had been a frog, or a toad, or a snake, sooner than have been a man, to have fallen into such sin, and to have become so foul!" Have courage, sinner; have courage. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Do not doubt this message: God has sent it to you. Do not reject it: you will reject your own life if you do. Turn you at his rebuke! It is a loving voice which speaks to you, and that would speak, perhaps, better and more forcibly if it were not choked with love. I do implore thee, sinner, come to Jesus! If thou art damned it is not for want of invitation. If thou wilt perish, it is not for want of earnest pleading with thee. I tell thee, man, there is nothing of thine own wanted. All this is found in the sin-offering; for thou needest not find it. There is no merit of thine needed; there is merit enough in Christ. Is it not the old proverb that you are not to take coals to Newcastle? Do not take anything to Christ. Come as you are—just as you are. Nay, tarry not till you go out

of this house. The Lord enable you to believe in Jesus now, to take him now as a complete and finished salvation for you, though you may be the most sunken and abandoned and hopeless of all characters. Why did God provide a sin-offering but for sinners? He could not have wanted to provide it if there was no necessity. You have a great necessity. You have, shall I say? compelled him to it. Your sins have nailed Christ's hands to the cross,—your sins have pierced his heart; and his heart is not pierced in vain, nor are those hands nailed there for naught. Christ will have you, sinner, Christ will have you. There are some of God's elect here, and he will have you. You shall not stand out against him. Almighty love will have you. He has determined that you shall not do what you have vowed. Your league with hell is broken to-night, and your covenant with death is disannulled. The prey shall not be taken from the mighty; the lawful captive shall be delivered. The Lord will yet fetch you up from the depths of the sea. Oh! what a debtor to grace you will be! Be a debtor to that grace to-night. Over head and ears in debt, plunge yourself by a simple act of trusting in Jesus, and you are saved.

Pray, ye who know how to pray, that this message may be made effective in the hand of God. And you who have never prayed before, God help you to pray now. May he now be found of them who sought not for him, and he shall have the glory, world without end. Amen.

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The Fainting Soul Revived

When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord. - Jonah 2:7

When man was first made, there was no fear of his forgetting God for it was his highest privilege and delight to have communion with his Maker. "The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day," and Adam was privileged to hold fellowship with God, closer, perhaps, than even the angels had in heaven. But the spell of that sacred harmony was rudely

broken by man's disobedience and his dreadful fall. Ever since our first parent tasted of the forbidden fruit, which brought death into our world, and all its train of woes, his mortal race has been naturally prone to forget God. The evil propensities of flesh and blood have made it impossible to persuade man to remember his Creator. The complaint of God against the Jews is true as an indictment against the whole human family. "Hear, O heaven, and give ear. O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me; the ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Man is foolish; he flies from the highest good. Man is wicked; he turns his back upon supreme holiness. Man is worldly: he forgets the kingdom of God and the world to come. Man is wilful; he follows his own vain imaginations, and, with head-strong rebellion, opposes himself to his God, that he may pursue his own wayward course, and gratify his wanton passions.

To convince a man of his error, to arrest him in his evil pursuits, to reclaim him to the paths of righteousness—this is seldom accomplished without dire trouble and deep affliction. Some men, it is true, are brought to God by gentle means; they are drawn by soft but mighty bonds; still, a much larger class of persons remains, upon whom these silken cords would exert no influence. They must not be handled softly, but must be dealt with heavily. The picklock will never open their hearts; there must be the crowbar, and even the battering ram, to give a furious cannonade. Some hearts can never be captured for God and for truth except by storm. Sword in hand, God's law must scale the ramparts. With thundering report, God's Word must dash down the walls of their confidence, and make breach after breach in the bastions of their pride, and even then they will fight it out, and never yield, until, driven to an awful extremity, they see that they must either yield at once, or else be lost for ever. It is with such persons that I now particularly want to deal. There are those who have forgotten God after having once known him, and they are not likely to be brought back without great trouble; and there are others who never did know God, and they never will enquire after him, unless they are driven to their wits' end by calamity, as when a great famine in the land where he dwelt compelled the prodigal for very lack of bread to seek his Father's house. So I have first to remonstrate:—

I. WITH THE BACKSLIDER.

Let me, however, before I go into the matter with you, describe a little more minutely the individuals I wish to address. There is no need to call out your names; it will suffice if we portray your character and describe your conduct. There are some of you who used to be members of Christian churches years ago, but you have gradually declined, and so reckless has your career at length become, that it is a wonder that you have not utterly perished in your sin. You seemed to run well on the outset, and for a time you held on in the way; but where are you now? Well, you happen at this present to be in God's house, and I do trust that God's own hour has come, when he will meet you and bring you back. What we have to say of Jonah, I do entreat you to apply to yourselves; if the cap seems to fit you, put it on and wear it, even though it should be a fool's cap: wear it till you are ashamed of yourselves, and are led to confess your folly before the God who is able to remove it, and to make you wise unto salvation.

Observe, dear friends, that though Jonah remembered the Lord, it was not till he got into the whale's belly, nor even then till his soul fainted within him. He did not remember the Lord all the time he was going down to Joppa to find a ship, nor yet when he got on board that ship. His Master had said to him, "Jonah, go to Nineveh," but Jonah was a strong-willed, head-strong fellow. Though a true servant of God, and a prophet, yet he fled from the presence of the Lord. To Nineveh, he resolved within himself, he would not go. He could foresee no honour to himself out of the journey, no increase of his own reputation, no deference that would come to him amongst those proud Assyrians, so, in direct defiance of the divine command, he set off to Joppa, to take a ship and to flee from God's presence. Into the ship he got, paid the fare, and went sallying down the sea to go to Tarshish; but all this while he never thought of God. Not unlikely in this assembly there may be a woman who used to be a member of a Christian church, but she married an ungodly man; after that there was no going to the house of God, much less anything like keeping up her church membership. The shop was kept open on Sunday, or there was a pleasure party to be entertained at home, or an excursion

taken into the country. All this seemed very pleasant. The disquietude of conscience she might feel at first wore off as habit made it familiar, until, year after year, this woman, who once seemed to be a true servant of Christ, lives in carelessness and indifference, not to say profanity, with hardly any thoughts of God. Perhaps she has not quite given up prayer; she could not absolutely become an enemy of Christ, or entertain a dislike to his people. Still, God was forgotten. So long as the business prospered, the husband was in good health, and the world smiled, God was never thought of. Can I be mistaken in supposing that there is a man here who in his youth was a loud talker, a vehement professor of religion, and a companion of those that fear the Lord? But after a time there seemed to be a way of getting money rather faster than the ordinary methods of honest labour or simple merchandise; so he entered into, a speculation, which soon ate out the vitals of his piety. His new projects involved new companions; in their fellowship he stifled his old convictions, and, as he would not play the hypocrite, he ceased to make any profession at all. Perhaps months have passed since he has been in a place of worship; even now he would rather be unrecognised, for he has only come here because a friend from the country asked him company to me the place and to hear the preacher. Ah! my dear sir, it is strange indeed, if you be a child of God, that you could have walked so contrary to God as you have. Yet so did Jonah. Do I, then, hold up his case before your eyes to comfort you? Nay; but let me hope that you will apply the bitter rebuke to your own soul, and be led to do as Jonah did. All the while the ship sailed smoothly over the sea, Jonah forgot his God. You could not have distinguished him from the veriest heathen on board. He was just as bad as they were. Yet was there a spark of fire among the embers, which God in due time fanned into a flame. Happy for you if this better part of his experience should tally with your own.

Such, too, was Jonah's blank forgetfulness, that he does not appear to have thought upon his God all the while the storm raged, the billows rolled, and the ship was tossed with tempest. The poor heathen sailors were all on their knees crying for mercy, but Jonah was asleep in the vessel, till the superstitious captain himself was amazed at his apathy: "What meanest thou, O sleeper; carest thou not that we all perish?" He went down and upbraided him, and asked him how it was that he could

sleep while the passengers and crew were all crying. "Arise," said he, "and call upon thy God." He was stirred up to his danger and his duty, even by a heathen! Now maybe there are some here who have had a host of troubles. Is husband dead? Are you a lone woman with a family to provide for? Or are you a widower, looking on your children with pity, whom you once regarded with a homely pride? Possibly you may have another form of trial. Your business has gone to the bad; you expected to have realised large profits by it, but you encountered loss upon loss, till your little capital has been scattered. Still, all this while you have not thought about God. Mayhap that child after child has been taken from you, and yet you have not remembered God. Is it really so, that the Lord loves you, and, because he loves you, therefore chastens you? Mark my word, you will continue to suffer loss upon loss, till you have lost all you have and all you count dear, and you will be brought to death's door yourself, but he will save you at last. If you ever were his, he never will let you sink into hell; but, oh! it will be hard work for you to get to heaven. You will be saved, but it will be so as by fire. You will be saved as by the skin of your teeth—scarcely saved, and the way in which you are saved will be a most terrible one to you. Oh! friend, I wish you would turn while God is smiting you gently, for know of a certainty if rods will not do, he will come to scourges, and if the scourge will not do, he will take the knife, and if the knife will not do, he will take the sword, and you shall have to feel it, for, as sure as God is God, he will never lose his child, and he will cut that child, as it were, into pieces, but he will save his soul. He will undermine your constitution by disease, and make you toss upon the bed of anguish, but he will bring you back. Oh! that you had grace to come back by gentler means before these terrible actions are tried!

So, then, Jonah did not think of God all this time. Now at length the vessel begins to creak, and seems as if she must go to pieces. Then they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. He is about to be thrown into the sea. At that moment a pair of huge jaws open wide, shut again, and swallow him up. "Where am I now?" says Jonah, as he is taken down deep by the motions of this monstrous fish, till the weeds come into the fish and wrap about his head, and his life is only preserved by a miracle. Then, oh! then Jonah thinks upon his God. "When my soul fainted within me." Now why did his soul faint within him? Was it not because he

thought, "Now I am in a hopeless case; I shall never come out of this; it is a wonder I am not drowned; it is a marvel I was not snapped in pieces by those huge jaws; what a hopeless case I am in! I will but linger a little while, then perish I must in this horrible prison of a whale's belly." I dare say he thought that never was man in such a plight before; never a person that was alive inside a fish; and how comfortless he must have felt with nothing but the cold deep round him. Instead of garments, weeds were wrapped about his head. How his heart throbbed, and his head ached, with no cheer, no light, no friendly voice, no succour, no help; faraway from dry land, out on the boundless deep, without a comrade to sympathise with his strange plight.

Now when a child of God goes astray, it is not at all unusual for God to bring him into just such a state as that, a condition in which he cannot help himself; forlorn and friendless, with no one that can relieve or minister to him. This dreary thought will meanwhile ever haunt his mind, "I brought it all upon myself!" Hast thou not procured this unto thyself? Like a woman who has left her husband's house, deserted her home, and betrayed her kind and tender protector, what fruit can she expect to reap of her wickedness? When she is ready to starve, when the wind blows through her tattered raiment, when her face is swollen with weeping, and her soul is full of anguish, she has only herself to upbraid, as she cries, "I have brought this upon myself; would God I had never left my cheerful homestead, however humble the lodgings might have been; would God I had never deserted the husband who loved me, and spread his aegis over me, however roughly he sometimes spake! Oh! that I had been more scrupulously obedient, and less prone to discontent!" The afterthought of sin—I think they call it remorse. Thus it was that Jonah thought upon his God, when the shame of his transgressions overwhelmed him.

Oh! how merciful our God is to allow us to think about him, and turn to him when in so pitiable a plight! "Yes," said a tradesman once to a customer for whose favours he felt little cause to be grateful, "you come to me, I know why; you have been to every other shop in the town for the article you require, and you could not obtain it; and now you come back to me whom you had no good cause ever to leave, I shall not serve you." This is not how the Lord speaks to us. He does not resent our ingratitude.

"My child, my poor child," says he, "though you have gone and spent your substance; though you have been feeding swine: though you are all black, and foul and filthy, yet you are my dear child still, and my heart yearns towards you." Without a word of rebuke, or even a taunting look, so soon as ever a poor sinner comes back to the Father's house, the Father's arms are round about his neck, and the kiss of pardon is pressed on his cheek. "I remember thee well," says he; "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities." Now if there be a backslider here—and I know there are several—I can only hope that God will bring you into Jonah's peril. You shall have no pity from me if he does; I will rather be thankful to God that he has brought you there, because I shall know then that he has some designs of love towards you. But when you get into the regions of despair, do as Jonah did—think upon your God. What, do any of you objects? Do you imagine that to think about God would make you worse? Well, think that you were once his child, and think again that he has found you out, and knows where you are. Jonah felt that God knew where he was, because he had sent the fish. God knows your whereabouts, my good woman; he knows what quarters you are now in, my fellow-sinner. Remember, too, that you are yet alive! what a wonder it is that you are still permitted to hear the voice which says, "Return, return; oh! backslider, return." God is immutable; he cannot change; his covenant is steadfast; he will not alter it. If he has loved you once, he loves you now. If I bought you, I will have you. Come back to him, then; he is your husband still. Return! return! he is your Father still—return! return! But, oh! my hearer, perhaps you have no pretensions to be a child of his! Perhaps you may have played the hypocrite and made a profession in your own strength. You turned back from the company of those who fear the Lord, because you never were truly converted. If it be so, let the mercy, which God shows to sinners, embolden you to cry to him. And may he break you to pieces now with the hammer of his Word. So may he save you, and so shall his praise be exceedingly great in your salvation.

Though I have tried thus to reach the backslider, it is likely enough that I have missed my mark, honest as my intention has been. Oh! it seems so dreadful that any of you should perish in your sins, who know the way of hope! Some of you were candled on the knees of piety. There are those now in heaven who look down upon you, and could they weep, you might

feel their tears dropping on your brow. You know very well that time was when the hope of a better world yielded you some kind of comfort and joy. You do not think, at any rate, that you were feigning piety then, but you did account yourself, a sinner. By the compassion of the Most High, by the love of God, I pray you stop! Do not drink the cup of devils after having drank the cup of the Lord, and give not that soul to damnation which once seemed to bid fair for salvation. Eternal life is too rich a prize to trifle with. May the Spirit of God do what I cannot. May he send home these things to the persons for whom they are intended.

And now we have, in the second place, to deal with the careless, the thoughtless, the profligate—with:—

II. THOSE WHO NEVER WERE AWAKENED—moral or immoral in the world's reckoning. Jonah did not remember God till his soul fainted within him; and the reckless sinner, as a rule, never does remember God till under the stress of law, or the distress of pain and penalty; his soul is ready to faint within him. Now I hope some of you will be brought to feel this faintness.

What kind of faintness do persons who are under the saved discipline of the Spirit of God generally feel?

There is faintness of horror at their present condition. I can imagine a person lying down on the edge of a cliff and falling asleep. On suddenly waking up, having moved during his sleep, he finds himself within an inch of the precipice, and looks down and sees, far beneath him, the jagged rocks and the boiling sea. How his nerves would quiver as he realized his position and his jeopardy! Many a sinner has thus opened his eyes to discern his terrible hazard. He has suddenly waked up to find that he is on the brink of eternal wrath, standing where an angry God is waving a dreadful sword, and certain to plunge it into his heart before long. Every unconverted person here is poising over the mouth of hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten; he is hanging over the jaws of perdition by one rope, and the strands of that rope are snapping every moment. If a man does but apprehend this and feels it, I do not wonder that he faints.

Faintness, moreover, arises from a dread of horrors yet to come. Who can conceive the heart-sinking of those poor passengers on board that vessel which so lately foundered in the open sea, at the prospect of being swallowed up alive, and sinking they knew not whither! It would be no easy thing, one would think, to keep from fainting at a time when such a doom was imminent. So when God awakens the soul by the noise of the tempest, it looks out and sees the ocean of divine wrath about to engulf it. The cries of lost spirits appal it, and it says to itself, "I shall soon mingle with those shrieks; my voice will aid the wailings of their dolorous company ore long; I shall be driven from his presence with a fiery sword at my heels before many hours are over." Then the soul faints with alarm at the thought of judgment to come.

Faint, too, is the soul of the sinner through a sense of weakness. "I cannot do anything to avert the catastrophe" seems to be the leading idea of a person when he has fainted. Over the awakened sinner there comes this sense of weakness. When a sinner does not know himself, he thinks that being saved is the easiest thing in the world. He supposes that to come to Christ to get peace is a matter that can be done just as readily as one snaps his fingers. But when God begins to deal with him, he says. "I would believe, but I cannot"; and he cries out, "Oh! God, I find that faith is as impossible to me as keeping thy law, except thou help me!" Once he thought he could reform himself, and become as holy as an angel; but now he can do nothing, and he cries out for very faintness, "Oh! God, what a poor, helpless, shiftless creature I am!"

And then there will sometimes come over him faintness of such a kind as I must call horrible. Well do I remember when I was in that state! I thought I would give up prayer, because it seemed of no use to pray, and yet I could not help praying; I must pray, and yet I felt that I did not pray. I thought I would not go to hear the gospel any more; there was nothing in it for me, and yet there was a fascination about the preaching of the gospel that made me go and hear it. I heard that Christ was very gracious to sinners but I could not believe that he would be gracious to me. Little did it matter whether I heard a promise or a threatening. I liked the threatening best. Threatenings appeared to me to be just what I deserved,

and they provoked some kind of emotion in my breast. But when I heard a promise I shuddered with a gloomy feeling that it was of no use to me; I felt condemned already. The pains of hell got hold upon me, so tortured was my soul with the forebodings of an endless doom. I heard, the other day, of a young minister becoming an infidel, and I prayed for him. What, think you, was the burden of my petition? I prayed that God would make him feel the weight of his hand; for I cannot imagine that a man who has once felt the weight of God's hand can ever afterwards doubt his being, his sovereignty, or his power. Believe me, brethren, there is such an unutterable anguish, as a man could not long endure without becoming absolutely insane, which God makes some people feel in order to crush their love of sin, to purge them of their self-righteousness, and bring them to a sense of their dependence on himself. Some men can never be brought in any other way. I may be addressing the patients I am describing. I sincerely hope I am. You are feeling God's hand. The whole weight of it rests upon you, and under it you are crushed, as a moth is crushed beneath one's finger. Now I have a message from God for you. When Jonah was in your case he remembered his God. Tell me, what sayest thou, poor heart—what sayest thou to remembering thy God?

The case I am going to describe is not exactly that of John Newton, but it is from his experience that I gather my picture. There is a young man with a very good father, a holy father. As the young man grows up he does not like his trade: he cannot bear it, so he says to his father, "While I succumb to your government I mean to have my own way; other people enjoy themselves, and so will I; and as I cannot do it under your roof. I will follow my fancy elsewhere." He goes to sea. When he is at sea he discovers that all is not quite to his taste; the work he has to do is very different from what he had been accustomed to; still, he doesn't flinch. At the first port he reaches he gives loose to his passions. "Ah!" says he, "this is a jolly life! This is far better than being at home with my father, and being kept tied to my mother's apron-strings all my days. I say a merry life is the thing to suit me, sir." He goes on board again, and wherever the vessel puts in, each port becomes an outlet for his vices. He is a rare boy to swear and drink, and when he comes back to England he has no words too bitter to utter against religion in general, and against his father's scruples of conscience in particular. It so happens that one day there

comes on a dreadful storm. He has to take a long spell at the pumps, and when that is over he must begin to pump again, for the ship is ready to founder, and every man must keep hard at it hour after hour. There is a driving wind and a heavy tempest. At last they are told that nothing can save them; there are breakers ahead, and the vessel will be on shore! He lashes himself to the mast and floats about all night, and the next day, and the next, with faint hope of life. He has some twitches of conscience now; he cannot help thinking of his father and mother. However, he is not going to be broken down by a trifle. He has a hard heart, and he will not give way yet. He is crashed on shore, and finds himself among a barbarous people. He is taken care of by the barbarians; they give him food; albeit his meal is scant, and he is presently set to work as a slave. His master proves harsh to him, and his master's wife especially cruel. He gets but little to eat, and he is often beaten. Still, he bears up, and hopes for better days. But, half-starved and hard worked, his bodily health and his mental energy are reduced to a low degree. No marvel that fever overtakes him. Who has he to nurse him? What friend to care for him? The people treat him as a dog, and take no notice of him. He can neither stir nor move. In vain he pines for a drop of water in the dead of the night; he feels that he must die of thirst. He lifts his voice, but there is nobody to hear him. To his piteous appeal there is no answer. Then it is he thinks, "Oh! God, if I might but get back to my father!" Then it is, when he is at the last extremity, that he thinks of home.

Now what did happen in the case of John Newton will happen, and has happened, in the case of many a sinner. He never would come back to God, but at last he felt that it was no use trying anywhere else. He was driven to utter desperation. In this dilemma his heart said, "Oh! that I might find the Lord." Hark, now: I will tell you a tale. A lot of sailors were going to sea. When about to start, the owner said, "There! I have bought a lifeboat; put it on board." They reply, "No, never! We don't believe in lifeboats; they are new-fangled things. We do not understand them, and we shall never use one." "Put it on board, and let it bide there," says the captain. "Well, captain," says the boatswain, "a tom fool of a boat—isn't it? I cannot think what the owner meant by putting such a thing as this on board." Old tars, as they walk along the deck say to themselves, "Ah! I never saw such a thing in all my life as that! Think of old Ben Bolt taking

a lifeboat with him! Don't believe in such gimcracks!" Presently a stiff breeze springs up, it comes to a gale—a hurricane—a perfect tornado! Now let down the lifeboat, captain. "No, no, no; nonsense!" Let down the lifeboat! No; the other boats are got out, but they are stove in, one after another, and capsized. They bring out another; she cannot ride out the storm. There she goes, right up on the crest of the waves and she has gone over, bottom uppermost. It is all over with them! "What shall we do, captain?" "Try the lifeboat, boatswain." Just so; when every spar is gone, when every other boat is washed overboard, and when the ship is going down, they will take to the lifeboat. So be it. The Lord wash all your boats overboard. May it please God to wreck your vessel; may he shiver every timber, and make you take to the lifeboat. I fear me some of you will never take counsel till you reach the crisis. May there come, then, such a storm that you will be driven to take to Christ. That done there is no storm you need ever fear. That done, let the loudest tempest roar, you are safe; you have Christ in the vessel with you. Two or three more words, and I have done. God has been pleased to give his dear Son, his only-begotten Son, to die a most dreadful death, not for righteous ones, but for sinners. Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. If you are a sinner, you are the sort of person Christ came to save. If you are a lost one, you are the sort of man that Jesus Christ came to seek. Let your present sorrow comfort you, because it is an indication that you are the kind of person that Christ will bless. Let your despair deliver you from despair, for when you despair there is hope for you. When you can do nothing, God will do everything. When you are empty of your own conceits, there is room for Christ to enter your heart. When you are stripped, Christ's garments are provided for you. When you are hungry, the bread that cometh down from heaven is provided for you. When you are thirsty, the water of life is yours. Let this broken-heartedness, this terror, this alarm, this faintness, this weakness of yours, only lead you to say, "I am such as Christ invited to himself. I will go to him, and if I perish, I will perish only there"; and if you trust Jesus, you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of his hand. May you trust him here and now. Amen.

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The Fainting Warrior

O wretched man that I am I who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. - Romans 7:24-25

If I chose to occupy your time with controversial matter, I might prove to a demonstration that the apostle Paul is here describing his own experience as a Christian. Some have affirmed that he is merely declaring what he was before conversion, and not what he was when he became the recipient of the grace of God. But such persons are evidently mistaken, and I believe wilfully mistaken; for any ample-hearted, candid mind, reading through this chapter, could not fall into such an error. It is Paul the apostle, who was not less than the very greatest of the apostles - it is Paul, the mighty servant of God, a very prince in Israel, one of the King's mighty men - it is Paul, the saint and the apostle, who here exclaims, "O wretched man that I am!"

Now, humble Christians are often the dupes of a very foolish error. They look up to certain advanced saints and able ministers, and they say, "Surely, such men as these do not suffer as I do; they do not contend with the same evil passions as those which vex and trouble me." Ah! if they knew the heart of those men, if they could read their inward conflicts, they would soon discover that the nearer a man lives to God, the more intensely has he to mourn over his own evil heart, and the more his Master honors him in his service, the more also doth the evil of the flesh vex and tease him day by day. Perhaps, this error is more natural, as it is certainly more common, with regard to apostolic saints. We have been in the habit of saying, Saint Paul, and Saint John, as if they were more saints than any other of the children of God. They are all saints whom God has called by his grace, and sanctified by his Spirit; but somehow we very foolishly put the apostles and the early saints into another list, and do not venture to look on them as common mortals. We look upon them as some extraordinary beings, who could not be men of like passions with ourselves. We are told in Scripture that our Saviour was "tempted in all points like as we are;" and yet we fall into the egregious error of

imagining that the apostles, who were far inferior to the Lord Jesus, escaped these temptations, and were ignorant of these conflicts. The fact is, if you had seen the apostle Paul, you would have thought he was remarkably like the rest of the chosen family: and if you had talked with him, you would have said, "Why, Paul, I find that your experience and mine exactly agree. You are more faithful, more holy, and more deeply taught than I, but you have the self same trials to endure. Nay, in some respects you are more sorely tried than I." Do not look upon the ancient saints as being exempt either from infirmities or sins, and do not regard them with that mystic reverence which almost makes you an idolater. Their holiness is attainable even by you, and their faults are to be censured as much as your own. I believe it is a Christian's duty to force his way into the inner circle of saintship; and if these saints were superior to us in their attainments, as they certainly were, let us follow them; let us press forward up to, yea, and beyond them, for I do not see that this is impossible. We have the same light that they had, the same grace is accessible to us, and why should we rest satisfied until we have distanced them in the heavenly race? Let us bring them down to the sphere of common mortals. If Jesus was the Son of man, and very man, "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh;" so were the apostles; and it is an egregious error to suppose that they were not the subjects of the same emotions, and the same inward trials, as the very meanest of the people of God. So far, this may tend to our comfort and to our encouragement, when we find that we are engaged in a battle in which apostles themselves have had to fight.

And now we shall notice this morning, first, the two natures, secondly their constant battle; thirdly, we shall step aside and look at the weary warrior, and hear him cry, "O wretched man that I am;" and then we shall turn our eye in another direction, and see that fainting warrior girding up his loins to the conflict, and becoming an expectant victor, while he shouts, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I. First, then, **THE TWO NATURES**. Carnal men, unrenewed men, have one nature - a nature which they inherited from their parents, and which, through the ancient transgression of Adam, is evil, only evil, and that continually. Mere human nature, such as is common to every man, has in

it many excellent traits, judging of it between man and man. A merely natural man may be honest, upright, kind, and generous, he may have noble and generous thoughts, and may attain unto a true and manly speech; but when we come to matters of true religion, spiritual matters that concern God and eternity, the natural man can do nothing. The carnal mind, whose ever mind it may be, is fallen, and is at enmity to God, does not know the things of God, nor can it ever know them. Now, when a man becomes a Christian, he becomes so through the infusion of a new nature. He is naturally "dead in trespasses and sins," "without God and without hope." The Holy Spirit enters into him, and implants in him a new principle, a new nature, a new life. That life is a high, holy and supernatural principle, it is, in fact the divine nature, a ray from the great "Father of Lights;" it is the Spirit of God dwelling in man. Thus, you see, the Christian becomes a double man - two men in one. Some have imagined that the old nature is turned out of the Christian: not so, for the Word of God and experience teach the contrary, the old nature is in the Christian unchanged, unaltered, just the same, as bad as ever it was; while the new nature in him is holy, pure and heavenly; and hence, as we shall have to notice in me next place - hence there arises a conflict between the two.

Now, I want you to notice what the apostle says about these two natures that are in the Christian, for I am about to contrast them. First, in our text the apostle calls the old nature "the body of this death." Why does he call it "the body of this death?" Some suppose he means these dying bodies; but I do not think so. If it were not for sin, we should have no fault to find with our poor bodies. They are noble works of God, and are not in themselves the cause of sin. Adam in the garden of perfection, felt the body to be no encumbrance, nor if sin were absent should we have any fault to find with our flesh and blood. What, then, is it? I think the apostle calls the evil nature within him a body, first, in opposition to those who talk of the relics of corruption in a Christian. I have heard people say that there are relics, remainders and remnants of sin in a believer. Such men do not know much about themselves yet. Oh! it is not a bone, or a rag which is left; it is the whole body of sin that is there - the whole of it, "from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot." Grace does not maim this body and cut away its members; it leaves it entire, although blessed

be God, it crucifies it, nailing it to the cross of Christ. And again, I think he calls it a body because it is something tangible. We all know that we have a body; it is a thing we can feel, we know it is there. The new nature is a spirit subtle, and not easy to detect, I sometimes have to question myself as to whether it is there at all. But as for my old nature, that is a body, I can never find it difficult to recognize its existence, it is as apparent as flesh and bones. As I never doubt that I am in flesh and blood, so I never doubt but what I have sin within me. It is a body - a thing which I can see and feel, and which, to my pain, is ever present with me."

Understand, then, that the old nature of the Christian is a body; it has in it a substance or, as Calvin puts it, it is a mass of corruption. It is not simply a shred, a remnant - the cloth of the old garment, but the whole of it is there still. True, it is crushed beneath the foot of grace; it is cast out of its throne; but it is there, there in all its entirety, and in all its sad tangibility, a body of death. But why does he call it a body of death? Simply to express what an awful thing this sin is that remains in the heart. It is a body of death. I must use a figure, which is always appended to this text, and very properly so. It was the custom of ancient tyrants, when they wished to put men to the most fearful punishments, to tie a dead body to them, placing the two back to back; and there was the living man, with a dead body closely strapped to him, rotting, putrid, corrupting, and this he must drag with him wherever he went. Now, this is just what the Christian has to do. He has within him the new life; he has a living and undying principle, which the Holy Spirit has put within him, but he feels that every day he has to drag about with him this dead body, this body of death, a thing as loathsome, as hideous, as abominable to his new life, as a dead stinking carcase would be to a living man. Francis Quarles gives a picture at the beginning of one of his emblems, of a great skeleton in which a living man is encased. However quaint the fancy, it is not more singular than true. There is the old skeleton man, filthy, corrupt and abominable. He is a cage for the new principle which God has put in the heart. Consider a moment the striking language of our text, "The body of this death," it is death incarnate, death concentrated, death dwelling in the very temple of life. Did you ever think what an awful thing death is? The thought is the most abhorrent to human nature. You

say you do not fear death, and very properly; but the reason why you do not fear death is because you look to a glorious immortality. Death in itself is a most frightful thing. Now, inbred sin has about it all the unknown terror, all the destructive force, and all the stupendous gloom of death. A poet would be needed to depict the conflict of life with death - to describe a living soul condemned to walk through the black shades of confusion, and to bear incarnate death in its very bowels. But such is the condition of the Christian. As a regenerate man he is a firing, bright, immortal spirit; but he has to tread the shades of death. He has to do daily battle with all the tremendous powers of sin, which are as awful, as sublimely terrific, as even the power's of death and hell.

Upon referring to the preceding chapter, we find the evil principle styled "the old man." There is much meaning in that word "old." But let it suffice us to remark, that in age the new nature is not upon an equal footing with the corrupt nature. There are some here who are sixty years old in their humanity, who can scarce number two years in the life of grace. Now pause and meditate upon the warfare in the heart. It is the contest of an infant with a full-grown man, the wrestling of a babe with a giant. Old Adam, like some ancient oak, has thrust his roots into the depths of manhood; can the divine infant uproot him and cast him from his place? This is the work, this is the labor. From its birth the new nature begins the struggle, and it cannot cease from it until the victory be perfectly achieved. Nevertheless, it is the moving of a mountain, the drying up of an ocean the threshing of the hills, and who is sufficient for these things? The heaven-born nature needs, and will receive, the abundant help of its Author, or it would yield in the struggle, subdued beneath the superior strength of its adversary and crushed beneath his enormous weight.

Again, observe, that the old nature of man, which remains in the Christian is evil, and it cannot ever be anything else but evil, for we are told in this chapter that "in me," - that is, in my flesh - "there dwelleth no good thing." The old Adam-nature cannot be improved; it cannot be made better; it is hopeless to attempt it. You may do what you please with it, you may educate it, you may instruct it, and thus you may give it more instruments for rebellion, but you cannot make the rebel into the friend,

you cannot turn the darkness into light; it is an enemy to God, and an enemy to God it ever must be. On the contrary, the new life which God has given us cannot sin. That is the meaning of a passage in John, where it is said, "The child of God sinneth not; he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The old nature is evil only evil, and that continually, the new nature is wholly good; it knows nothing of sin, except to hate it. Its contact with sin brings it pain and misery, and it cries out, "Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech, that I tabernacle in the tents of Kedar."

I have thus given you some little picture of the two natures. Let me again remind you that these two natures are essentially unchangeable. You cannot make the new nature which God has given you less divine; the old nature you cannot make less impure and earthly. Old Adam is a condemned thing. You may sweep the house, and the evil spirit may seem to go out of it, but he will come back again and bring with him seven other devils more wicked than himself. It is a leper's house, and the leprosy is in every stone from the foundation to the roof; there is no part sound. It is a garment spotted by the flesh; you may wash, and wash, and wash, but you shall never wash it clean; it were foolish to attempt it. Whilst on the other hand the new nature can never be tainted - spotless, holy and pure, it dwells in our hearts; it rules and reigns there expecting the day when it shall cast out its enemy, and without a rival it shall be monarch in the heart of man for ever.

II. I have thus described the two combatants; we shall now come in the next place to THEIR BATTLE. There was never deadlier feud in all the world between nations than there is between the two principles, right and wrong. But right and wrong are often divided from one another by distance, and therefore they have a less intense hatred. Suppose an instance: right holds for liberty, therefore right hates the evil of slavery. But we do not so intensely hate slavery as we should do if we saw it before our eyes: then would the blood boil, when we saw our black brother, smitten by the cow-hide whip. Imagine a slaveholder standing here and smiting his poor slave until the red blood gushed forth in a river; can you conceive your indignation? Now it is distance which makes you feel this less acutely. The right forgets the wrong, because it is far away. But suppose now that right and wrong lived in the same house; suppose two

such desperate enemies, cribbed, cabined, and confined within this narrow house, man; suppose the two compelled to dwell together, can you imagine to what a desperate pitch of fury these two would get with one another. The evil thing says, "I will turn thee out, thou intruder; I cannot be peaceful as I would, I cannot riot as I would, I cannot indulge just as I would; out with thee, I will never be content until I slay thee." "Nay," says the new born nature, "I will kill thee, and drive thee out. I will not suffer stick or stone of thee to remain. I have sworn war to the knife with thee; I have taken out the sword and cast away the scabbard, and will never rest till I can sing complete victory over thee, and totally eject thee from this house of mine." They are always at enmity wherever they are; they were never friends, and never can be. The evil must hate the good, and the good must hate the evil.

And mark although we might compare the enmity to the wolf and lamb, yet the new-born nature is not the lamb in all respects. It may be in its innocence and meekness, but it is not in its strength; for the new-born nature has all the omnipotence of God about it, whilst the old nature has all the strength of the evil one in it, which is a strength not easily to be exaggerated, but which we very frequently underestimate. These two things are ever desperately at enmity with one another. And even when they are both quiet they hate each other none the less. When my evil nature does not rise, still it hates the newborn nature, and when the new-born nature is inactive, it has nevertheless a thorough abhorrence of all iniquity. The one cannot endure the other, it must endeavor to thrust it forth. Nor do these at any time allow an opportunity to pass from being revenged upon one another. There are times when the old nature is very active, and then how will it ply all the weapons of its deadly armoury against the Christian. You will find yourselves at one time suddenly attacked with anger, and when you guard yourself against the hot temptation, on a sudden you will find pride rising, and you will begin to say in yourself; "Am I not a good man to have kept my temper down?" And the moment you thrust down your pride there will come another temptation, and lust will look out of the window of your eyes, and you desire a thing upon which you ought not to look, and ere you can shut your eyes upon the vanity, sloth in its deadly torpor surrounds you, and you give yourself up to its influence and cease to labor for God. And then

when you bestir yourselves once more, you fled that in the very attempt to rouse yourself you have awakened your pride. Evil haunts you go where you may, or stand in what posture you choose. On the other hand the new nature will never lose an opportunity of putting down the old. As for the means of grace, the newborn nature will never rest satisfied unless it enjoys them. As for prayer, it will seek by prayer to wrestle with the enemy. It will employ faith, and hope, and love, the threatenings, the promises, providence, grace, and everything else to cast out the evil. Well," says one, "I don't find it so." Then I am afraid of you. If you do not hate sin so much that you do everything to drive it out, I am afraid you are not a living child of God. Antinomians like to hear you preach about the evil of the heart, but here is the fault with them, they do not like to be told that unless they hate that evil, unless they seek to drive it out and unless it is the constant disposition of their new-born nature to root it up, they are yet in their sins. Men who only believe their depravity, but do not hate it, are no further than the devil on the road to heaven. It is not my being corrupt that proves me a Christian, nor knowing I am corrupt, but that I hate my corruption. It is my agonizing death struggle with my corruptions that proves me to be a living child of God. These two natures will never cease to struggle so long as we are in this world. The old nature will never give up; it will never cry truce, it will never ask for a treaty to be made between the two. It will always strike as often as it can. When it lies still it will only be preparing for some future battle. The battle of Christian with Apollyon lasted three hours; but the battle of Christian with himself lasted all the way from the Wicket-gate to the River Jordan. The enemy within can never be driven out while we are here. Satan may sometimes be absent from us, and get such a defeat that he is glad to go howling back to his den, but old Adam abideth with us from the first even to the last. He was with us when we first believed in Jesus, and long ere that, and he will be with us till that moment when we shall leave our bones in the grave, our fears in the Jordan, and our sins in oblivion.

Once more observe, that neither of these two natures will be content in the fight without bringing in allies to assist. The evil nature has old relations, and in its endeavor to drive out the grace that is within, it sends off messengers to all its helpers. Like Cherdorlasmer, the King of Elam, it bringeth other kings with it, when it goeth out to battle. "Ah!" says old

Adam, "I have friends in the pit." He sends a missive down to the depths, and willing allies come therefrom - spirits from the vasty deep of hell; devils without number come up to the help of their brother. And then, not content with that, the flesh says: - "Ah! I have friends in this world;" and then the world sends its fierce cohorts of temptation, such as the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. What a battle, when sin, Satan, and the world, make a dead-set upon the Christian at once. "Oh," says one, "it is a terrible thing to be a Christian." I assure you it is. It is one of the hardest things in the world to be a child of God; in fact, it is impossible, unless the Lord makes us his children, and keeps us so.

Well, what does the new nature do? When it sees all these enemies, it cries unto the Lord, and then the Lord sends it friends. First comes in to its help, Jehovah, in the everlasting counsel, and reveals to the heart its own interest in the secrets of eternity. Then comes Jesus with his blood. "Thou shalt conquer," says he; "I will make thee more than a conqueror through my death." And then appears the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. With such assistance, this new-born nature is more than a match for its enemies. God will sometimes leave that new nature alone, to let it know its own weakness; but it shall not be for long, lest it should sink in despair. Are you fighting with the enemy to-day, my dear Christian brethren? Are Satan, the flesh, and the world - that hellish trinity - all against you? Remember, there is a divine trinity for you. Fight on, though like Valiant-for-Truth, your blood runs from your hand and glues your sword to your arm. Fight on! for with you are the legions of heaven; God himself is with you; Jehovah Nissi is your banner, and Jehovah Rophi is the healer of your wounds. You shall overcome; for who can defeat Omnipotence, or trample divinity beneath his foot?

I have thus endeavored to describe the conflict; but understand me, it cannot be described. We must say, as Hart does in his hymn, when after singing the emotions of his soul, he says -

"But, brethren, you can surely guess,
For you perhaps have felt the same."

If you could see a plain upon which a battle is fought, you would see how

the ground is torn up by the wheels of the cannon, by the horse hoofs, and by the trampling of men. What desolation is where once the golden crops of harvest grew. How is the ground sodden with the blood of the slain. How frightful the result of this terrible struggle. But if you could see the believers' heart after a spiritual battle, you would find it just a counterpart of the battle-field - as much cut up as the ground of the battle-field after the direst conflict that men or fiends have ever waged. For, think: we are combating man with himself; nay, more, man with the whole world; nay, more, man with hell; God with man, against man, the world and hell. What a fight is that! It were worth an angel's while to come from the remotest fields of ether to behold such a conflict.

III. We come now to notice THE WEARY COMBATANT. He lifts up his voice, and weeping he cries, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is the cry of a panting warrior. He has fought so long that he has lost his breath, and he draws it in again; he takes breath by prayer. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He will not give up the conflict; he knows he cannot, and he dare not. That thought does not enter into his mind; but the conflict is so sore, the battle so furious, that he is almost defeated; he sits down to refresh himself, and thus he sighs out his soul; like the panting hart, longing for the water brook, he says, "O wretched man that I am." Nay, it is more than that. It is the cry of one who is fainting. He has fought till all his strength is spent, and he falls back into the arms of his Redeemer with this fainting gasp, "O wretched man that I am!" His strength has failed him; he is sorely beaten in the battle, he feels that without the help of God he is so totally defeated that he commences his own wail of defeat, "O wretched man that I am." And then he asks this question, "Who shall deliver me?" And there comes a voice from the Law, "I cannot and I will not." There comes a voice from Conscience, "I can make thee see the battle, but I cannot help thee in it." And then there comes a cry from old Human Nature, and that says, "Ah! none can deliver thee, I shall yet destroy thee; thou shalt fall by the hand of thine enemy; the house of David shall be destroyed, and Saul shall live and reign for ever." And the poor fainting soldier cries again, "Who shall deliver me?" It seems a hopeless case, and I believe that sometimes the true Christian may think himself hopelessly given over to the power of sin.

The wretchedness of Paul, I think, lay in two things, which are enough to make any man wretched. Paul believed the doctrine of human responsibility, and yet he felt the doctrine of human inability. I have heard people say sometimes - "You tell the sinner that he cannot believe and repent without the help of the Holy Spirit, and yet you tell him that it is his duty to believe and repent. How are these two to be reconciled? We reply that they do not want any reconciliation; they are two truths of Holy Scripture, and we leave them to reconcile themselves, they are friends, and friends do not need any reconciliation. But what seems a difficulty as a matter of doctrine is clear as daylight as a matter of experience. I know it is my duty to be perfect, but I am conscious I cannot be. I know that every time I commit sin I am guilty, and yet I am quite certain that I must sin - that my nature is such that I cannot help it. I feel that I am unable to get rid of this body of sin and death, and yet I know I ought to get rid of it. These two things are enough to make any man miserable - to know that he is responsible for his sinful nature, and yet to know that he cannot get rid of it - to know that he ought to keep it down, and yet to feel he cannot - to know that it is his business to keep God's law perfectly, and walk in the commandments of the law blameless, and yet to know by sad experience that he is as unable to do so as he is to reverse the motion of the globe, or dash the sun from the center of the spheres. How will not these two things drive any man to desperation? The way in which some men avoid the dilemma, is by a denial of one of these truths. They say, "Well, it is true I am unable to cease from sin;" and then they deny their obligation to do so; they do not cry, "O wretched man that I am;" they live as they like, and say they cannot help it. On the other hand, there are some men who know they are responsible; but then they say, "Ay but I can cast off my sin," and these are tolerably happy. The Arminian and the hyper-Calvinist both of them get on very comfortably; but the man who believes these two doctrines, as taught in God's Word, that he is responsible for sin and yet that he is unable to get rid of it, I do not wonder that when he looks into himself he finds enough to make him sigh and cry, ever, to faintness and despair, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death."

And now says one, "Ah, I would be a Christian, if that is the way in which

he faints - it be is always to be fighting with himself; and even until he despairs of victory." Stop a moment. Let us complete the picture. This man is fainting; but he will be restored by-and-bye. Think not that he is hopelessly defeated, he falls to rise, he faints but to be revived afresh. I know a magic, which can awaken his sleeping hopes and shoot a thrill along the freezing current of his blood. Let us sound the promise in his ear, see how soon he revives. Let us put the cordial to his lips; see how he starts up and plays the man again. "I have been almost defeated" says he, "almost driven to despair. Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; though I fall, yet shall I rise again." And he lets fly against him once more, shouting, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." So on he goes again, more than a conqueror, through him that has loved him.

IV. This brings me to this last point, that THE CHRISTIAN IS TO BE A CONQUEROR AT LAST. Do you think that we are for ever to be the drudges and the slaves of sin? Am I for ever to be the galley-slave of my own nature, to tug for freedom and never to escape? Am I always to have this dead man chained to my back, and sniff the pestiferous exhalations of his putrid body? No, no, no, that which is within my heart, is like a caged eagle; and I know that soon the bars which confine me shall be broken; the door of my cage shall be opened, and I shall mount with my eye upon the sun of glory, soaring upward, true to the line, moving neither to the right hand nor to the left, flying till I reach my eyrie in the everlasting rocks of God's eternal love. No, we that love the Lord are not for ever to dwell in Mesech. The dust may besmear our robes and filth may be upon our brow, and beggared may be our garment, but we shall not be so for ever. The day is coming when we shall rise and shake ourselves from the dust, and put on our beautiful garments. It is true we are now like Israel in Canaan. Canaan is full of enemies; but the Canaanites shall and must be driven out. Amalek shall be slain, Agag shall be hewn in pieces; our enemies shall, every one of them, be dispersed, and the whole land from Dan to Beersheba shall be the Lords. Christians, rejoice! You are soon to be perfect, you are soon to be free from sin, totally free from it, without one wrong inclination, one evil desire. You are soon to be as pure as the angels in light; nay, more, with your Master's garments on you are to be "holy as the holy one." Can you think of that? Is not that the very sum of heaven, the rapture of bliss, the

sonnet of the hill-tops of glory - that you are to be perfect? No temptation can reach you from eye, or ear, or hand; nor if the temptation could reach you would you be hurt by it; for there will be nothing in you that could in any way foster sin. It would be as when a spark falls upon an ocean, your holiness would quench it in a moment. Yes, washed in the blood of Jesus, afresh baptized with the Holy Spirit, you are soon to walk the golden streets, white-robed and white-hearted too, and perfect as your Maker, you are to stand before his throne, and sing his praises to eternity.

Now, soldiers of Christ, to arms again! Once more rush into the fight, you cannot be defeated; you must overcome. Though you faint a little, yet take courage; you shall conquer through the blood of the Lamb.

And now, turning aside for a minute, I shall conclude by making an observation or two to many now present. There are some here who say, "I am never disturbed in that fashion." Then I am sorry for you. I will tell you the reason of your false peace. You have not the grace of God in your hearts. If you had you would surely find this conflict within you. Do not despise the Christian because he is in the conflict, despise yourself because you are out of it. The reason why the devil lets you alone is, that he knows you are his. He does not need to trouble you much now; he will have time enough to give you your wages as the last. He troubles the Christian because he is afraid of losing him; he thinks that if he does not tease him here, he shall never have the chance to do it in eternity, so he will bite him, and bark at him while he may. That is why the Christian is vexed more than you are. As for you, you may well be without any pain, for dead men feel no blows. You may well be without prickings of conscience; for men that are corrupt are not likely to feel wounds, though you stab them from head to foot. I pity your condition, for the worm that dieth not is preparing to feed upon you; the eternal vulture of remorse shall soon wet his horrid beak with the blood of your soul. Tremble; for the fires of hell are hot and unquenchable, and the place of perdition is hideous beyond a madman's dream. Oh that you would think of your last end. The Christian may have an evil present, but he has a glorious future; but your future is the blackness of darkness for ever. I adjure you by the living God, you that fear not Christ, consider your ways. You and I must give an account for this morning's service. You are warned, men; you are

warned. Take heed to yourselves, that ye think not this life to be everything. There is a world to come; there is "after death the judgment." If you fear not the Lord, there is after judgment eternal wrath and everlasting misery.

And now a word to those who are seeking Christ. "Ah!" says one, "sir, I have sought Christ, but I feel worse than I ever was in my life. Before I had any thoughts about Christ I felt myself to be good, but now I feel myself to be evil." It is all right, my friend; I am glad to hear you say so. When surgeons heal a patient's wound, they always take care to cut away the proud flesh, because the cure can never be radical while the proud flesh remains. The Lord is getting rid of your self-confidence and self-righteousness. He is just now revealing to your soul the deadly cancer which is festering within you. You are on the sure road to healing, if you are on the way to wounding. God wounds before he heals; he strikes a man dead in his own esteem before he makes him alive. "Ah," cries one, "but can I hope that I ever shall be delivered?" Yes, my brother, if you now look to Christ. I care not what your sin nor what your despair of heart; if you will only turn your eye to him who bled upon the tree, there is not only hope for you, but there is a certainty of salvation. I myself, while thinking over this subject, felt a horror of great darkness rush over my spirit, as I thought what danger I was in lest I should be defeated, and I could not get a glimpse of light into my burdened spirit, until I turned my eye, and saw my Master hanging on the tree. I saw the blood still flowing; faith laid hold upon the sacrifice, and I said, "This cross is the instrument of Jesu's victory, and shall be the means of mine." I looked to his blood; I remembered that I was triumphant in that blood, and I rose from my meditations, humbled, but yet rejoicing; cast down, but not in despair; looking for the victory. Do likewise. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: believe that. You are an awakened, conscious and penitent sinner; therefore, he came to save you. Believe his word; trust him. Do nothing for your own salvation of yourself, but trust him to do it. Cast yourself simply and only on him; and, as this Bible is true, you shall not find the promise fail you - "He that seeketh findeth; to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

May God help you, by giving you this new life within! May he help you to

look to Jesus, and though long and hard be the conflict, sweet shall be the victory.

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Faith

Without faith it is impossible to please God. - Hebrews 11:6

The old Assembly's Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?" and its answer is, "To glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." The answer is exceedingly correct; but it might have been equally truthful if it had been shorter. The chief end of man is "to please God;" for in so doing - we need not say it, because it is an undoubted fact - in so doing he will please himself. The chief end of man, we believe, in this life and in the next, is to please God his Maker. If any man pleases God, he does that which conduces most to his own temporal and eternal welfare. Man cannot please God without bringing to himself a great amount of happiness; for if any man pleases God, it is because God accepts him as his son, gives him the blessings of adoption, pours upon him the bounties of his grace, makes him a blessed man in this life, and insures him a crown of everlasting life, which he shall wear, and which shall shine with unfading lustre when the wreaths of earth's glory have all been melted away; while, on the other hand, if a man does not please God, he inevitably brings upon himself sorrow and suffering in this life; he puts a worm and a rottenness in the core of all his joys; he fills his death-pillow with thorns, and he supplies the eternal fire with faggots of flame which shall for ever consume him. He that pleases God, is, through Divine grace, journeying onward to the ultimate reward of all those that love and fear God; but he who is ill-pleasing to God, must, for Scripture has declared it, be banished from the presence of God, and consequently from the enjoyment of happiness. If then, we be right in saying that to please God is to be happy, the one important question is, how can I please God? And there is something very solemn in the utterance of our text: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." That is to say, do what you may, strive as earnestly as you can, live as excellently as you please, make what sacrifices you choose, be as eminent as you can for everything that is lovely and of good repute, yet none of these things can be pleasing to God unless they be mixed with faith. As the Lord said to the Jews, "With all

your sacrifices you must offer salt;" so he says to us, "With all your doings you must bring faith, or else "without faith it is impossible to please God."

This is an old law; it is as old as the first man. No sooner were Cain and Abel born into this world, and no sooner had they attained to manhood, than God gave a practical proclamation of this law, that "without faith it is impossible to please him." Cain and Abel, one bright day, erected an altar side by side with each other. Cain fetched of the fruits of the trees and of the abundance of the soil, and placed them upon his altar; Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock, and laid it upon his altar. It was to be decided which God would accept. Cain had brought his best, but he brought it without faith; Abel brought his sacrifice, but he brought it with faith in Christ. Now, then, which shall best succeed? The offerings are equal in value; so far as they themselves are concerned that are alike good. Upon which will the heavenly fire descend? Which will the Lord God consume with the fire of his pleasure? Oh! I see Abel's offering burning, and Cain's countenance has fallen, for unto Abel and unto his offering the Lord had respect, but unto Cain and his offering the Lord had no respect. It shall be the same till the last man shall be gathered into heaven. There shall never be an acceptable offering which has not been seasoned with faith. Good though it may be, as apparently good in itself as that which has faith, yet, unless faith be with it, God never can, and never will, accept it, for he here declares, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

I shall endeavour to pack my thoughts closely this morning, and be as brief as I can, consistently with a full explanation of the theme. I shall first have an exposition of what is faith; secondly, I shall have an argument, that without faith it is impossible to be saved; and thirdly, I shall ask a question - Have you that faith which pleases God? We shall have, then, an exposition, an argument, and a question.

I. First, for the EXPOSITION. What is faith?

The old writers, who are by far the most sensible - for you will notice that the books that were written about two hundred years ago, by the old Puritans, have more sense in one line than there is in a page of our new

books, and more in a page than there is in a whole volume of our modern divinity - the old writers tell you, that faith is made up of three things: first knowledge, then assent, and then what they call affiance, or the laying hold of the knowledge to which we give assent, and making it our own by trusting in it.

1. Let us begin, then, at the beginning. The first thing in faith is knowledge. A man cannot believe what he does not know. That is a clear, self-evident axiom. If I have never heard of a thing in all my life, and do not know it, I cannot believe it. And yet there are some persons who have a faith like that of the fuller, who when he was asked what he believed, said, "I believe what the Church believes." "What does the Church believe?" "The Church believes what I believe." "And pray what do you and the Church believe?" "Why we both believe the same thing." Now this man believed nothing, except that the Church was right, but in what he could not tell. It is idle for a man to say, "I am a believer," and yet not to know what he believes; but yet I have seen some persons in this position. A violent sermon has been preached, which has stirred up their blood; the minister has cried, "Believe! Believe! Believe!" and the people on a sudden have got it into their heads that they were believers, and have walked out of their place of worship and said, "I am a believer." And if they were asked, "Pray what do you believe?" they could not give a reason for the hope that was in them. They believe they intend to go to chapel next Sunday; they intend to join that class of people; they intend to be very violent in their singing and very wonderful in their rant; therefore they believe they shall be saved; but what they believe they cannot tell. Now, I hold no man's faith to be sure faith unless he knows what he believes. If he says, "I believe," and does not know what he believes, how can that be true faith? The apostle has said, "How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how can they hear without a preacher? and how can they preach except they be sent?" It is necessary, then, to true faith, that a man should know something of the Bible. Believe me, this is an age when the Bible is not so much thought of as it used to be. Some hundred years ago the world was covered with bigotry, cruelty, and superstition. We always run to extremes, and we have just gone to the other extreme now. It was then said, "One faith is right, down with all others by the rack and by the sword." now it is said, "However

contradictory our creeds may be, they are all right." If we did but use our common sense we should know that it is not so. But some reply, "Such-and-such a doctrine need not be preached and need not be believed." Then, sir, if it need not be preached, it need not be revealed. You impugn the wisdom of God, when you say a doctrine is unnecessary; for you do as much as say that God has revealed something which was not necessary, and he would be as unwise to do more than was necessary, as if he had done less than was necessary. We believe that every doctrine of God's Word ought to be studied by men, and that their faith should lay hold of the whole matter of the Sacred Scriptures, and more especially upon all that part of Scripture which concerns the person of our all-blessed Redeemer. There must be some degree of knowledge before there can be faith. "Search the Scriptures," then, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Christ;" and by searching and reading cometh knowledge, and by knowledge cometh faith, and through faith cometh salvation.

2. But a man may know a thing, and yet not have faith. I may know a thing, and yet not believe it. Therefore assent must go with faith: that is to say, what we know we must also agree unto, as being most certainly the verity of God. Now, in order to faith, it is necessary that I should not only read the Scriptures and understand them, but that I should receive them in my soul as being the very truth of the living God, and I should devoutly with my whole heart receive the whole of the Scripture as being inspired of the Most High, and the whole of the doctrine which he requires me to believe to my salvation. You are not allowed to halve the Scriptures, and to believe what you please; you are not allowed to believe the Scripture with a half-heartedness, for if you do this wilfully, you have not the faith which looks alone to Christ. True faith gives its full assent to the Scriptures; it takes a page and says, "No matter what is in the page, I believe it;" it turns over the next chapter and says, "Herein are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable do wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their destruction; but hard though it be, I believe it." It sees the Trinity; it cannot understand the Trinity in Unity, but it believes it. It sees an atoning sacrifice; there is something difficult in the thought, but it believes it; and whatever it be which it sees in revelation, it devoutly puts its lips to the book, and says,

"I love it all; I give my full, free and hearty assent to every word of it, whether it be the threatening or the promise, the proverb, the precept, or the blessing. I believe that since it is all the Word of God it is all most assuredly true." Whosoever would be saved must know the Scriptures, and must give full assent unto them.

3. But a man may have all this, and yet not possess true faith; for the chief part of faith lies in the last head, namely, in an affiance to the truth; not the believing it merely, but the taking hold of it as being ours, and in the resting on it for salvation. Recumbency on the truth was the word which the old preachers used. You will understand that word. Leaning on it; saying, "This is truth, I trust my salvation on it." Now, true faith, in its very essence rests in this - a leaning upon Christ. It will not save me to know that Christ is a Saviour; but it will save me to trust him to be my Saviour. I shall not be delivered from the wrath to come by believing that his atonement is sufficient, but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge, and my all. The pith, the essence of faith lies in this - a casting one-self on the promise. It is not the lifebuoy on board the ship that saves the man when he is drowning, nor is it his belief that it is an excellent and successful invention. No! He must have it around his loins, or his hand upon it, or else he will sink. To use an old and hackneyed illustration: suppose a fire in the upper room of a house, and the people gathered in the street. A child is in the upper story: how is he to escape? He cannot leap down - that were to be dashed to pieces. A strong man comes beneath, and cries, "Drop into my arms." It is a part of faith to know that the man is there; it is another part of faith to believe that the man is strong; but the essence of faith lies in the dropping down into the man's arms. That is the proof of faith, and the real pith and essence of it. So, sinner, thou art to know that Christ died for sin; thou art also to understand that Christ is able to save, and thou art to believe that; but thou art not saved, unless in addition to that, thou puttest thy trust in him to be thy Saviour, and to be thine for ever. As Hart says in his hymn, which really expresses the gospel -

"Venture on him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus

Can do helpless sinners good."

This is the faith which saves; and however unholy may have been your lives up to this hour, this faith, if given to you at this moment, will blot out all your sins, will change your nature, make you a new man in Christ Jesus, lead you to live a holy life, and make your eternal salvation as secure as if an angel should take you on his bright wings this morning, and carry you immediately to heaven. Have you that faith? That is the one all-important question; for while with faith men are saved, without it men are damned. As Brooks hath said in one of his admirable works, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved, be his sins never so many; but he that believeth not in the Lord Jesus must be damned, be his sins never so few." Hast thou faith? For the text declares, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

II. And now we come to the ARGUMENT, - why, without faith, we cannot be saved.

Now there are some gentlemen present who are saying, "Now we shall see whether Mr. Spurgeon has any logic in him." No, you won't, sirs, because I never pretended to exercise it. I hope I have the logic which can appeal to men's hearts; but I am not very prone to use the less powerful logic of the head, when I can win the heart in another manner. But if it were needful, I should not be afraid to prove that I know more of logic and of many other things than the little men who undertake to censure me. It were well if they knew how to hold their tongues, which is at least a fine part of rhetoric. My argument shall be such as I trust will appeal to the heart and conscience, although it may not exactly please those who are always so fond of syllogistic demonstration -

"Who could a hair divide
Between the west and north-west side."

1. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." And I gather it from the fact that there never has been the case of a man recorded in Scripture who did please God without faith. The 11th chapter of Hebrews is the chapter of the men who pleased God. Listen to their names: "By faith

Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice;" "By faith Enoch was translated;" "By faith Noah built an ark;" "By faith Abraham went out into a place that he should afterwards receive;" "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise;" "By faith Sarah bare Isaac;" "By faith Abraham offered up Isaac;" "By faith Moses gave up the wealth of Egypt;" "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob;" "By faith Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph;" "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel;" "By faith the Red Sea was dried up;" "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down;" "By faith the harlot Rahab was saved;" "And what more shall I say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." But all these were men of faith. Others mentioned in Scripture, have done something; but God did not accept them. Men have humbled themselves, and yet God has not saved them. Ahab did, and yet his sins were never forgiven. Men have repented, and yet have not been saved, because their's was the wrong repentance. Juda repented, and went and hanged himself, and was not saved. Men have confessed their sins, and have not been saved. Saul did it. He said to David, "I have sinned against thee, my son David;" and yet he went on as he did before. Multitudes have confessed the name of Christ, and have done many marvellous things, and yet they have never been pleasing to God, from this simple reason, that they had not faith. And if there be not one mentioned in Scripture, which is the history of some thousand years, it is not likely that in the other two thousand years of the world's history there would have been one, when there was not one during the first four thousand.

2. But the next argument is, faith is the stooping grace, and nothing can make a man stoop without faith. Now, unless man does stoop, his sacrifice cannot be accepted. The angels know this. When they praise God, they do it veiling their faces with their wings. The redeemed know it. When they praise God, they cast their crowns before his feet. Now, a man who has not faith proves that he cannot stoop; for he has not faith for this reason, because he is too proud to believe. He declares he will not yield his intellect, he will not become a child and believe meekly what God tells him to believe. He is too proud, and he cannot enter heaven, because the door of heaven is so low that no one can enter in by it unless they will bow

their heads. There never was a man who could walk into salvation erect. We must go to Christ on our bended knees; for though he is a door big enough for the greatest sinner to come in, he is a door so low that men must stoop if they would be saved. Therefore it is that faith is necessary, because a want of faith is certain evidence of absence of humility.

3. But now for other reasons. Faith is necessary to salvation, because we are told in Scripture that works cannot save. To tell a very familiar story, and even the poorest may not misunderstand what I say: a minister was one day going to preach. He climbed a hill on his road. Beneath him lay the villages, sleeping in their beauty, with the corn-fields motionless in the sunshine; but he did not look at them, for his attention was arrested by a woman standing at her door, and who, upon seeing him, came up to him with the greatest anxiety, and said, "O sir, have you any keys about you? I have broken the key of my drawers, and there are some things I must get directly." Said he, "I have no keys." She was disappointed, expecting that everyone would have some keys. "But suppose," he said, "I had some keys, they might not fit your lock, and therefore you could not get the articles you want. But do not distress yourself, wait till some one else comes up. But," said he, wishing to improve the occasion, "have you ever heard of the key of heaven?" "Ah! yes," she said, "I have lived long enough, and I have gone to Church long enough, to know that if we work hard and get our bread by the sweat of our brow, and act well towards our neighbours, and behave, as the catechism says, lowly and reverently to all our betters, and if we do our duty in that station of life in which it has pleased God to place us, and say our prayers regularly, we shall be saved." "Ah!" said he, "my good woman, that is a broken key, for you have broken the commandments, you have not fulfilled all your duties. It is a good key, but you have broken it." "Pray, sir," said she, believing that he understood the matter, and looking frightened, "What have I left out?" "Why," said he, "the key of heaven is at his girdle; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth?" And explaining it more fully to her, he said, "It is Christ, and Christ alone, that can open heaven to you, and not your good works." "What, minister," said she, "are our good works useless then?" "No," said he, "not after faith. If you believe first, you may have as many good works as you please; but if you believe, you will never trust in them, for if you trust in them you have spoilt them, and

they are not good works any longer. Have as many good works as you please, still put your trust wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ, for if you do not, your key will never unlock heaven's gate." So then, my hearers, we must have true faith, because the old key of works is so broken by us all, that we never shall enter Paradise by it. If any of you pretend that you have no sins, to be very plain with you, you deceive yourselves, and the truth is not in you. If you conceive that by your good works you shall enter heaven, never was there a more fell delusion, and you shall find at the last great day, that your hopes were worthless, and that, like sear leaves from the autumn trees, your noblest doings shall be blown away, or kindled into a flame within you yourselves must suffer for ever. Take heed of your good works; get them after faith, but remember, the way to be saved is simply to believe in Jesus Christ.

4. Again: without faith it is impossible to be saved, and to please God, because without faith there is no union to Christ. Now, union to Christ, is indispensable to our salvation. If I come before God's throne with my prayers, I shall never get them answered, unless I bring Christ with me. The Molossians of old, when they could not get a favour from their king, adopted a singular expedient; they took the king's only son in their arms, and falling on their knees cried, "O king, for thy son's sake, grant our request." He smiled and said, "I deny nothing to those who plead my son's name." It is so with God. He will deny nothing to them man who comes, having Christ at his elbow; but if he comes alone he must be cast away. Union to Christ is, after all, the great point in salvation. Let me tell you a story to illustrate this: the stupendous falls of Niagara have been spoken of in every part of the world; but while they are marvellous to hear of, and wonderful as a spectacle, they have been very destructive to human life, when by accident any have been carried down the cataract. Some years ago, two men, a bargeman and a collier, were in a boat, and found themselves unable to manage it, it being carried so swiftly down the current that they must both inevitably be borne down and dashed to pieces. Persons on the shore saw them, but were unable to do much for their rescue. At last, however, one man was saved by floating a rope to him, which he grasped. The same instant that the rope came into his hand a log floated by the other man. The thoughtless and confused bargeman instead of seizing the rope laid hold on the log. It was a fatal

mistake; they were both in imminent peril, but the one was drawn to shore because he had a connection with the people on the land, whilst the other, clinging to the log, was borne irresistibly along, and never heard of afterwards. Do you not see that here is a practical illustration? Faith is a connection with Christ. Christ is on the shore, so to speak, holding the rope of faith, and if we lay hold of it with the hand of our confidence, he pulls us to shore; but our good works having no connection with Christ, are drifted along down the gulf of fell despair. Grapple them as tightly as we may, even with hooks of steel, they cannot avail us in the least degree. You will see, I am sure, what I wish to show to you. Some object to anecdotes; I shall use them till they have done objecting to them. The truth is never more powerfully set forth to men than by telling them, as Christ did, a story of a certain man with two sons, or a certain householder who went a journey, divided his substance, and gave to some ten talents, to another one.

Faith, then, is an union with Christ. Take care you have it; for if not, cling to your works, and there you go floating down the stream! Cling to your works, and there you go dashing down the gulf! Lost because your works have no hold on Christ and no connection with the blessed Redeemer! But thou, poor sinner, with all thy sin about thee, if the rope is round thy loins, and Christ has hold of it, fear not!

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."

5. Just one more argument, and then I have done with it. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," because it is impossible to persevere in holiness without faith. What a multitude of fair-weather Christians we have in this age! Many Christians resemble the nautilus, which in fine smooth weather swims on the surface of the sea, in a splendid little squadron, like the mighty ships; but the moment the first breath of wind ruffles the waves, they take in their sails and sink into the depths. Many Christians are the same. In good company, in evangelical drawing-rooms, in pious parlors, in chapels and vestries, they are tremendously religious;

but if they are exposed to a little ridicule, if some should smile at them and call them methodist, or presbyterian, or some name of reproach, it is all over with their religion till the next fine day. Then when it is fine weather, and religion will answer their purpose, up go the sails again, and they are as pious as before. Believe me, that kind of religion is worse than irreligion. I do like a man to be thoroughly what he is - a downright man; and if a man does not love God, do not let him say he does; but if he be a true Christian, a follower of Jesus, let him say it and stand up for it; there is nothing to be ashamed of in it; the only thing to be ashamed of is to be hypocritical. Let us be honest to our profession, and it will be our glory. Ah! what would you do without faith in times of persecution? You good and pious people that have no faith, what would you do if the stake were again erected in Smithfield, and if once more the fires consumed the saints to ashes - if the Lollards' toward were again opened, if the rack were again piled, or if even the stocks were used, as they have been used by a Protestant Church as witness the persecution of my predecessor, Benjamin Keach, who was once set in the stocks at Aylesbury, for writing a book against infant baptism. If even the mildest form of persecution were revived, how would the people be scattered abroad! And some of the shepherds would be leaving their flocks. Another anecdote now, and I hope it will lead you to see the necessity of faith, while it may lead me on insensibly to the last part of my discourse. A slaveholding American on one occasion buying a slave, said to the person of whom he was purchasing him, "Tell me honestly what are his faults." Said the seller, "He has no faults that I am aware of but one, and that one is, he will pray." "Ah!" said the purchaser, "I don't like that, but I know something that will cure him of it pretty soon." So the next night Cuffey was surprised by his master in the plantation, while in earnest prayer, praying for his new master, and his master's wife and family. The man stood and listened, but said nothing at that time; but the next morning he called Cuffey, and said, "I do not want to quarrel with you, my man, but I'll have no praying on my premises: so you just drop it." "Massa," said he "me canna leave off praying; me must pray." "I'll teach you to pray, if you are going to keep on at it." "Massa, me must keep on." "Well, then, I'll give you five-and-twenty lashes a day till you leave off." "Massa, if you give me fifty, I must pray." "If that's the way you are saucy to your master, you shall have it directly." So tying him up he gave him five-and-twenty

lashes, and asked him if he would pray again. "Yes, massa, me must pray always, me canna leave off." The master look astonished; he could not understand how a poor saint could keep on praying, when it seemed to do no good, but only brought persecution upon him. He told his wife of it. His wife said, "Why can't you let the poor man pray? He does his work very well; you and I do not care about praying, but there's no harm in letting him pray, if he gets on with his work." "But I don't like it," said the master, "he almost frightened me to death. You should see how he looked at me." "Was he angry?" "No, I should not have minded that; but after I had beaten him, he looked at me with tears in his eyes, but as if he pitied me more than himself." That night the master could not sleep; he tossed to and fro on his bed, his sins were brought to his remembrance; he remembered he had persecuted a saint of God. Rising in his bed, he said, "Wife, will you pray for me?" "I never prayed in my life," said she "I cannot pray for you." "I am lost," he said, "if somebody does not pray for me; I cannot pray for myself." "I don't know any one on the estate that knows how to pray, except Cuffey," said his wife. The bell was rung, and Cuffey was brought in. Taking hold of his black servant's hand, the master said, "Cuffey, can you pray for your master?" "Massa," said he, "me been praying for you eber since you flogged me, and me mean to pray always for you." Down went Cuffey on his knees, and poured out his soul in tears, and both husband and wife were converted. That negro could not have done this without faith. Without faith he would have gone away directly, and said, "Massa, me leave off praying; me no like de white man's whip." But because he persevered through his faith, the Lord honored him, and gave him his master's soul for his hire.

III. And now in conclusion, THE QUESTION, the vital question. Dear hearer, have you faith? Dost thou believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart? If so, thou mayest hope to be saved. Ay, thou mayest conclude with absolute certainty that thou shalt never see perdition. Have you faith? Shall I help you to answer that question? I will give you three tests, as briefly as ever I can, not to weary you, and then farewell this morning. He that has faith has renounced his own righteousness. If thou puttest one atom of trust in thyself thou hast no faith; if thou dost place even a particle of reliance upon anything else but what Christ did, thou hast no faith. If thou dost trust in thy works, then thy works are anti-christ, and

Christ and anti-christ can never go together. Christ will have all or nothing; he must be a whole Saviour, or none at all. If, then, you have faith, you can say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling."

The true faith may be known by this, that it begets a great esteem, for the person of Christ. Dost thou love Christ? Couldst thou die for him? Dost thou seek to serve him? Dost thou love his people? Canst thou say,

"Jesus, I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to my ear."

Oh! if thou dost not love Christ thou dost not believe in him; for to believe in Christ begets love. And yet more: he that has true faith will have true obedience. If a man says he has faith, and has no works, he lies; if any man declares that he believes on Christ, and yet does not lead a holy life, he makes a mistake; for while we do not trust in good works, we know that faith always begets good works. Faith is the father of holiness, and he has not the parent who loves not the child. God's blessings are blessings with both his hands. In the one hand he gives pardon; but in the other hand he always gives holiness; and no man can have the one unless he has the other.

And now, dear hearers, shall I down upon my knees, and entreat you for Christ's sake to answer this question in your own silent chamber: Have you faith? Oh! answer it, Yes, or No. Leave off saying, "I do not know," or "I do not care." Ah! you will care, one day, when the earth is reeling, and the world is tossing to and fro; ye will care when God shall summon you to judgment, and when he shall condemn the faithless and the unbelieving. Oh! that ye were wise - that ye would care now, and if any of you feel your need of Christ, let me beg of you, for Christ's sake, now to seek faith in him who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission, and who, if he has given you repentance, will give you remission too. Oh sinners, who know your sins! "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and ye shall be saved." Cast yourselves upon his love and blood, his doing and his dying,

his miseries and his merits; and if you do this you shall never fall, but you shall be saved now, and saved in that great day when not to be saved will be horrible indeed. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Lay hold on him, touch the hem of his garment, and ye shall be healed. May God help you so to do; for Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

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Faith And Life

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. - 2 Peter 1:1-4

The two most important things in our holy religion are faith and life. He who shall rightly understand these two words is not far from being a master in experimental theology. Faith and life! these are vital points to a Christian. They possess so intimate a connection with each other that they are by no means to be severed; God hath so joined them together, let no man seek to put them asunder. You shall never find true faith unattended by true godliness; on the other hand, you shall never discover a truly holy life which has not for its root and foundation a living faith upon the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Woe unto those who seek after the one without the other! There be some who cultivate faith and forget holiness; these may be very high in orthodoxy, but they shall be very deep in damnation, in that day when God shall condemn those who hold the truth in unrighteousness, and make the doctrine of Christ to pander to their lusts. There are others who have strained after holiness of

life, but have denied the faith; these are comparable unto the Pharisees of old, of whom the Master said, they were "whitewashed sepulchres;" they were fair to look upon externally, but inwardly, because the living faith was not there, they were full of dead men's bones and all manner of uncleanness. Ye must have faith, for this is the foundation; ye must have holiness of life, for this is the superstructure. Of what avail is the mere foundation of a building to a man in the day of tempest? Can he hide himself among sunken stones and concrete? He wants a house to cover him, as well as a foundation upon which that house might have been built; even so we need the superstructure of spiritual life if we would have comfort in the day of doubt. But seek not a holy life without faith, for that would be to erect a house which can afford no permanent shelter, because it has no foundation on a rock—a house which must come down with a tremendous crash in the day when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon it. Let faith and life be put together, and, like the two abutments of an arch, they shall make your piety strong. Like the horses of Pharaoh's chariot, they pull together gloriously. Like light and heat streaming from the same sun, they are alike full of blessing. Like the two pillars of the temple, they are for glory and for beauty. They are two streams from the fountain of grace; two lamps lit with holy fire; two olive-trees watered by heavenly care; two stars carried in Jesus' hand. The Lord grant that we may have both of these to perfection, that his name may be praised.

Now, it will be clear to all, that in the four verses before us, our apostle has most excellently set forth the necessity of these two things—twice over he insists upon the faith, and twice over upon holiness of life. We will take the first occasion first.

I. Observe, in the first place, what he says concerning the character and the origin of faith, and then concerning the character and origin of spiritual life.

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." So far the faith. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according

as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." These two verses, you see, concern the spiritual life which comes with the faith.

Let us begin where Peter begins, with the FAITH. You have here a description of true saving faith.

First, you have a description of its source. He says, "to them that have obtained like precious faith." See, then, my brethren, faith does not grow in man's heart by nature; it is a thing which is obtained. It is not a matter which springs up by a process of education, or by the example and excellent instruction of our parents; it is a thing which has to be obtained. Not imitation, but regeneration; not development, but conversion. All our good things come from without us, only evil can be educed from within us. Now, that which is obtained by us must be given to us; and well are we taught in Scripture that "faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Although faith is the act of man, yet it is the work of God. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" but that heart must, first of all, have been renewed by divine grace before it ever can be capable of the act of saving faith. Faith, we say, is man's act, for we are commanded to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and we shall be saved. At the same time, faith is God's gift, and wherever we find it, we may know that it did not come there from the force of nature, but from a work of divine grace. How this magnifies the grace of God, my brethren, and how low this casts human nature! Faith. Is it not one of the simplest things? Merely to depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, does it not seem one of the easiest of virtues? To be nothing, and to let him be everything—to be still, and to let him work for me, does not this seem to be the most elementary of all the Christian graces? Indeed, so it is; and yet, even to this first principle and rudiment, poor human nature is so fallen and so utterly undone, that it cannot attain unto! Brethren, the Lord must not only open the gates of heaven to us at last, but he must open the gates of our heart to faith at the first. It is not enough for us to know that he must make us perfect in every good work to do his will, but we must be taught that he must even give us a desire after Christ; and when this is given, he must enable us to give the grip of the hand of faith whereby Jesus Christ

becomes our Saviour and Lord. Now, the question comes (and we will try and make the text of today, a text of examination all the way through) have we obtained this faith? Are we conscious that we have been operated upon by the Holy Spirit? Is there a vital principle in us which was not there originally? Do we know today the folly of carnal confidence? Have we a hope that we have been enabled through divine grace to cast away all our own righteousness and every dependence, and are we now, whether we sink or swim, resting entirely upon the person, the righteousness, the blood, the intercession, the precious merit of our Lord Jesus Christ? If not, we have cause enough to tremble; but if we have, the while the apostle writes, "Unto them that have obtained like precious faith," he writes to us, and across the interval of centuries his benediction comes as full and fresh as ever, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you."

Peter having described the origin of this faith, proceeds to describe its object. The word "through" in our translation, might, quite as correctly, have been rendered "in"—"faith in the righteousness of our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." True faith, then, is a faith in Jesus Christ, but it is a faith in Jesus Christ as divine. That man who believes in Jesus Christ as simply a prophet, as only a great teacher, has not the faith which will save him. Charity would make us hope for many Unitarians, but honesty compels us to condemn them without exception, so far as vital godliness is concerned. It matters not how intelligent may be their conversation, nor how charitable may be their manners, nor how patriotic may be their spirit, if they reject Jesus Christ as very God of very God, we believe they shall without doubt perish everlastingly. Our Lord uttered no dubious words when he said, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and we must not attempt to be more liberal than the Lord himself. Little allowance can I make for one who receives Jesus the prophet, and rejects him as God. It is an atrocious outrage upon common sense for a man to profess to be a believer in Christ at all, if he does not receive his divinity. I would undertake, at any time, to prove to a demonstration, that if Christ were not God, he was the grossest impostor who ever lived. One of two things, he was either divine or a villain. There is no stopping between the two. I cannot imagine a character more evil than that which would be borne by a man who should lead his followers to adore him as God, without ever putting in a word by way of caveat, to stop their idolatry;

nay, who should have spoken in terms so ambiguous, that two thousand years after his death, there should be found millions of persons resting upon him as God. I say, if he were not God, the atrocity of his having palmed himself upon us, his disciples, as God, puts aside altogether from consideration any of the apparent virtues of his life. He was the grossest of all deceivers, if he was not "very God of very God." O beloved, you and I have found no difficulties here; when we have beheld the record of his miracles, when we have listened to the testimony of his divine Father, when we have heard the word of the inspired apostles, when we have felt the majesty of his own divine influence in our own hearts, we have graciously accepted him as "the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father;" and, as John bear witness of him and said, "The Word was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God," even so have we received him; so that at this day, he that was born of the virgin Mary, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews, is to us "God over all, blessed for ever."

"Jesus is worthy to receive
Honour and power divine:
And blessings more than we can give,
Be Lord for ever thine."

Now, beloved friends, have we heartily and joyfully received Jesus Christ as God? My hearer, if thou hast not, I pray thee seek of God the faith that saves, for thou hast it not as yet, nor art thou in the way to it. Who but a God could bear the weight of sin? Who but a God shall be the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" Concerning whom but a God could it be said, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." We have to do with Christ, and we should be consumed if he changed; inasmuch, then, as he does not change, and we are not consumed, he must be divine, and our soul rolls the entire burden of its care and guilt upon the mighty shoulders of the everlasting God, who -

"Bears the earth's huge pillars up,
And spreads the heavens abroad."

Remark in further dwelling upon the text, that the apostle has put in

another word beside "God", and that is, "of God and our Saviour." As if the glory of the Godhead might be too bright for us, he has attempered it by gentler words "our Saviour." Now, to trust Jesus Christ as divine, will save no man, unless there be added to this a resting in him as the great propitiatory sacrifice. Jesus Christ is our Saviour because he became a substitute for guilty man. He having taken upon himself the form of manhood by union with our nature, stood in the room, place, and stead of sinners. When the whole tempest of divine wrath was about to spend itself on man, he endured it all for his elect; when the great whip of the law must fall, he bared his own shoulders to the lash; when the cry was heard, "Awake, O sword!" it was against Christ the Shepherd, against the man who was the fellow to the eternal God. And because he thus suffered in the place and stead of man, he received power from on high to become the Saviour of man, and to bring many sons into glory, because he had been made perfect through suffering. Now, have we received Jesus Christ as our Saviour? Happy art thou, if thou hast laid thy hand upon the head of him who was slain for sinners. Be glad, and rejoice in the Lord without ceasing, if today that blessed Redeemer who has ascended upon high has become thy Saviour, delivered thee from sin, passing by thy transgressions, and making thee to be accepted in the beloved. A Saviour is he to us when he delivers us from the curse, punishment, guilt and power of sin, "He shall save his people from their sins." O thou great God, be thou my Saviour, mighty to save.

But be pleased to notice the word "righteousness." It is a faith in the righteousness of our God and our Saviour. In these days, certain divines have tried to get rid of all idea of atonement; they have taught that faith in Jesus Christ would save men, apart from any faith in him as a sacrifice. Ah, brethren, it does not say, "faith in the teaching of God our Saviour;" I do not find here that it is written, "faith in the character of God our Saviour, as our exemplar." No, but "faith in the righteousness of God our Saviour." That righteousness, like a white robe, must be cast around us. I have not received Jesus Christ at all, but I am an adversary and an enemy to him, unless I have received him as Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness. There is his perfect life; that life was a life for me; it contains all the virtues, in it there is no spot; it keeps the law of God, and makes it honourable; my faith takes that righteousness of Jesus Christ,

and it is cast about me, and I am then so beautifully, nay, so perfectly arrayed, that even the eye of God can see neither spot nor blemish in me. Have we, then, today a faith in the righteousness of God our Saviour? For no faith but this can ever bring the soul into a condition of acceptance before the Most High. "Why," saith one, "these are the very simplicities of the gospel." Beloved, I know they are, and, therefore, do we deal them out this morning, for, thanks be to God, it is the simplicities which lie at the foundation; and it is rather by simplicities than by mysteries that a Christian is to try himself and to see whether he be in the faith or no. Put the question, brethren, have we, then, this like precious faith in God and our Saviour Jesus Christ?

Our apostle has not finished the description, without saying that it is "like precious faith." All faith is the same sort of faith. Our faith may not be like that of Peter, in degree, but if it be genuine, it is like it as to its nature, its origin, its objects, and its results. Here is a blessed equality. Speak of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," you shall only find these things carried out within the Church of Christ. There is indeed a blessed equality here, for the poorest little-faith who ever crept into heaven on its hands and knees, has a like precious faith with the mighty apostle Peter. I say, brethren, if the one be gold, so is the other; if the one can move mountains, so can the other; for remember, that the privileges of mountain-moving, and of plucking up the trees, and casting them into the sea, are not given to great faith, but "if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed," it shall be done. Little faith has a royal descent and is as truly of divine birth as is the greatest and fullest assurance which ever made glad the heart of man, hence it ensures the same inheritance at the last, and the same safety by the way. It is "like precious faith."

He tells us too, that faith is "precious;" and is it not precious? for it deals with precious things, with precious promises, with precious blood, with a precious redemption, with all the preciousness of the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Well may that be a precious faith which supplies our greatest want, delivers us from our greatest danger, and admits us to the greatest glory. Well may that be called "precious faith," which is the symbol of our election, the evidence of our calling, the root of all our graces, the channel of communion, the weapon of prevalence, the

shield of safety, the substance of hope, the evidence of eternity, the guerdon of immortality, and the passport of glory. O for more of this inestimably precious faith. Precious faith, indeed it is.

When the apostle, Simon Peter, writes "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," does he write to you? does he write to me? If not, if we are not here addressed, remember that we can never expect to hear the voice which says, "Come ye blessed of my Father;" but we are today in such a condition, that dying as we now are, "Depart ye cursed" must be the thunder which shall roll in our ears, and drive us down to hell. So much, then, concerning faith.

Now we shall turn to notice with great brevity, the LIFE. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." Here we have, then, brethren, the fountain and source of our spiritual life. Just as faith is a boon which is to be obtained, so you will perceive that our spiritual life is a principle which is given. A thing which is given to us, too, by divine power—"according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." To give life at all is the essential attribute of God. This is an attribute which he will not alienate; to save and to destroy belong unto the Sovereign of heaven. "He can create, and he destroy," is one of the profoundest notes in the ascription of our praise. Suppose a corpse before us. How great a pretender would he be who should boast that it was in his power to restore it to life. Certainly, it would be even a greater pretence if anyone should say that he could give to himself or to another the divine life, the spiritual life by which a man is made a Christian. My brethren, you who are partakers of the divine nature, know that by nature you were dead in trespasses and sins, and would have continued so until this day if there had not been an interposition of divine energy on your behalf. There you lay in the grave of your sin, rotten, corrupt. The voice of the minister called to you, but you did not hear. You were often bidden to come forth, but ye did not and could not come. But when the Lord said, "Lazarus, come forth," then Lazarus came forth; and when he said to you,

"Live," then you lived also, and the spiritual life beat within you, with joy and peace through believing. This we ought never to forget, because, let us never fail to remember, that if our religion is a thing which sprang from ourselves, it is of the flesh, and must die. That which is born of the flesh in its best and most favourable moments, is flesh, and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Ye must be born again." If a man's religious life be only a refinement of his ordinary life, if it be only a high attainment of the natural existence, then is it not the spiritual life, and does not prepare him for the eternal life before the throne of God. No, we must have a supernatural spark of heavenly flame kindled within us. Just as nothing but the soul can quicken the body and make it live, so the Spirit alone can quicken the soul and make the soul live. We must have the third master-principle infused, or else we shall be but natural men, made after the image of the first Adam. We must have, I say, the new spirit, or else we shall not be like the second Adam, who was made a quickening spirit. Only of the Christian can we say that he is spirit, soul, and body; the ungodly man has only soul and body, and as to spiritual existence, he is as dead as the body would be if there were no soul. Now the implantation of this new principle, called the spirit, is a work of divine power. Divine power! What stupendous issues are grasped in that term, divine power! It was this which digged the deep foundations of the earth and sea! Divine power, it is this which guides the marches of the stars of heaven! Divine power! it is this which holds up the pillars of the universe, and which one day shall shake them, and hurry all things back to their native nothingness. Yet the selfsame power which is required to create a world and to sustain it, is required to make man a Christian, and unless that power be put forth, the spiritual life is not in any one of us.

You will perceive, dear friends, that the apostle Peter wished to see this divine life in a healthy and vigorous state, and therefore he prays that grace and peace may be multiplied. Divine power is the foundation of this life; grace is the food it feeds upon, and peace is the element in which it lives most healthily. Give a Christian much grace, and his spiritual life will be like the life of a man who is well clothed and nurtured; keep the spiritual life without abundant grace, and it becomes lean, faint, and ready to die; and though die it cannot, yet will it seem as though it gave up the ghost, unless fresh grace be bestowed. Peace, I say, is the element

in which it flourishes most. Let a Christian be much disturbed in mind, let earthly cares get into his soul, let him have doubts and fears as to his eternal safety, let him lose a sense of reconciliation to God, let his adoption be but dimly before his eyes, and you will not see much of the divine life within him. But oh! if God shall smile upon the life within you, and you get much grace from God, and your soul dwells much in the balmy air of heavenly peace, then shall you be strong to exercise yourself unto godliness, and your whole life shall adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour.

Observe, again, that in describing this life, he speaks of it as one which was conferred upon us by our being called. He says, "We were called unto glory and virtue." I find translators differ here. Many of them think the word should be "By"—"We are called by the glory and virtue of God"—that is, there is a manifestation of all the glorious attributes of God, and of all the efficacious virtue and energy of his power in the calling of every Christian. Simon Peter himself was at his fishing and in his boat, but Jesus said to him, "Follow me;" and at once he followed Christ. He says there was in that calling, the divine glory and virtue; and, doubtless, when you and I shall get to heaven, and see things as they are, we shall discover in our effectual calling of God to grace, a glory as great as in the creation of worlds, and a virtue as great as in the healing of the sick, when virtue went from the garments of a Saviour. Now, can we say today, that we have a life within us which is the result of divine power, and have we, upon searching ourselves, reason to believe, dear friends, that there is that within us which distinguishes us from other men, because we have been called out by mankind by the glory and energy of the divine power? I am afraid some of us must say "Nay." Then the Lord in his mercy yet bring us into the number of his people. But if we can, however, tremblingly say, "Yes, I trust there is something of the life in me;" then as Peter did so, do I wish for you that benediction, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." O brethren, whatever men may say against the faith of God, there is nothing in the world which creates virtue like true faith. Wherever true faith enters, though it be into the heart of a harlot or of a thief, what a change it makes! See her there; she has polluted herself many times; she has gone far into sin. Mary has been a sinner; she hears

the preaching of the Saviour; standing in the crowd she listens to him one day as he preaches concerning the prodigal, and how the loving father pressed him to his bosom; she comes to Jesus and she finds forgiveness. Is she a harlot any longer? Nay, there she is, washing his feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. The woman who was a sinner, hates her evil ways and loves her gracious Lord. We may say of her, "But she is washed, but she is sanctified, but she is saved." Take Saul of Tarsus. Foaming with blood, breathing out threatenings, he is going to Damascus to drag the saints of God to prison. On the road he is struck down; by divine mercy he is led to put his trust in Jesus. Is he a persecutor any longer? See that earnest apostle beaten with rods—shipwrecked—in labours more abundant than all the rest of them—counting not his life dear unto him, that he may win Christ and be found in him. Saul of Tarsus becomes a majestic proof of what the grace of God can do. See Zaccheus, the grasping publican, distributing his wealth, the Ephesians burning their magical books, the jailer washing the apostle's stripes. Take the case of many now present. Let memory refresh itself this morning, with the recollection of the change which has been wrought in you. We have nothing to boast of; God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Christ, but yet some of us are wonderful instances of renewing grace. We were unclean, our mouths could utter blasphemy; our temper was hot and terrible; our hands were unrighteous; we were altogether as an unclean thing, but how changed now! Again, I say, we boast of nothing which we now are, for by the grace of God we are what we are, yet the change is something to be wondered at. Has divine grace wrought this change in you? Be not weary with my reiteration of this question. Let me put it again to you till I get an answer; nay, till I force you to an answer: Have you this precious faith? Can you not answer the question? Then, have you not that divine life, that life which is given by divine calling? If you have the one, you have the other; and if you have not both, you have neither; for where there is the one, the other must come, and where the one has come, the other has been there.

II. I have thus fully but feebly brought the subject before you, allow me to remind you that another verse remains which handles the same topics. In the fourth verse, he deals with the privileges of faith, and also with the privileges of the spiritual life.

Notice the PRIVILEGE OF FAITH first. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises"—here is the faith, "That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Here is the life resulting from the faith. Now, the privileges of faith first. The privileges of faith are, that we have given to us "Exceeding great and precious promises." "Great and precious"—two words which do not often come together. Many things are great which are not precious, such as great rocks, which are of little value; on the other hand, many things are precious which are not great—such as diamonds and other jewels, which cannot be very great if they be very precious. But here we have promises which are so great, that they are not less than infinite, and so precious, that they are not less than divine. I shall not attempt to speak about their greatness or their preciousness, but just give a catalogue of them, and leave you to guess at both. We have some of them which are like birds in the hands—we have them already; other promises are like birds in the bush, only that they are just as valuable and as sure as those which are in the hand.

Note here, then, we have received by precious faith the promise and pardon. Hark thee, my soul, all thy sins are forgiven thee. He who hath faith in Christ hath no sin to curse him, his sins are washed away, they have ceased to be; they have been carried on the scape-goat's head into the wilderness; they are drowned in the Red Sea; they are blotted out; they are thrown behind God's back; they are cast into the depths of the sea. Here is a promise of perfect pardon. Is not this great and precious?—as great as your sins are; and if your sins demanded a costly ransom, this precious promise is as great as the demand.

Then comes the righteousness of Christ: you are not only pardoned, that is, washed and made clean, but you are dressed, robed in garments such as no man could ever weave. The vesture is divine. Jehovah himself has wrought out your righteousness for you; the holy life of Jesus the Son of God, has become your beautiful dress, and you are covered with it. Christian, is not this an exceeding great and precious promise? The law was great—this righteousness is as great as the law. The law asked a precious revenue from man, more than humanity could pay—the

righteousness of Christ has paid it all. Is it not great and precious?

Then next comes reconciliation. You were strangers, but you are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Once aliens, but now fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. Is not this great and precious?

Then comes your adoption. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be we suffer with him that we may be glorified together." Oh, how glorious is this great and precious promise of adoption!

Then we have the promise of providence: "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." "Thy place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." "Thy bread shall be given thee and thy waters shall be sure." "As thy days thy strength shall be." "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God." "When thou passest through the rivers, I will be with thee, the floods shall not overflow thee. When thou goest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." When I think of providence, the greatness of its daily gifts, and the preciousness of its hourly boons, I may well say, here is an exceeding great and precious promise.

Then you have the promise too, that you shall never taste of death but shall only sleep in Jesus. "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they cease from their labours; and their works do follow them." Nor does the promise cease here, you have the promise of a resurrection. "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Beloved, we know that if Christ rose from the dead, so also them who sleep in Jesus, will the Lord bring with him. Nor is this all, for we shall reign with Jesus; at his coming, we shall be glorified with him, we shall sit upon his throne, even as he has overcome and sits with his Father upon his throne. The harps of heaven, the streets

of glory, the trees of paradise, the river of the water of life, the eternity of immaculate bliss—all these, God hath promised to them who love him. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;" and by our faith we have grasped them, and we have today "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Now, beloved, see how rich faith makes you!—what treasure!—what a costly regalia!—what gold mines!—what oceans of wealth!—what mountains of sparkling treasures has God conferred upon you by faith!

But we must not forget the life, and with that we close. The text says, he has given us this promise, "that"—"in order that." What then? What are all these treasures lavished for? For what these pearls? For what these jewels? For what, I say, these oceans of treasure? For what? Is the end worthy of the means? Surely God never giveth greater store than the thing which he would purchase will be worth. We may suppose, then, the end to be very great when such costly means have been given; and what is the end? Why, "that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." O, my brethren, if you have these mercies today by faith, do see to it that the result is obtained. Be not content to be made rich in these great and precious promises, without answering God's design in your being thus enriched. That design, you perceive, is twofold; it is first that you may be partakers of the divine nature; and, secondly, that you may escape the corruption which is in the world.

To be a partaker of the divine nature is not, of course, to become God. That cannot be. The essence of Deity is not to be participated in by the creature. Between the creature and the Creator there must ever be a gulf fixed in respect of essence; but as the first man Adam was made in the image of God, so we, by the renewal of the Holy Spirit, are in a yet diviner sense made in the image of the Most High, and are partakers of the divine nature. We are, by grace, made like God. "God is love;" we become love—"He that loveth is born of God." God is truth; we become true, and we love that which is true, and we hate the darkness and the lie. God is good, it is his very name; he makes us good by his grace, so that we become the pure in heart who shall see God. Nay, I will say this, that we become

partakers of the divine nature in even a higher sense than this—in fact, in any sense, anything short of our being absolutely divine. Do we not become members of the body of the divine person of Christ? And what sort of union is this—"members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones?" The same blood which flows in the head flows in the hand, and the same life which quickens Christ, quickens his people; for, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Nay, as if this were not enough, we are married into Christ. He hath betrothed us unto himself in righteousness and in faithfulness; and as the spouse must, in the nature of things, be a partaker of the same nature as the husband, so Jesus Christ first became partaker of flesh and blood that they twain might be one flesh; and then he makes his Church partakers of the same spirit, that they twain may be one spirit; for he who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Oh, marvellous mystery! we look into it, but who shall understand it? One with Jesus, by eternal union one, married to him; so one with him that the branch is not more one with the vine than we are a part of the Lord, our Saviour, and our Redeemer. Rejoice in this, brethren, ye are made partakers of the divine nature, and all these promises are given to you in order that you may show this forth among the sons of men, that ye are like God, and not like ordinary men; that ye are different now from what flesh and blood would make you, having been made participators of the nature of God.

Then the other result which follows from it, was this, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Ah, beloved, it were ill that a man who is alive should dwell in corruption. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" said the angel to Magdalene. Should the living dwell among the dead? Should divine life be found amongst the corruptions of worldly lusts? The bride of Christ drunken! Frequenting the ale-house! A member of Christ's body found intoxicated in the streets, or lying, or blaspheming, or dishonest! God forbid. Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them members of a harlot? How can I drink the cup of the Lord, and drink the cup of Belial? How can it be possible that I can have life, and yet dwell in the black, dark, foul, filthy, pestiferous tomb of the world's lusts? Surely, brethren, from these open lusts and sins ye have escaped: have ye also escaped from slothfulness? Have ye clean escaped from carnal security? Are we seeking day by day to live above worldliness,

and love of the things of the world, and the ensnaring avarice which they nourish? Remember, it is for this that you have been enriched with the treasures of God. Do not, oh, I conjure you, do not, chosen of God and beloved by him, and so graciously enriched, do not suffer all this lavish treasure to be wasted upon you.

There is nothing which my heart desires more than to see you, the members of this Church, distinguished for holiness: it is the Christian's crown and glory. An unholy Church! it is of no use to the world, and of no esteem among men. Oh! it is an abomination, hell's laughter, heaven's abhorrence. And the larger the Church, the more influential, the worse nuisance does it become, when it becomes dead and unholy. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world, have been brought upon her by an unholy Church. Whence came the darkness of the dark ages? From the Church of Rome. And if we want to see the world again sitting in Egyptian darkness, bound with fetters of iron, we have only to give up the faith, and to renounce holiness of life, and we may drag the world down again to the limbo of superstition, and bind her fast in chains of ignorance and vice. O Christian, the vows of God are upon you. You are God's priest: act as such. You are God's king: reign over your lusts. You are God's chosen: do not associate with Belial. Heaven is your portion; live like a heavenly spirit, so shall you prove that you have the true faith; but except ye do this, your end shall be to lift up your eyes in hell, and find yourself mistaken when it will be too late to seek or find a remedy. The Lord give us the faith and the life, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Faith And Regeneration

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begot loveth him also that is begotten of him. - 1 John 5:1

For the preacher of the gospel to make full proof of his ministry will be a task requiring much divine teaching. Besides much care in the manner and spirit, he will need guidance as to his matter. One point of difficulty will be to preach the whole truth in fair proportion, never exaggerating one doctrine, never enforcing one point, at the expense of another, never keeping back any part, nor yet allowing it undue prominence. For practical result will much depend upon an equal balance, and a right dividing of the word. In one case this matter assumes immense importance because it affects vital truths, and may lead to very serious results unless rightly attended to; I refer to the elementary facts involved in the work of Christ for us, and the operations of the Holy Spirit in us. Justification by faith is a matter about which there must be no obscurity much less equivocation; and at the same time we must distinctly and determinately insist upon it that regeneration is necessary to every soul that shall enter heaven. "Ye must be born again" is as much a truth as that clear gospel statement, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is to be feared that some zealous brethren have preached the doctrine of justification by faith not only so boldly and so plainly, but also so baldly and so out of all connection with other truth, that they have led men into presumptuous confidences, and have appeared to lend their countenance to a species of Antinomianism very much to be dreaded. From a dead, fruitless, inoperative faith we may earnestly pray, "Good Lord, deliver us," yet may we be unconsciously, fostering it. Moreover to stand up and cry, "Believe, believe, believe," without explaining what is to be believed, to lay the whole stress of salvation upon faith without explaining what salvation is, and showing that it means deliverance from the power as well as from the guilt of sin, may seem to a fervent revivalist to be the proper thing for the occasion, but those who have watched the result of such teaching have had grave cause to question whether as much hurt may not be done by it as good. On the other hand, it is our sincere conviction that there is equal danger in the other extreme. We are most certain that a man must be made a new creature in Christ Jesus, or he is not saved; but some have seen so clearly the importance of this truth that they are for ever and always dwelling upon the great change of conversion, and its fruits, and its consequences, and they hardly appear to remember the glad tidings that whosoever believeth on Christ Jesus hath everlasting life. Such teachers are apt to set up so high a standard of

experience, and to be so exacting as to the marks and signs of a true born child of God, that they greatly discourage sincere seekers, and fall into a species of legality from which we may again say, "Good Lord, deliver us." Never let us fail most plainly to testify to the undoubted truth that true faith in Jesus Christ saves the soul, for if we do not we shall hold in legal bondage many who ought long ago to have enjoyed peace, and to have entered into the liberty of the children of God.

It may not be easy to keep these two things in their proper position, but we must aim at it if we would be wise builders. John did so in his teaching. If you turn to the third chapter of his gospel it is very significant that while he records at length our Saviour's exposition of the new birth to Nicodemus, yet in that very same chapter he gives us what is perhaps the plainest piece of gospel in all the Scriptures: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So, too, in the chapter before us he insists upon a man's being born of God; he brings that up again and again, but evermore does he ascribe wondrous efficacy to faith; he mentions faith as the index of our being born again, faith as overcoming the world, faith as possessing the inward witness, faith as having eternal life—indeed, he seems as if he could not heap honour enough upon believing, while at the same time he insists upon the grave importance of the inward experience connected with the new birth.

Now, if such difficulty occurs to the preacher, we need not wonder that it also arises with the hearer, and causes him questioning. We have known many who, by hearing continually the most precious doctrine that belief in Jesus Christ is saving, have forgotten other truths, and have concluded that they were saved when they were not, have fancied they believed when as yet they were total strangers to the experience which always attends true faith. They have imagined faith to be the same thing as a presumptuous confidence of safety in Christ, not grounded upon the divine word when rightly understood, nor proved by any facts in their own souls. Whenever self-examination has been proposed to them they have avoided it as an assault upon their assurance, and when they have been urged to try themselves by gospel tests, they have defended their

false peace by the notion that to raise a question about their certain salvation would be unbelief. Thus, I fear, the conceit of supposed faith in Christ has placed them in an almost hopeless position, since the warnings and admonitions of the gospel have been set aside by their fatal persuasion that it is needless to attend to them, and only necessary to cling tenaciously to the belief that all has been done long ago for us by Christ Jesus, and that godly fear and careful walking are superfluities, if not actually an offence against the gospel. On the other hand, we have known others who have received the doctrine of justification by faith as a part of their creed, and yet have not accepted it as a practical fact that the believer is saved. They so much feel that they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds, that they are always looking within themselves for evidences, and are the subjects of perpetual doubts. Their natural and frequent song is -

"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?"

These are a class of people to be much more pitied than condemned. Though I would be the very last to spread unbelief, I would be the very first to inculcate holy anxiety. It is one thing for a person to be careful to know that he is really in Christ, and quite another thing for him to doubt the promises of Christ, supposing that they are really made to him. There is a tendency in some hearts to look too much within, and spend more time studying their outward evidences and their inward feelings, than in learning the fullness, freeness, and all sufficiency of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. They too much obscure the grand evangelical truth that the believer's acceptance with God is not in himself, but in Christ Jesus, that we are cleansed through the blood of Jesus, that we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, and are, in a word, "accepted in the Beloved." I earnestly long that these two doctrines may be well balanced in your souls. Only the Holy Spirit can teach you this. This is a narrow path which the eagle's eye has not seen, and the lions whelp has not trodden. He whom the Holy Ghost shall instruct will not give way to presumption and despise the Spirit's work within, neither will he forget that salvation is of

the Lord Jesus Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The text appears to me to blend these two truths in a very delightful harmony, and we will try to speak of them, God helping us.

"He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." We shall consider this morning, first of all, the believing which is here intended; and then, secondly, how it is a sure proof of regeneration; and then, thirdly, dwelling for awhile upon the closing part of the verse we shall show how it becomes an argument for Christian love: "Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."

I. WHAT IS THE BELIEVING INTENDED IN THE TEXT? We are persuaded, first of all, that the believing here intended is that which our Lord and his apostles exhorted men to exercise, and to which the promise of salvation is always appended in the word of God; as for instance that faith which Peter inculcated when he said to Cornelius, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins;" and which our Lord commanded when he came into Galilee, saying to men, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark i. 15). Certain persons have been obliged to admit that the apostles commanded, and exhorted, and besought men to believe, but they tell us the kind of believing which the apostles bade men exercise was not saving faith. Now, God forbid we should ever in our zeal to defend a favorite position, be driven to an assertion so monstrous. Can we imagine for a moment apostles with burning zeal and ardor, inspired by the Spirit of God within them, going about the world exhorting men to exercise a faith which after all would not save them? To what purpose did they run on so fruitless an errand, so tantalizing to human need, so barren of results? When our Lord bade his disciples go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and added, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," the faith which was to be preached was evidently none other than a saving faith, and it is frivolous to say otherwise. I must confess that I felt shocked the other day to read in a certain sermon the remark that the words of Paul to the jailor "were spoken in a conversation held at midnight under peculiar circumstances, and the evangelist who wrote them was not present at the interview."

Why, had it been at high noon, and had the whole world been present, the apostle could have given no fitter answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" than the one he did give, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is, I repeat, a mere frivolity or worse, to say that the faith enjoined by the apostles was a mere human faith which does not save, and that there is no certainty that such faith saves the soul. That cause must be desperate that calls for such a defence.

Furthermore, the faith here intended is the duty of all men. Read the text again: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." It can never be less than man's duty to believe the truth; that Jesus is the Christ is the truth, and it is the duty of every man to believe it. I understand her by "believing," confidence in Christ, and it is surely the duty of men to confide in that which is worthy of confidence, and that Jesus Christ is worthy of the confidence of all men is certain, it is therefore the duty of men to confide in him.

Inasmuch as the gospel command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," is addressed by divine authority to every creature, it is the duty of every man so to do. What saith John: "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," and our Lord himself assures us, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." I know there are some who will deny this, and deny it upon the ground that man has not the spiritual ability to believe in Jesus, to which I reply that it is altogether an error to imagine that the measure of the sinners moral ability is the measure of his duty. There are many things which men ought to do which they have now lost the moral and spiritual, though not the physical, power to do. A man ought to be chaste, but if he has been so long immoral that he cannot restrain his passions, he is not thereby free from the obligation. It is the duty of a debtor to pay his debts, but if he has been such a spendthrift that he has brought himself into hopeless poverty, he is not exonerated from his debts thereby. Every man ought to believe that which is true, but if his mind has become so depraved that he loves a lie and will not receive the truth, is he thereby excused? If the law of God is to be lowered according to the moral condition of sinners, you

would have a law graduated upon a sliding- scale to suit the degrees of human sinfulness; in fact, the worst man would be under the least law, and become consequently the least guilty. God's requirements would be a variable quantity, and, in truth, we should be under no rule at all. The command of Christ stands good however bad men may be, and when he commands all men everywhere to repent, they are bound to repent, whether their sinfulness renders it impossible for them to be willing to so or not. In every case it is man's duty to do what God bids him.

At the same time, this faith, wherever it exists, is in every case, without exception, the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. Never yet did a man believe in Jesus with the faith here intended, except the Holy Spirit led him to do so. He has wrought all our works in us, and our faith too. Faith is too celestial a grace to spring up in human nature till it is renewed: faith is in every believer "the gift of God." You will say to me, "Are these two things consistent?" I reply, "Certainly, for they are both true." "How consistent?" say you. "How inconsistent?" say I, and you shall have as much difficulty to prove them inconsistent as I to prove them consistent. Experience makes them consistent, if theory does not. Men are convinced by the Holy Spirit of sin—"of sin," saith Christ, "because they believe not on me;" here is one of the truths; but the selfsame hearts are taught the same Spirit that faith is of the operation of God. (Col. ii. 2) Brethren be willing to see both sides of the shield of truth. Rise above the babyhood which cannot believe two doctrines until it sees the connecting link. Have you not two eyes, man? Must you needs put one of them out in order to see clearly? Is it impossible to you to use a spiritual stereoscope, and look at two views of truth until they melt into one, and that one becomes more real and actual because it is made up of two? Man men refuse to see more than one side of a doctrine, and persistently fight against anything which is not on its very surface consistent with their own idea. In the present case I do not find it difficult to believe faith to be at the same time the duty of man and the gift of God; and if others cannot accept the two truths, I am not responsible for their rejection of them; my duty is performed when I have honestly borne witness to them.

Hitherto we have only been clearing the way. Let us advance. The faith

intended in the text evidently rests upon a person—upon Jesus. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." It is not belief about a doctrine, nor an opinion, nor a formula, but belief concerning a person. Translate the words, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ," and they stand thus: "Whosoever believeth that the Saviour is the Anointed is born of God." By which is assuredly not meant, whosoever professes to believe that he is so, for many do that whose lives prove that they are not regenerate; but, whosoever believes it to be the fact, as truly and in very deed to receive Jesus as God has set him forth and anointed him, is a regenerate man. What is meant by "Jesus is the Christ," or, Jesus is the Anointed? First, that he is the Prophet; secondly, that he is the Priest; thirdly, that he is the King of the church, for in all these three senses he is the Anointed. Now, I may ask myself this question: Do I this day believe that Jesus is the great Prophet anointed of God to reveal to me the way of salvation? Do I accept him as my teacher and admit that he has the words of eternal life? If I so believe, I shall obey his gospel and possess eternal life. Do I accept him to be henceforth the revealer of God to my soul, the messenger of the covenant, the anointed prophet of the Most High? But he is also a priest. Now, a priest is ordained among men to offer sacrifices; do I firmly believe that Jesus was ordained to offer his one sacrifice for the sins of mankind, by the offering of which sacrifice once for all he has finished the atonement and made complete expiation? Do I accept his atonement as an atonement for me, and receive his death as an expiation upon which I rest my hope for forgiveness of all my transgressions? Do I in fact believe Jesus to be the one sole, only propitiating Priest, and accept him to act as priest for me? If so, then I have in part believed that Jesus is the Anointed. But he is also King, and if I desire to know whether I possess the right faith, I further must ask myself, "Is Jesus, who is now exalted in heaven, who once bled on the cross, is he King to me? Is his law my law? Do I desire to submit myself entirely to his government? Do I hate what he hates, and love what he loves? Do I live to praise him? Do I, as a loyal subject, desire to see his kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven?" My dear friend, if thou canst heartily and earnestly say, "I accept Jesus Christ of Nazareth to be Prophet, Priest, and King to me, because God has anointed him to exercise those three offices; and in each of these three characters I unfeignedly trust him," then, dear friend, you have the faith

of God's elect, for it is written, "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

Now we go a little further. True faith is reliance. Look at any Greek lexicon you like, and you will find that the word *pisteuein* does not merely mean to believe, but to trust, to confide in, to commit to, entrust with, and so forth; and the marrow of the meaning of faith is confidence in, reliance upon. Let me ask, then, every professor here who professes to have faith, is your faith the faith of reliance? You give credit to certain statements, do you also place trust in the one who glorious person who alone can redeem? Have you confidence as well as credence? A creed will not save you, but reliance upon the Anointed Saviour is the way of salvation. Remember, I beseech you, that if you could be taught an orthodoxy unadulterated with error, and could learn a creed written by the pen of the Eternal God himself, yet a mere notional faith, such as men exercise when they believe in the existence of men in the moon, or nebulae in space, could not save your soul. Of this we are sure, because we see around us many who have such a faith, and yet evidently are not the children of God.

Moreover, true faith is not a flattering presumption, by which a man says, "I believe I am saved, for I have such delightful feelings, I have had a marvelous dream, I have felt very wonderful sensations;" for all such confidence may be nothing but mere assumption. Presumption, instead of being faith, is the reverse of faith; instead of being the substance of things hoped for, it is a mere mirage. Faith, is as correct as reason, and if her arguments are considered, she is as secure in her conclusions as though she drew them by mathematical rules. Beware, I pray you, of a faith which has no basis but your own fancy.

Faith, again, is not the assurance that Jesus died for me. I sometimes feel myself a little at variance with that verse -

"Just as I am - without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me."

It is eminently suitable for a child of God, but I am not sure as to its being

the precise way for putting the matter for a sinner. I do not believe in Jesus because I am persuaded that his blood was shed for me, but rather I discover that his blood was shed especially for me from the fact that I have been led to believe in him. I fear me there are thousands of people who believe that Jesus died for them, who are not born of God, but rather are hardened in their sin by their groundless hopes of mercy. There is no particular efficacy in a man's assuming that Christ has died for me; for it is a mere truism, if it true as some teach, that Jesus died for everybody. On such a theory every believer in a universal atonement would necessarily be born of God, which is very far from being the case. When the Holy Ghost leads us to rely upon the Lord Jesus, then the truth that God gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him might be saved, is opened up to our souls, and we see that for us who are believers, Jesus died with the special intent that we should be saved. For the Holy Spirit to assure us that Jesus shed his blood for us in particular is one thing, but merely to conclude that Jesus for us on the notion that he died for everybody is as far as the east is from the west, from being real faith in Jesus Christ.

Neither is it faith for me to be confident that I am saved, for it may be the case that I am not saved, and it can never be faith to believe a lie. Many have concluded rashly that they were saved when they were still in the gall of bitterness. That was not the exhibition of confidence in Christ but the exhibition of a base presumption destructive to the last degree. To come back to where we started from, faith, in a word, is reliance upon Jesus Christ. Whether the Redeemer died in special and particular for me or not, is not the question to be raised in the first place; I find that he came into the world to save sinners, under that general character I come to him, I find that whosoever trusteth him shall be saved, I therefore trust him, and having done so, I learn from his word that I am the object of his special love, and that I am born of God.

In my first coming to Jesus I can have no knowledge of any personal and special interest in the blood of Jesus; but since it is written, "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," I come and trust myself to that propitiation; sink or swim I cast myself on the Saviour. Great Son of God,

thou hast lived and died, thou hast bled and suffered, and made atonement for sin for all such as trust thee, and I trust thee, I lean upon thee, I cast myself upon thee. Now, whoever has such faith as this is born of God, he has true faith which is proof positive of the new birth. Judge ye, therefore, whether ye have this faith or no.

Let me tarry just one minute longer over this. The true faith is set forth in Scripture by figures, and one or two of these we will mention. It was an eminent type of faith when the Hebrews father in Egypt slew the lamb and caught the warm blood in the basin, then took a bunch of hyssop and dipped it in the blood and marked the two posts of his door, and then struck a red mark across the lintel. That smearing of the door represented faith. The deliverance was wrought by the blood; and the blood availed through the householder's own personally striking it upon his door. Faith does that; it takes of the things of Christ, makes them its own, sprinkles the soul, as it were, with the precious blood, accepts the way of mercy by which the Lord passes over us and exempts his people from destruction. Faith was shown to the Jews in another way. When a beast was offered in sacrifice for sin, the priest and sometimes the representatives of the tribes or the individual laid their hands upon the victim in token that they desired their sins to be transferred to it, that it might suffer for them as a type of the great substitute. Faith lays her hands on Jesus, desiring to receive the benefit of his substitutionary death.

A still more remarkable representation of faith was that of the healing look of the serpent-bitten Israelites. On the great standard in the midst of the camp Moses lifted up a serpent of brass; high overhead above all the tents this serpent gleamed in the sun, and whoever of all the dying host would but look to it was made to live. Looking was a very simple act, but it indicated that the person was obedient to God's command. He looked as he was bidden, and the virtue of healing came from the brazen serpent through a look. Such is faith. It is the simplest thing in the world, but it indicates a great deal more than is seen upon its surface:

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

To believe in Jesus is but to glance the eye of faith to him, to trust him

with thy soul.

That poor woman who came behind our Saviour in the press offers us another figure of what faith is. She said, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be made whole." Taking no medicines, making no profession, and performing no ceremonies, she simply touched the ravelling of the Saviour's robe, and she was healed at once. O soul, if thou canst get into contact with Christ by simply trusting him, though that trust be ever so feeble, thou hast the faith of God's elect; thou hast the faith which is in every case the token of the new birth.

II. We must now pass on to show that WHEREVER IT EXISTS IT IS THE PROOF OF REGENERATION. There never was a grain of such faith as this in the world, except in a regenerate soul, and there never will be while the world standeth. It is so according to the text, and if we had no other testimony this one passage would be quite enough to prove it. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "Ah!" I hear thee say, poor soul, "the new birth is a great mystery; I do not understand it; I am afraid I am not a partaker in it." You are born again if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you are relying upon a crucified Saviour you are assuredly begotten again unto a lively hope. Mystery or no mystery, the new birth is yours if you are a believer. Have you never noticed that the greatest mysteries in the world reveal themselves by the simplest indications. The simplicity and apparent easiness of faith is no reason why I should not regard its existence as an infallible indication of the new birth within. How know we that the new-born child lives except by its cry? Yet a child's cry—what a simple sound it is! how readily could it be imitated! a clever workman could with pipes and strings easily deceive us; yet was there never a child's cry in the world but what it indicated the mysteries of breathing, heart-beating, blood-flowing, and all the other wonders which come with life itself. Do you see yonder person just drawn out of the river? Does she live? Yes, life is there. Why? Because the lungs still heave. But does it not seem an easy thing to make lungs heave? A pair of billows blown into them, might not that produce the motion? Ah, yes, the thing is easily imitated after a sort; but no lungs heave except where life is. Take another illustration. Go into a telegraph office at any time, and you will see certain needles moving right and left

with unceasing click. Electricity is a great mystery, and you cannot see or feel it; but the operator tells you that the electric current is moving along the wire. How does he know? "I know it by the needle." How is that? I could move your needles easily. "Yes; but do not you see the needle has made two motions to the right, one to the left, and two to the right again? I am reading a message." "But," say you, "I can see nothing in it; I could imitate the clicking and moving very easily." Yet he who is taught the art sees before him in those needles, not only electric action, but a deeper mystery still; he perceives that a mind is directing an invisible force, and speaking by means of it. Not to all, but to the initiated is it given to see the mystery hidden within the simplicity. The believer sees in the faith, which is simple as the movements of the needle, an indication that God is operating on the human mind, and the spiritual man discerns that there is an inner secret intimated thereby, which the carnal eye cannot decipher. To believe in Jesus is a better indicator of regeneration than anything else, and in no case did it ever mislead. Faith in the living God and his Son Jesus Christ is always the result of the new birth, and can never exist except in the regenerate. Whoever has faith is a saved man.

I beg you to follow me a little in this argument. A certain divine has lately said, "A man's act of believing is not the same as his being saved: it is only in the direction of being saved." This is tantamount to a denial that every believer in Christ is at once saved; and the inference is that a man may not conclude that he is saved because he believes in Jesus. Now, observe how opposed this is to Scripture. It is certain from the Word of God that the man who believes in Jesus is not condemned. Read John iii. 18, and many other passages. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned." Now is not every unregenerate man condemned? Is not a man who is not condemned a saved man? When you are sure on divine authority that the believer is not condemned, how in the name of everything that is rational can you deny that the believer is saved? If he is not condemned, what has he to fear? Will he not rightly conclude that being justified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?

Note, secondly, that faith in the fourth verse of the chapter before us is said to "overcome the world." "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." What, then, does faith overcome the world in

persons who are not saved? How can this be possible when the apostle saith that that which overcomes the world is born of God? Read the fourth verse: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:" but faith overcomes the world. therefore the man who has faith is regenerate; and what means that but that he is saved, and that his faith is the instrument by which he achieves victories.

Further, faith accepts the witness of God, and more, he that hath faith has the witness in himself to the truth of God. Read the tenth verse of the chapter: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." It is not said, "He that does this or feels that," but "He that believeth hath the witness in himself," his heart bears witness to the truth of God. Has any unsaved man an experimental witness within? Will you tell me that a man's inner experience bears witness to God's gospel and yet the man is in a lost state, or only hopeful of being saved ultimately? No, sir, it is impossible. He that believeth has that change wrought in him which enables by his own consciousness to confirm the witness of God, and such a man must be in a state of salvation. It is not possible to say of him that he is an unsaved man.

Again, note in this chapter, at the thirteenth verse, that wherever there is faith there is eternal life; so run the words, "these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Our Lord himself, and his apostles, in several places have declared, "He that believeth on him hath everlasting life." Do not tell me that a sinner who believes in Jesus is to make an advance before he can say he is saved, that a man who trusts Christ is only on his way to salvation, and must wait until he has used the ordinances, and has grown in grace, before he may know that he is saved. No, the moment that the sinner's trust is placed on the finished work of Jesus he is saved. Heaven and earth may pass away, but that man shall never perish. If only one second ago I trusted the Saviour I am safe; just as safe as the man who has believed in Jesus fifty years, and who has all the while walked uprightly. I do not say that the new born convert is as happy, nor as useful, nor as holy, nor as ripe for heaven, but I do say that the words, "he that believeth on him hath everlasting life," is a truth with general bearings, and relates as much to the babe in faith as does to the man who

has attained to fullness of stature in Jesus Christ.

As if this chapter were written on purpose to meet the gross error that faith does not bring immediate salvation, it extols faith again and again, yea, and I may add, our Lord himself crowns faith, because faith never wears the crown, but brings all the glory to the dear Redeemer.

Now, let me say a word or two in reply to certain questions. But must not a man repent as well as believe? Reply: No man ever believed but what he repented at the same time. Faith and repentance go together. they must. If I trust Christ to save me from sin, I am at the same time repenting of sin, and my mind is changed in relation to sin, and everything else that has to do with its state. All the fruits meet for repentance are contained in faith itself. You will never find that a man who trusts Christ remains an enemy of God, or a lover of sin. The fact that he accepts the atonement provided is proof positive that he loathes sin, and that his mind is thoroughly changed in reference to God. Moreover, as to all the graces which are produced in the Christian afterwards, are they not all to be found in embryo in faith? "Only believe, and you shall be save," is the cry which many sneer at, and others misunderstand; but do you know what "only believe" means? Do you know what a world of meaning lies in that word? Read that famous chapter to the Hebrews, and see what faith has done and is still able to do, and you will see that it is no trifle. Wherever there is faith in a man let it but develop itself and there will be a purging of himself from sin, a separating himself from the world, a conflict with evil, and a warring for the glory of Christ, which nothing else could produce. Faith is in itself one of the noblest of graces; it is the compendium of all virtues; and as sometimes there will lie within one single ear enough seed to make a whole garden fertile, so, within that one word "faith," there lies enough of virtue to make earth blessed; enough of grace, if the Spirit make it to grow, to turn the fallen into the perfect. Faith is not the easy and light thing men think. Far are we from ascribing salvation to the profession of a mere creed, we loathe the idea; neither do we ascribe salvation to a fond persuasion, but we do ascribe salvation to Jesus Christ, and the obtaining of it to that simple, child like confidence which lovingly casts itself into the arms of him who gave both his hands to the nail and suffered to the death for the sins of his people. He who

believes, then, is saved—rest assured of that. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

III. Now what flows out of this? Love is the legitimate issue! We must love if we are begotten of God all those who are also born of God. It would be an insult to you if I were to prove that a brother should love his brother. Doth not nature herself teach us that? Those, then, who are born of God ought to love all those of the same household. And who are they? Why, all those who have believed that Jesus is the Christ, and are resting their hopes where we rest ours, namely, on Christ the Anointed One of God. We are to love all such. We are to do this because we are of the family. We believe, and therefore we have been begotten of God. Let us act as those who are of the divine family; let us count it our privilege we are received into the household, and rejoice to perform the lovely obligations of our high position. We look around us and see many others who have believed in Jesus Christ; let us love them because they are of the same kindred. "But they are some of them unsound in doctrine, they make gross mistakes as to the Master's ordinances." We are not to love their faults, neither ought we to expect them to love ours, we are nevertheless to love their persons, for "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," and therefore he is one of the family, and as we love the Father who begat we are to love all those who are begotten of him. First, I love God, and therefore I desire to promote God's truth and to keep God's gospel free from taint. But then I am to love all those whom God has begotten, despite the infirmities and errors I see in them, being also myself compassed about with infirmities. Life is the reason for love, the common life which is indicated by the common faith in the dear Redeemer is to bind us to each other. I must confess, though I would pay every deference to every brother's conscientious judgment, I do not know how I could bring my soul as a child of God to refuse any man communion at my Master's table, who believed that Jesus is the Christ. I have proof in his doing so, if he be sincere (and I can only judge of that by his life), that he is born of God; and has not every child a right to come to the Father's table? I know in the olden times, parent used to make their children go without meals as a punishment, but everybody tell us now this is cruel and unwise, for it injures the child's constitution to deprive it of necessary food. There are rods in the Lord's house, and there is no need to keep

disobedient children away from supper. Let them come to the Lord's table, and eat and drink with the Lord Jesus and with all his saints, in the hope that when their constitution bestows stronger they will throw out the disease which now they labor under, and come to be obedient to the whole gospel, which saith, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Let me beg the members of this church to exhibit mutual love to one another. Are there many feeble among you? Comfort them. Are there any who want instruction? Bring your knowledge to their help. Are there any in distress? Assist them. Are they backsliding? Restore them. "Little children, love one another," is the rule of Christ's family, may we observe it. May the love of God which has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, reveal itself by our love to all the saints. And, remember, other sheep he has which are not yet of this fold; them also he must bring in. Let us love those who are yet to be brought in, and lovingly go forth at once to seek them; in whatever other form of service God has given us, let us with loving eyes look after our prodigal brothers, and who knows, we may bring into the family this very day some for whom there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God, because the lost one has been found. God bless and comfort you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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Faith And Repentance Inseparable

Repent ye, and believe the gospel. - Mark 1:15

Our Lord Jesus Christ commences his ministry by announcing its leading commands. He cometh up from the wilderness newly anointed, like the bridegroom from his chamber; his love notes are repentance and faith. He cometh forth fully prepared for his office, having been in the desert, "tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin"; his loins are girded like

a strong man to run a race. He preacheth with all the earnestness of a new zeal, combined with all the wisdom of a long preparation; in the beauty of holiness from the womb of morning he glittereth with the dew of his youth. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Messiah speaketh in the greatness of his strength. He crieth unto the sons of men, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Let us give our ears to these words which, like their author, are full of grace and truth. Before us we have the sum and substance of Jesus Christ's whole teaching—the Alpha and Omega of his entire ministry; and coming from the lips of such an one, at such a time, with such peculiar power, let us give the most earnest heed, and may God help us to obey them from our inmost hearts.

I. I shall commence my remarking that the gospel which Christ preached was, very plainly, a command. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Our Lord does condescend to reason. Often his ministry graciously acted out the old text, "Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." He does persuade men by telling and forcible arguments, which should lead them to seek the salvation of their souls. He does invite men, and oh, how lovingly he woos them to be wise. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He does entreat men; he condescendeth to become, as it were, a beggar to his own sinful creatures, beseeching them to come to him. Indeed, he maketh this to be the duty of his ministers, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Yet, remember, though he condescendeth to reason, to persuade, to invite, and to beseech, still his gospel hath in it all the dignity and force of a command; and if we would preach it in these days as Christ did, we must proclaim it as a command from God, attended with a divine sanction, and not to be neglected save at the infinite peril of the soul. When the feast was spread upon the table for the marriage-supper, there was an invitation, but it had all the obligation of a command, since those who rejected it were utterly destroyed as despisers of their king. When the builders reject Christ, he becomes a stone of stumbling to "the disobedient"; but how could they disobey if there were no command? The gospel contemplates, I say, invitations, entreaties, and beseechings, but it also takes the higher ground of authority. "Repent ye" is as much a command of God as "Thou shalt not steal." "Believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ" has as fully a divine authority as "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength." Think not, O men, that the gospel is a thing left to your option to choose it or not! Dream not, O sinners, that ye may despise the Word from heaven and incur no guilt! Think not that ye may neglect it and no ill consequences shall follow! It is just this neglect and despising of yours which shall fill up the measure of your iniquity. It is this concerning which we cry aloud, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation!" God commands you to repent. The same God before whom Sinai was moved and was altogether on a smoke—that same God who proclaimed the law with sound of trumpet, with lightnings and with thunders, speaketh to us more gently, but still as divinely, through his only begotten Son, when he saith to us, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Why is this, dear friends; why has the Lord made it a command to us to believe in Christ? There is a blessed reason. Many souls would never venture to believe at all if it were not made penal to refuse to do so. For this is the difficulty with many awakened sinners: may I believe? Have I a right to believe? Am I permitted to trust Christ? Now this question is put aside, once for all, and should never irritate a broken heart again. You are commanded by God to do it, therefore you may do it. Every creature under heaven is commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus, and bow the knee at his name; every creature, wherever the gospel comes, wherever the truth is preached, is commanded there and then to believe the gospel; and it is put in that shape, I say, least any conscience-stricken sinner should question whether he may do it. Surely, you may do what God commands you to do. You may know this in the devil's teeth—"I may do it; I am bidden to do it by him who hath authority, and I am threatened if I do not with eternal damnation from his presence, for 'he that believeth not shall be damned.'" This gives the sinner such a blessed permit, that whatever he may be or may not be, whatever he may have felt or may not have felt, he has a warrant which he may use whenever he is led to approach the cross. However benighted and darkened you may be, however hard-hearted and callous you may be, you have still a warrant to look to Jesus in the words, "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth." He that commanded thee to believe will justify thee in believing; he cannot condemn thee for that which he himself bids thee do.

But while there is this blessed reason for the gospel's being a command, there is yet another solemn and an awful one. It is that men may be without excuse in the day of judgment; that no man may say at the last, "Lord, I did not know that I might believe in Christ; Lord, heaven's gate was shut in my face; I was told that I might not come, that I was not the man." "Nay," saith the Lord, with tones of thunder, "the times of man's ignorance I winked at, but in the gospel I commanded all men everywhere to repent; I sent my Son, and then I sent my apostles, and afterwards my ministers, and I bade them all make this the burden of their cry, 'Repent and be converted everyone of you'; and as Peter preached at Pentecost, so bade I them preach to thee. I bade them warn, exhort, and invite with all affection, but also to command with all authority, compelling you to come in, and inasmuch as you did not come at my command, you have added sin to sin; you have added the suicide of your own soul to all your other iniquities; and now, inasmuch as you did reject my Son, you shall have the portion of unbelievers, for 'he that believeth not shall be damned.'" To all the nations of the earth, then, let us sound forth this decree from God. O men, Jehovah that made you, he who gives you the breath of your nostrils, he against whom you have offended, commands you this day to repent and believe the gospel. He gives his promise—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"; and he adds the solemn threatening—"He that believeth not shall be damned." I know some brethren will not like this, but that I cannot help. The slave of systems I will never be, for the Lord has loosed this iron bondage from my neck, and now I am the joyful servant of the truth which maketh free. Offend or please, as God shall help me, I will preach every truth as I learn it from the Word; and I know if there be anything written in the Bible at all it is written as with a sunbeam, that God in Christ commandeth men to repent, and believe the gospel. It is one of the saddest proofs of man's utter depravity that he will not obey this command, but that he will despise Christ, and so make his doom worse than the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. Without the regenerating work of God the Holy Ghost, no man ever will be obedient to this command, but still it must be published for a witness against them if they reject it; and while publishing God's command with all simplicity, we may expect that he will divinely enforce it in the souls of those whom he has ordained unto eternal life.

II. While the gospel is a command, it is a two-fold command explaining itself. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

I know some very excellent brethren—would God there were more like them in zeal and love—who, in their zeal to preach up simple faith in Christ have felt a little difficulty about the matter of repentance; and I have known some of them who have tried to get over the difficulty by softening down the apparent hardness of the word repentance, by expounding it according to its more usual Greek equivalent, a word which occurs in the original of my text, and signifies "to change one's mind." Apparently they interpret repentance to be a somewhat slighter thing than we usually conceive it to be, a mere change of mind, in fact. Now, allow me to suggest to those dear brethren, that the Holy Ghost never preaches repentance as a trifle; and the change of mind or understanding of which the gospel speaks is a very deep and solemn work, and must not on any account be depreciated. Moreover, there is another word which is also used in the original Greek for repentance, not so often I admit, but still is used, which signifies "an after-care," a word which has in it something more of sorrow and anxiety, than that which signifies changing one's mind. There must be sorrow for sin and hatred of it in true repentance, or else I have read my Bible to little purpose. In very truth, I think there is no necessity for any other definition than that of the children's hymn—

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more."

To repent does mean a change of mind; but then it is a thorough change of the understanding and all that is in the mind, so that it includes an illumination, an illumination of the Holy Spirit; and I think it includes a discovery of iniquity and a hatred of it, without which there can hardly be a genuine repentance. We must not, I think, undervalue repentance. It is a blessed grace of God the Holy Spirit, and it is absolutely necessary unto salvation.

The command explains itself. We will take, first of all, repentance. It is quite certain that whatever the repentance here mentioned may be, it is a repentance perfectly consistent with faith; and therefore we get the explanation of what repentance must be, from its being connected with the next command, "Believe the gospel." Then, dear friends, we may be sure that that unbelief which leads a man to think that his sin is too great for Christ to pardon it, is not the repentance meant here. Many who truly repent are tempted to believe that they are too great sinners for Christ to pardon. That, however, is not part of their repentance; it is a sin, a very great and grievous sin, for it is undervaluing the merit of Christ's blood; it is a denial of the truthfulness of God's promise; it is a detracting from the grace and favour of God who sent the gospel. Such a persuasion you must labour to get rid of, for it came from Satan, and not from the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Ghost never did teach a man that his sins were too great to be forgiven, for that would be to make God the Holy Spirit to teach a lie. If any of you have a thought of that kind this morning, be rid of it; it cometh from the powers of darkness, and not from the Holy Ghost; and if some of you are troubled because you never were haunted by that fear, be glad instead of being troubled. He can save you; be you as black as hell he can save you; and it is a wicked falsehood, and a high insult against the high majesty of divine love when you are tempted to believe that you are past the mercy of God. That is not repentance, but a foul sin against the infinite mercy of God.

Then, there is another spurious repentance which makes the sinner dwell upon the consequences of his sin, rather than upon the sin itself, and so keeps him from believing. I have known some sinners so distressed with fears of hell, and thoughts of death and of eternal judgment, that to use the words of one terrible preacher, "They have been shaken over the mouth of hell by their collar," and have felt the torments of the pit before they went thither. Dear friends, this is not repentance. Many a man has felt all that and has yet been lost. Look at many a dying man, tormented with remorse, who has had all its pangs and convictions, and yet has gone down to the grave without Christ and without hope. These things may come with repentance, but, they are not an essential part of it. That which is called law-work, in which the sinner is terrified with horrible thoughts

that God's mercy is gone for ever, may be permitted by God for some special purpose, but it is not repentance; in fact, it may often be devilish rather than heavenly, for, as John Bunyan tells us, Diabolus doth often beat the great hell-drum in the ears of the men of Mansoul, to prevent their hearing the sweet trumpet of the gospel which proclaimeth pardon to them. I tell thee, sinner, any repentance that keeps thee from believing in Christ is a repentance that needs to be repented of; any repentance that makes thee think Christ will not save thee, goes beyond the truth and against the truth, and the sooner thou are rid of it the better. God deliver thee from it, for the repentance that will save thee is quite consistent with faith in Christ.

There is, again, a false repentance which leads men to hardness of heart and despair. We have known some seared as with a hot iron by burning remorse. They have said, "I have done much evil; there is no hope for me; I will not hear the Word any more." If they hear it it is nothing to them, their hearts are hard as adamant. If they could once get the thought that God would forgive them, their hearts would flow in rivers of repentance; but no; they feel a kind of regret that they did wrong, but yet they go on in it all the same, feeling that there is no hope, and that they may as well continue to live as they were wont to do, and get the pleasures of sin since they cannot, as they think, have the pleasures of grace. Now, that is no repentance. It is a fire which hardens, and not the Lord's fire which melts; it may be a hammer, but it is a hammer used to knit the particles of your soul together, and not to break the heart. If, dear friends, you have never been the subject of these terrors do not desire them. Thank God if you have been brought to Jesus any how, but long not for needless horrors. Jesus saves you, not by what you feel, but by that finished work, that blood and righteousness which God accepted on your behalf. Do remember that no repentance is worth having which is not perfectly consistent with faith in Christ. An old saint, on his sick-bed, once used this remarkable expression; "Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance; but"—and here is the beauty of it—"lift me high as heaven in faith." Now, the repentance that sinks a man low as hell is of no use except there is faith also that lifts him as high as heaven, and the two are perfectly consistent one with the other. A man may loathe and detest himself, and all the while he may know that Christ is able to save, and has saved him.

In fact, this is how true Christians live; they repent as bitterly as for sin as if they knew they should be damned for it; but they rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all. Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet, the stripping of repentance, and the clothing of faith! The repentance that ejects sin as an evil tenant, and the faith which admits Christ to be the sole master of the heart; the repentance which purges the soul from dead works, and the faith that fills the soul with living works; the repentance which pulls down, and the faith which builds up; the repentance that scatters stones, and the faith which puts stones together; the repentance which ordains a time to weep, and the faith that gives a time to dance— these two things together make up the work of grace within, whereby men's souls are saved. Be it, then laid down as a great truth, most plainly written in our text, that the repentance we ought to preach is one connected with faith, and thus we may preach repentance and faith together without any difficulty whatever.

Having shown you what this repentance is not, let us dwell for a moment on what it is. The repentance which is here commanded is the result of faith; it is born at the same time with faith—they are twins, and to say which is the elder-born passes my knowledge. It is a great mystery; faith is before repentance in some of its acts, and repentance before faith in another view of it; the fact being that they come into the soul together. Now, a repentance which makes me weep and abhor my past life because of the love of Christ which has pardoned it, is the right repentance. When I can say, "My sin is washed away by Jesu's blood," and then repent because I so sinned as to make it necessary that Christ should die—that dove-eyed repentance which looks at his bleeding wounds, and feels that her heart must bleed because she wounded Christ—that broken heart that breaks because Christ was nailed to the cross for it—that is the repentance which bringeth us salvation.

Again, the repentance which makes us avoid present sin because of the love of God who died for us, this also is saving repentance. If I avoid sin to-day because I am afraid of being lost if I commit it, I have not the repentance of a child of God; but when I avoid it and seek to lead a holy life because Christ loved me and gave himself up for me, and because I am not my own, but am bought with a price, this is the work of the Spirit

of God.

And again, that change of mind, that after-carefulness which leads me to resolve that in future I will live like Jesus, and will not live unto the lusts of the flesh, because he hath redeemed me, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood—that is the repentance which will save me, and the repentance he asks of me. O ye nations of the earth, he asks not the repentance of Mount Sinai, while ye do fear and shake because his lightnings are abroad; but he asks you to weep and wail because of him; to look on him whom you have pierced, and to mourn for him as a man mourneth for his only son; he bids you remember that you nailed the Saviour to the tree, and asks that this argument may make you hate the murderous sins which fastened the Saviour there, and put the Lord of glory to an ignominious and an accursed death. This is the only repentance we have to preach; not law and terrors; not despair; not driving men to self-murder—this is the terror of the world which worketh death; but godly sorrow is a sorrow unto salvation though Jesus Christ our Lord.

This brings me to the second half of the command, which is, "Believe the gospel." Faith means trust in Christ. Now, I must again remark that some have preached this trust in Christ so well and so fully, that I can admire their faithfulness and bless God for them; yet there is a difficulty and a danger; it may be that in preaching simple trust in Christ as being the way of salvation, that they omit to remind the sinner that no faith can be genuine but such as is perfectly consistent with repentance for past sin; for my text seems to me to put it thus: no repentance is true but that which consorts with faith; no faith is true but that which is linked with a hearty and sincere repentance on account of past sin. So then, dear friends, those people who have a faith which allows them to think lightly of past sin, have the faith of devils, and not the faith of God's elect. Those who say, "Oh, as for the past, that is nothing; Jesus Christ has washed all that away"; and can talk about all the crimes of their youth, and the iniquitous of their riper years, as if they were mere trifles, and never think of shedding a tear; never feel their souls ready to burst because they should have been such great offenders—such men who can trifle with the past, and even fight their battles o'er again when their passions are too

cold for new rebellions—I say that such who think sin a trifle and have never sorrowed on account of it, may know that their faith is not genuine. Such men as have a faith which allows them to live carelessly in the present who say, "Well, I am saved by a simple faith"; and then sit on the ale-bench with the drunkard, or stand at the bar with the spirit-drinker, or go into worldly company and enjoy the carnal pleasures and the lusts of the flesh, such men are liars; they have not the faith which will save the soul. They have a deceitful hypocrisy; they have not the faith which will bring them to heaven.

And then, there be some other people who have a faith which leads them to no hatred of sin. They do not look upon sin in others with any kind of shame. It is true they would not do as others do, but then they can laugh at what others commit. They take pleasure in the vices of others; laugh at their profane jests, and smile at their loose speeches. They do not flee from sin as from a serpent, nor detest it as the murderer of their best friend. No, they dally with it; they make excuses for it; they commit in private what in public they condemn. They call grave offences slight faults and little defalcations; and in business they wink at departures from uprightness, and consider them to be mere matters of trade; the fact being that they have a faith which will sit down arm-in-arm with sin, and eat and drink at the same table with unrighteousness. Oh! if any of you have such a faith as this, I pray God to turn it out bag and baggage. It is of no good to you; the sooner you are cleaned out of it the better for you, for when this sandy foundation shall all be washed away, perhaps you may then begin to build upon the rock. My dear friends, I would be very faithful with your souls, and would lay the lancet at each man's heart. What is your repentance? Have you a repentance that leads you to look out of self to Christ, and to Christ only? On the other hand, have you that faith which leads you to true repentance; to hate the very thought of sin; so that the dearest idol you have known, whatever it may be, you desire to tear from its throne that you may worship Christ, and Christ only? Be assured of this, that nothing short of this will be of any use to you at the last. A repentance and a faith of any other sort may do to please you now, as children are pleased with fancies; but when you get on a death-bed, and see the reality of things, you will be compelled to say that they are a falsehood and a refuge of lies. You will find that you have been daubed

with untempered mortar; that you have said, "Peace, peace," to yourselves, when there was no peace. Again, I say, in the words of Christ, "Repent and believe the gospel." Trust Christ to save you, and lament that you need to be saved, and mourn because this need of yours has put the Saviour to open shame, to frightful sufferings, and to a terrible death.

III. But we must pass on to a third remark. These commands of Christ are of the most reasonable character.

Is it an unreasonable thing to demand of a man that he should repent? You have a person who has offended you; you are ready to forgive him; do you think it is at all exacting or overbearing if you ask of him an apology; if you merely ask him, as the very least thing he can do, to acknowledge that he has done wrong? "No," say you, "I should think I showed my kindness in accepting rather than any harshness in demanding an apology from him." So God, against whom we have rebelled, who is our liege sovereign and monarch, seeth it to be inconsistent with the dignity of his kingship to absolve an offender who expresseth no contrition; and I say again, is this a harsh, exacting, unreasonable command? Doth God in this mode act like Solomon, who made the taxes of his people heavy? Rather doth he not ask of you that which your heart, if it were in a right state, would be but too willing to give, only too thankful that the Lord in his grace has said, "He that confesseth his sin shall find mercy"? Why, dear friends, do you expect to be saved while you are in your sins? Are you to be allowed to love your iniquities, and yet go to heaven? What, you think to have poison in your veins, and yet be healthy? What, man, keep the thief in doors, and yet be acquitted of dishonesty? Be stained, and yet be thought spotless? Harbour the disease and yet be in health? Ridiculous! Absurd! Repentance is founded on the necessity of things. The demand for a change of heart is absolutely necessary; it is but a reasonable service. O that men were reasonable, and they would repent; it is because they are not reasonable that it needs the Holy Spirit to teach their reason right reason before they will repent and believe the gospel.

And then, again, believing; is that an unreasonable thing to ask of you? For a creature to believe its Creator is but a duty; altogether apart from the promise of salvation, I say, God has a right to demand of the creature

that he has made, that he should believe what he tells him. And what is it he asks you to believe? Anything hideous, contradictory, irrational? It may be above reason, but it is not contrary to reason. He asks you to believe that through the blood of Jesus Christ, he can still be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. He asks you to trust in Christ to save you. Can you expect that he will save you if you will not trust him? Have you really the hardihood to think that he will carry you to heaven while all the while you declare he cannot do it? Do you think it consistent with the dignity of a Saviour to save you while you say, "I do not believe thou art a Saviour, and I will not trust thee"? Is it consistent with his dignity for him to save you, and suffer you to remain an unbelieving sinner, doubting his grace, mistrusting his love, slandering his character, doubting the efficacy of his blood, and of his plea? Why, man, it is the most reasonable thing in the world that he should demand of thee that thou shouldst believe in Christ. And this he doth demand of thee this morning. "Repent and believe the gospel." O friends, O friends, how sad, how sad is the state of man's soul when he will not do this! We may preach to you, but you never will repent and believe the gospel. We may lay God's command, like an axe, to the root of the tree, but, reasonable as these commands are, you will still refuse to give God his due; you will go on in your sins; you will not come unto him that you may have life; and it is here the Spirit of God must come in to work in the souls of the elect to make them willing in the day of his power. But oh! in God's name I warn you that, if, after hearing this command, you do, as I know you will do, without his Spirit, continue to refuse obedience to so reasonable a gospel, you shall find at the last it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you; for had the things which are preached in London been proclaimed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and in ashes. Woe unto you, inhabitants of London! Woe unto you, subjects of the British Empire! for if the truths which have been declared in your streets had been preached to Tyre and Sidon, they would have continued even unto this day.

IV. But still, to pass on, I have yet a fourth remark to make, and that is, this is a command which demands immediate obedience. I do not know how it is, let us preach as we may, we cannot lead others to think that there is any great alarm, that there is any reason why they should think

about their souls now. Last night there was a review on Wimbledon Common, and living not very far away from it, I could hear in one perpetual roll the cracks of the rifles and the thunder of cannon. One remarked to me, "Supposing there really were war there, we should not sit quite so comfortably in our room with our window open, listening to all this noise." No; and so when people come to chapel, they hear a sermon about repentance and faith; they listen to it. "What do you think of it?" "Oh—very well." But suppose it were real; suppose they believed it to be real, would they sit quite so comfortably? Would they be quite so easy? Ah, no! But you do not think it is real. You do not think that the God who made you actually asks of you this day that you should repent and believe. Yes, sirs, but it is real, and it is your procrastination, it is your self-confidence that is the sham, the bubble that is soon to burst. God's demand is the solemn reality, and if you could but hear it as it should be heard you would escape from your lives and flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you in the gospel, and you would do this to-day. This is the command of Christ, I say, to-day. To-day is God's time. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation." "To-day," the gospel always cries, for if it tolerated sin a single day, it were an unholy gospel. If the gospel told men to repent of sin to-morrow, it would give them an allowance to continue in it to-day, and that would indeed be to pander to men's lusts. But the gospel maketh a clean sweep of sin, and demandeth of man that he should throw down the weapons of his rebellion now. Down with them, man! every one of them. Down, sir, down with them, and down with them now! You must not keep one of them; throw them down at once! The gospel challengeth him that he believe in Jesus now. So long as thou continuest in unbelief thou continuest in sin, and art increasing thy sin; and to give thee leave to be an unbeliever for an hour, were to pander to thy lusts; therefore it demandeth of thee faith, and faith now, for this is God's time, and the time which holiness must demand of a sinner. Besides, sinner, it is thy time. This is the only time thou canst call thine own. To-morrow! Is there such a thing? In what calendar is it written save in the almanack of the fool? To-morrow! Oh, how hast thou ruined multitudes! "To-morrow," say men; but like the hind-wheel of a chariot, they are always near to the front-wheel, always near to their duty; they still go on, and on, but never get one whit the nearer, for, travel as they may, to-morrow is still a little

beyond them—but a little, and so they never come to Christ at all. This is how they speak, as an ancient poet said—

"I will to-morrow, that I will, I will be sure to do it';
To-morrow comes, to-morrow goes, And still thou art 'to do it';
Thus, then, repentance is deferred from one day to another,
Until the day of death is one, And judgment is the other."

O sons of men, always to be blessed, to be obedient, but never obedient, when will ye learn to be wise? This is your only time; it is God's time, and this is the best time. You will never find it easier to repent than now; you will never find it easier to believe than now. It is impossible now except the Spirit of God be with you; it will be as impossible to-morrow; but if now you would believe and repent, the Spirit of God is in the gospel which I preach; and while I cry out to thee in God's name, "Repent and believe," he that bade me command you thus to do gives power with the command, that even as Christ spake to the waves and said, "Be still," and they were still, and to the winds, "Be calm," and they were quiet, so when we speak to your proud heart it yields because of the grace that accompanies the word, and you repent and believe the gospel. So may it be, and may the message of this morning gather out the elect, and make them willing in the day of God's power.

But now, lastly, this command, while it has an immediate power, has also a continual force. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," is advice to the young beginner, and it is advice to the old grey-headed Christian, for this is our life all the way through—"Repent ye, and believe the gospel." St. Anselm, who was a saint—and that is more than many of them were who were called so—St. Anselm once cried out "Oh! sinner that I have been, I will spend all the rest of my life in repenting of my whole life!" And Rowland Hill, whom I think I might call St. Rowland, when he was near death, said he had one regret, and that was that a dear friend who had lived with him for sixty years would have to leave him at the gate of heaven. "That dear friend," said he, "is repentance; repentance has been with me all my life, and I think I shall drop a tear," said the good man, "as I go through the gates, to think that I can repent no more." Repentance is the daily and hourly duty of a man who believes in Christ; and as we walk

by faith from the wicket gate to the celestial city, so our right-hand companion all the journey through must be repentance. Why, dear friend, the Christian man, after he is saved, repents more than he ever did before, for now he repents not merely of overt deeds, but even of imaginations. He will take himself to task at night, and chide himself because he had tolerated one foul thought; because he has looked on vanity, though perhaps the heart had gone no further than the look of lust; because the thought of evil has flitted through the mind—for all this he will vex himself before God; and were it not that he still continues to believe the gospel, one foul imagination would be such a plague and sting to him, that he would have no peace and rest. When temptation comes to him the good man finds the use of repentance, for having hated sin and fled from it of old, he has ceased to be what he once was. One of the ancient fathers, we are told, had, before his conversion, lived with an ill woman, and some little time after, she accosted him as usual. Knowing how likely he was to fall into sin he ran away with all his might, and she ran after him, crying, "Wherefore runnest thou away? It is I." He answered, "I run away because I am not I; I am a new man." Now, it is just that, "I am not I," which keeps the Christian out of sin; that hating of the former "I," that repenting of the old sin that maketh him run from evil, abhor it, and look not upon it, lest by his eyes he should be led into sin. Dear friend, the more the Christian man knows of Christ's love, the more will he hate himself to think that he has sinned against such love. Every doctrine of the gospel will make a Christian man repent. Election, for instance. "How could I sin," saith he. "I that was God's favourite, chosen of him from before the foundation of the world?" Final perseverance will make him repent. "How can I sin," says he, "that am loved so much and kept so surely? How can I be so villainous as to sin against everlasting mercy?" Take any doctrine you please, the Christian will make it a fount for sacred woe; and there are times when his faith in Christ will be so strong that his repentance will burst its bonds, and will cry with George Herbert—

"Oh, who will give me tears?
Come, all ye springs,
Ye clouds and rain dwell in my eyes,
My grief hath need of all the wat'ry things

That nature hath produc'd. Let ev'ry vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,
Unless they set new conduits, new supplies
To bear them out, and with my state agree."

And all this is because he murdered Christ; because his sin nailed the Saviour to the tree; and therefore he weepeth and mourneth even to his life's end. Sinning, repenting, and believing—these are three things that will keep with us till we die. Sinning will stop at the river Jordan; repentance will die triumphing over the dead body of sin; and faith itself, though perhaps it may cross the stream, will cease to be so needful as it has been here, for there we shall see even as we are seen, and shall know even as we are known.

I send you away when I have once again solemnly declared my Master's will to you this morning, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Here are some of you come from foreign countries, and many of you are from our provincial towns in England; you came here, perhaps, to hear the preacher of whom many a strange thing has been said. Well and good, and may stranger things still be said if they will but bring men under the sound of the Word that they may be blessed. Now, this I have to say to you this morning: In that great day when a congregation ten thousand times larger than this shall be assembled, and on the great white throne the Judge shall sit, there will be not a man, or woman, or child, who is here this morning, able to make excuse and say, "I did not hear the gospel; I did not know what I must do to be saved!" You have heard it: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." That is, trust Christ; believe that he is able and willing to save you. But there is something better. In that great day, I say, there will be some of you present—oh! let us hope all of us—who will be able to say, "Thank God that ever I yielded up the weapons of my proud rebellion by repentance; thank God that I looked to Christ, and took him to be my Saviour from first to last; for here am I, a monument of grace, a sinner saved by blood, to praise him while time and eternity shall last!" God grant that we may meet each other at the last with joy and not with grief! I will be a swift witness against you to condemn you if you believe not this gospel; but if you repent and believe, then we shall praise

that grace which turned our hearts, and so gave us the repentance which led us to trust Christ, and the faith which is the effectual gift of the Holy Spirit. What shall I say more unto you? Wherefore, wherefore will you reject this? If I have spoken to you of fables, of fictions, of dreams, then turn on your heel and reject my discourse. If I have spoken in my own name, who am I that you should care one whit for me? But if I have preached that which Christ preached, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," I charge you by the living God, I charge you by the world's Redeemer, I charge you by cross of Calvary, and by the blood which stained the dust at Golgotha, obey this divine message and you shall have eternal life; but refuse it, and on your heads be your blood for ever and ever!

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Faith Illustrated

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. - 2 Timothy 1:12

AN ASSURANCE of our safety in Christ will be found useful to us in all states of experience. When Jesus sent forth his seventy chosen disciples, endowed with miraculous powers, they performed great wonders, and naturally enough they were somewhat elated when they returned to tell him of their deeds. Jesus marked their tendency to pride; he saw that in the utterance - "Behold even devils were subject to us," there was mingled much of self-congratulation and boasting. What cure, think you, did he administer; or what was the sacred lesson that he taught them which might prevent their being exalted above measure? "Nevertheless," said he, "rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." The assurance of our eternal interest in Christ may help to keep us humble in the day of our prosperity; for when God multiplies our wealth, when he blesses our endeavors, when he speeds the plough; when

he wafts the good ship swiftly onward, this may act as a sacred ballast to us, that we have something better than these things, and therefore we must not set our affections upon the things of earth, but upon things above; and let our heart be where our greatest treasure is. I say, better than any lancet to spill the superfluous blood of our boasting, better than any bitter medicine to chase the burning fever of our pride; better than any mixture of the most pungent ingredients is this most precious and hallowed wine of the covenant - a remembrance of our safety in Christ. This, this alone, opened up to us by the Spirit, will suffice to keep us in that happy lowliness which is the true position of the full-grown man in Christ Jesus. But note this, when at any time we are cast down with multiplied afflictions, and oppressed with sorrow, the very same fact which kept us humble in prosperity may preserve us from despair in adversity. For mark you here, the apostle was surrounded by a great fight of affliction; he was compassed about with troubles, he suffered within and without; and yet he says, "Nevertheless I am not ashamed." But what is that which preserves him from sinking? It is the same truth which kept the ancient disciples from overweening pride. It is the sweet persuasion of his interest in Christ. "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Get then, Christian brethren and friends, get assurance; be not content with hope, get confidence; rest not in faith, labor after the full assurance of faith; and never be content, my hearer, till thou canst say thou knowest thy election, thou art sure of thy redemption, and thou art certain of thy preservation unto that day.

I propose this morning in preaching upon this text to labor both for the edification of the saint and the conversion of the sinner. I shall divide the text very amply thus: First, we have in it the grandest action of the Christian's life, namely, the committing of our eternal interests into the hand of Christ. Secondly, we have the justification of this grand act of trust - "I know in whom I have trusted." I have not trusted one whose character is unknown to me, I am not foolish, I have sure grounds for what I have done. And then we have, thirdly, the most blessed effect of this confidence - "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."

I. First, then I am to describe THE GRANDEST ACTION OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE.

With all our preaching, I am afraid that we too much omit the simple explanation of the essential act in salvation. I have feared that the anxious enquirer might visit many of our churches and chapels, month after month, and yet he would not get a clear idea of what he must do to be saved. He would come away with an indistinct notion that he was to believe, but what he was to believe he would not know. He would, perhaps, obtain some glimmering of the fact that he must be saved through the merits of Christ, but how those merits can become available to him, he would still be left to guess. I know at least that this was my case - that when sincere and anxious to do or be anything which might save my soul, I was utterly in the dark as to the way in which my salvation might be rendered thoroughly secure. Now, this morning. I hope I shall be able to put it into such a light that he who runs may read, and that the wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein.

The apostle says, he committed himself into the hands of Christ. His soul with all its eternal interests; his soul with all its sins, with all its hopes, and all its fears, he had put into the hands of Christ, as the grandest and most precious deposit which man could ever make. He had taken himself just as he was and had surrendered himself to Christ, saying - "Lord save me, for I cannot save myself; I give myself up to thee, freely relying upon thy power, and believing in thy love. I give my soul up to thee to be washed, cleansed, saved, and preserved, and at last brought home to heaven." This act of committing himself to Christ was the first act which ever brought real comfort to his spirit; it was the act which he must continue to perform whenever he would escape from a painful sense of sin; the act with which he must enter heaven itself, if he would die in peace and see God's face with acceptance. He must still continue to commit himself into the keeping of Christ. I take it that when the apostle committed himself to Christ, he meant these three things. He meant first, that from that good hour he renounced all dependence upon his own efforts to save himself. The apostle had done very much, after a fashion, towards his own salvation. He commenced with all the advantages of ancestry. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, as

touching the law a Pharisee. He was one of the very straightest of the straightest sect of his religion. So anxious was he to obtain salvation by his own efforts, that he left no stone unturned. Whatever Pharisee might be a hypocrite, Paul was none. Though he tithed his anise, and his mint, and his cummin, he did not neglect the weightier matters of the law. He might have united with truth, in the affirmation of the young man, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." Hear ye his own testimony: "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." Being exceedingly desirous to serve God, he sought to put down what he thought was the pestilent heresy of Christ. Being exceeding hot in his endeavors against every thing that he thought to be wrong, he persecuted the professors of the new religion, hunted them in every city, brought them into the synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; when he had emptied his own country, he must needs take a journey to another, that he might there show his zeal in the cause of his God, by bringing out those whom he thought to be the deluded followers of an impostor. But suddenly Paul's mind is changed. Almighty grace leads him to see that he is working in a wrong direction, that his toil is lost, that as well might Sisyphus seek to roll his stone up hill, as for him to find a road to heaven up the steep of Sinai; that as well might the daughters of Danaus hope to fill the bottomless cauldron with a bucket full of holes, as Paul indulge the idea that he could fill up the measure of the laws' demands. Consequently he feels that all he has done is nothing worth, and coming to Christ he cries, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

And now, my dear friends, if you would be saved, this is what you must do. I hope many of you have already performed the solemn act, you have said to Jesus in the privacy of your closet, "O Lord, I have tried to save myself, but I renounce all my endeavors. Once I said, 'I am no worse than my neighbors; my goodness shall preserve me.' Once I said, 'I have been

baptized, I have taken the sacrament, in these things will I trust,' and now, Lord, I cast all this false confidence to the winds.

'No more, my God, I beset no more
Of all the duties I have done;
I quit the hopes I held before
To trust the merits of thy Son.
The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before thy throne:
But faith can answer thy demands
By pleading what my Lord has done.'"

You cannot be saved if you have one hand on self and the other hand on Christ. Let go, cannier, renounce all dependence in anything thou canst do. Cease to be thine own keeper, give up the futile attempt to be thy own Saviour, and then thou wilt have taken the first step to heaven. There are but two, the first is - out of self, the next is - into Christ. When Christ is thy all, then art thou safe.

But again, when the apostle says he committed his soul to the keeping of Christ, he means that he had implicit confidence that Christ would save him now that he had relinquished all trust in self. Some men have gone far enough to feel that the best performance of their hands cannot be accepted before the bar of God. They have learned that their most holy acts are full of sin, that their most faithful service falls short of the demands of the law; they have relinquished self, but they are not able yet to see that Christ can and will save them. They are waiting for some great revelation; they think, perhaps, that by some marvellous electric shock, or some miraculous feeling within them, they will be led to place their confidence in Christ. They want to see an angel or a vision, or to hear a voice. Their cry is, "How could I think that Jesus would save such an one as I am. I am too vile, or else I am too hardened; I am the odd man; it is not likely that Christ would ever save me." Now, I doubt not that the apostle had felt all this, but he overcame all this attacking of sin, and he came to at last Christ and said, "Jesus, I feel that thou art worthy of my confidence. Behold, I the chief of sinners am, I have nothing in myself that can assist thee in taking me to heaven; I shall kick and struggle against thee rather than assist thee. But behold, I feel that such is thy

power, and such thy love, that I commit myself to thee. Take me as I am, and make me what thou wouldst have me be. I am vile, but thou art worthy; I am lost, but thou art the Saviour; I am dead, but thou art the quickener; take me; I beseech thee; I put my trust in thee, and though I perish, I will perish relying on thy blood. If I must die, I will die with my arms about thy cross, for thou art worthy of confidence, and on thee do I rely."

And now, my friends, if you will be safe, you must, in the strength of the Holy Ghost, do this also. You say you have given up all trust in self - well and good; now place your trust in Christ, repose your all on him; drop into his arms; cast yourself into his power; lay hold on him. You know how Joab, when he fled from the sword of Solomon, laid hold on the horns of the altar, thinking that surely when he had laid hold on the altar he was safe. His was vain confidence, for he was dragged from the horns of the altar and slain. But if thou canst lay hold on the horns of the altar of God, even Christ, thou art most surely safe, and no sword of vengeance can ever reach thee.

I saw the other day a remarkable picture, which I shall use as an illustration of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus. An offender had committed a crime for which he must die, but it was in the olden time when churches were considered to be sanctuaries in which criminals might hide themselves and so escape. See the transgressor - he rushes towards the church, the guards pursue him with their drawn swords, all athirst for his blood, they pursue him even to the church door. He rushes up the steps, and just as they are about to overtake him and hew him in pieces on the threshold of the church, out comes the Bishop, and holding up the crucifix he cries, "Back, back! stain not the precincts of God's house with blood! stand back!" and the guards at once respect the emblem and stand back, while the poor fugitive hides himself behind the robes of the priest. It is even so with Christ. The guilty sinner flies to the cross - flies straight away to Jesus, and though Justice pursues him, Christ lifts up his wounded hands and cries to Justice, "Stand back! stand back! I shelter this sinner; in the secret place of my tabernacle do I hide him; I will not suffer him to perish, for he puts his trust in me." Sinner, fly to Christ! But thou sayest, "I am too vile." The viler thou art, the more

wilt thou honor him by believing that he is able to make thee clean. "But I am too great a sinner." Then the more honor shall be given to him that thou art able to confide in him, great sinner though thou art. If you have a little sickness, and you tell your physician - "Sir! I am quite confident in your skill to heal," there is no great compliment, but if you are sore sick with a complication of diseases, and you say - "Sir! I seek no better skill, I will ask no more excellent advice, I trust alone in you," what an honor have you conferred on him, that you could trust your life in his hands when it was in extreme danger. Do the like with Christ; put your soul in his care, dare it, venture it; cast thyself simply on him; let nothing but faith be in thy soul; believe him, and thou shalt never be mistaken in thy trust.

But I think I have not completely stated all the apostle meant, when he said that he committed himself to Christ. He certainly meant those two things - self-renunciation, and implicit belief in Christ's power and willingness to save, but in the third place, the apostle meant that he did make a full and free surrender of himself to Christ, to be Christ's property, and Christ's servant for ever. If you would be saved you must not be your own. Salvation is through being bought with a price; and if you be bought with a price, and thus saved, remember, from that day forward you will not be your own. To-day, as an ungodly sinner, you are your own master, free to follow the lusts of the flesh; or, rather Satan is your great tyrant, and you are under bondage to him. If you would be saved you must by the aid of the Holy Spirit now renounce the bondage of Satan and come to Christ, saying, "Lord I am willing to give up all sin, it is not in my power to be perfect but I wish it were, make me perfect. There is not a sin I wish to keep; take all away; I present myself before thee. Wash me, make me clean. Do what thou wilt in me. I make no reserve, I make a full surrender of all to thee." And then you must give up to Christ all you are, and all you have by solemn indenture, signed and sealed by your own heart. You must say in the words of the sweet Moravian hymn -

"Take thou my soul and all my powers;
O take my memory, mind, and will,
Take all my goods, and all my hours,
Take all I know and all I feel;
Take all I think and speak, and do;

O take my heart, but make it new."

Accept the sacrifice, - I am worthless, but receive me through thy own merits. Take and keep me, I am, I hope I ever shall be thine.

I have now explained that act which is after all the only one which marks the day of salvation to the soul. I will give one or two figures however to set it in a clearer light. When a man hath gold and silver in his house, he fears lest some thief may break through and steal, and therefore if he be a wise man he seeks out a bank in which to store his money. He makes a deposit of his gold and his silver; he says in effect, "Take that, sir, keep it for me. To-night I shall sleep securely; I shall have no thought of thieves; my treasure is in your hands. Take care of that for me, when I need it, at your hands shall I require it." Now in faith we do just the same with our blessed Redeemer. We bring our soul just as it is and give it up to him. "Lord, I cannot keep it; sin and Satan will be sure to ruin it - take it and keep it for me, and in that day when God shall require the treasure, stand my sponsor, and on my behalf return my soul to my Maker kept and preserved to the end." Or take another figure. When your adventurous spirit hath sought to climb some lofty mountain, delighted with the prospect you scale many and many a steep; onward you climb up the rocky crags until at last you arrive at the verge of the snow and ice. There in the midst of precipices that scarcely know a bottom and of summits that seem inaccessible, you are suddenly surrounded with a fog. Perhaps it becomes worse and worse until a snow-storm completes your bewilderment. You cannot see a step before you: your track is lost. A guide appears: "I know this mountain," says he. "In my early days have I climbed it with my father. O'er each of these crags have I leaped in pursuit of the chamois; I know every chasm and cavern. If you will follow me even through the darkness I will find the path and bring you down; but mark, before I undertake to guide you in safety, I demand of you implicit trust. You must not plant your feet where you think it safest, but where I shall bid you. Wherever I bid you climb or descend you must implicitly obey, and I undertake on my part to bring you safely down to your house again." You do so - you have many temptations to prefer your own judgment to his but you resist them - and you are safe. Even so must you do with Christ. Lost to-day and utterly bewildered Christ appears.

"Let me guide you, let me be an eye to thee through the thick darkness; let me be thy foot, lean on me in the slippery place, let me be thy very life; let me wrap thee in my crimson vest to keep thee from the tempest and the storm." Will you now trust him; rely entirely, simply, and implicitly upon him? If so, the grand act of your life is done and you are a saved man, and on the terra firma of heaven you shall one day plant your delighted feet and praise the name of him who saved you from your sins.

I must add, however, that this act of faith must not be performed once only, but it must be continued as long as you live. As long as you you must have no other confidence but "Jesus only." You must take him now to-day, to have and to hold through life and in death, in tempest and in sunshine, in poverty and in wealth, never to part or sunder from him. You must take him to be your only prop, your only pillar from this day forth and for ever. What sayest thou sinner? Does God the Holy Ghost lead thee to say "Ay?" Does thy heart now confide in Jesus? If so, let the angels sing, for a soul is born to God, and a brand is plucked from the eternal fire. I have thus described faith in Christ - the committing of the soul to him.

II. This brings us to our second point - THE JUSTIFICATION OF THIS GRAND ACT OF TRUST.

Confidence is sometimes folly; trusting in man is always so. When I exhort you, then, to put your entire confidence in Christ, am I justified in so doing? and when the apostle could say that he trusted alone in Jesus, and had committed himself to him, was he a wise man or a fool? What saith the apostle? "I am no fool," said he, "for I know whom I have believed. I have not trusted to an unknown and untried pretender. I have not relied upon one whose character I could suspect. I have confidence in one whose power, whose willingness, whose love, whose truthfulness I know. I know whom I have believed." When silly women put their trust in yet more silly and wicked priests, they may say possibly that they know whom they have believed. But we may tell them that their knowledge must be ignorance indeed - that they are greatly deluded in imagining that any man, be he who he may, or what he may, can have any power in the salvation of his fellow's soul. You come sneaking up to me and ask me

to repose my soul in you; and who are you? "I am an ordained priest of the Church of Rome." And who ordained you? "I was ordained by such a one." And who ordained him? "It cometh after all," saith he, "from the Pope." And who is he, and what is he more than any other man, or any other imposter? What ordination can he confer? "He obtained it directly from Peter." Did he? Let the link be proved; and if he did, what was Peter, and where has God given Peter power to forgive sin - a power which he should transmit to all generations? Begone! The thick pollutions of thine abominable church forbid the idea of descent from any apostle but the traitor Judas. Upon the Papal throne men worse than devils have had their seat, and even a woman big with her adulteries once reigned as head of thine accursed church. Go purge the filthiness of thy priesthood, the debauchery of thy nunneries and the stygian filth of thy mother city, the old harlot Rome. Talk not of pardoning others, while fornication is licensed in Rome itself, and her ministers are steeped to the throat in iniquity. But to return. I rest no more on Peter than Peter could rest in himself, Peter must rest on Christ as a poor guilty sinner himself, an imperfect man who denied his Master with oaths and curses. He must rest where I must rest, and we must stand together on the same great rock on which Christ doth build his church, even his blood and his everlasting merits. I marvel that any should be found to have such confidence in men, that they should put their souls in their hands. If however any of you wish to trust in a priest, let me advise you if you do trust him, to do it wholly and fully. Trust him with your cash-box, trust him with your gold and silver. Perhaps you object to that. You don't feel at all inclined to go that length. But, my friend, if you cannot trust the man with your gold and silver, pray don't trust him with your soul. I only suggested this because I thought you might smile and at once detect your error. If you could not trust such a fox with your business; if you would as soon commit your flocks to the custody of a wolf, why will you be fool enough to lay your soul at the feet of some base priest who, likely enough, is ten thousand times more wicked than your self.

Was Paul then justified in his confidence in Christ? He says he was because he knew Christ. And what did he know? Paul knew, first of all, Christ's Godhead. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. If my soul be in his hand,

"Where is the power can reach it there,
Or what can pluck it thence."

If the wings of Omnipotence do cover it, if the eye of Omnipotence is fixed upon it, and if the heart of eternal love doth cherish it, how can it be destroyed? Trust not thy soul my fellow-man anywhere but with thy God. But Jesus is thy God rely thou fully in him, and think not that thou canst place a confidence too great in him who made the heavens, and bears the world upon his shoulders. Paul knew too that Christ was the Redeemer. Paul had seen in vision Christ in the garden. He had beheld him sweat as it were great drops of blood. By faith Paul had seen Jesus hanging on the cross. He had marked his agonies on the tree of doom. He had listened to his death shriek, of "It is finished," and he felt that the atonement which Jesus offered, was more than enough to recompense for the sin of man. Paul might have said, "I am not foolish in confiding my soul in the pierced and blood-stained hand of him whose sacrifice hath satisfied the Father and opened the gates of heaven to all believers." Further, Paul knew that Christ was risen from the dead. By faith he saw Christ at the right hand of God, pleading with his Father for all those who commit themselves to his hand. Paul knew Christ to be the all-prevailing intercessor. He said to himself "I am not wrong in believing him, for I know whom I have trusted, that when he pleads, the Father will not deny him, and when he asks, sooner might he even die than he become deaf to Jesus' prayer." This was again, another reason why Paul dared to trust in Christ. He knew his Godhead, he knew his redemption, he knew his resurrection, he knew his ascension, and intercession, and I may add, Paul knew the love of Christ, that love which passeth kindness; higher than thought, and deeper than conception. He knew Christ's power, that he was Omnipotent, the lying of kings. He knew Christ's faithfulness; that he was the God, and could not lie. He knew his immutability, that he was "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday today and for ever," and having known Christ in every glorious office, in every divine attribute, and in all the beauty of his complex character, Paul said, "I can with confidence repose in him, for I know him, I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him."

But Paul not only knew these things by faith, but he knew much of them

by experience. Our knowledge of Christ is somewhat like climbing one of our Welsh mountains. When you are at the base you see but little, the mountain itself appears to be but one half as high as it really is. Confined in a little valley you discover scarcely anything but the rippling brooks as they descend into the stream at the base of the mountain. Climb the first rising knoll, and the valley lengthens and widens beneath your feet. Go up higher, and higher still, till you stand upon the summit of one of the great roots that start out as spurs from the sides of the mountain you see the country for some four or five miles round, and you are delighted with the widening prospect. But go onward, and onward, and onward, and how the scene enlarges, till at last, when you are on the summit, and look east, west, north, and south, you see almost all England lying before you. Yonder is a forest in some distant country, perhaps two hundred miles away, and yonder the sea, and there a shining river and the smoking chimneys of a manufacturing town, or there the masts of the ships in some well known port. All these things please and delight you, and you say, "I could not have imagined that so much could be seen at this elevation." Now, the Christian life is of the same order. When we first believe in Christ we see but little of him. The higher we climb the more we discover of his excellencies and his beauties. But who has ever gained the summit? Who has ever known all the fullness of the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Paul now grown old, sitting, grey hair'd, shivering in a dungeon in Rome - he could say, with greater power than we can, "I know whom I have believed?" - for each experience had been like the climbing of a hill, each trial had been like the ascending to another summit, and his death seemed like the gaining of the very top of the mountain from which he could see the whole of the faithfulness and the love of him to whom he had committed his soul.

III. And now, I close by noticing THE APOSTLE'S CONFIDENCE. The apostle said, "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." See this man. He is sure he shall be saved. But why? Paul! art thou sure that thou canst keep thyself? "No," says he, "I have nothing to do with that:" and yet thou art sure of thy salvation! "Yes," saith he, "I am!" How is it, then? "Why, I am persuaded that he is able to keep me. Christ, to whom I commit myself, I know hath power enough to

hold me to the end." Martin Luther was bold enough to exclaim "Let him that died for my soul, see to the salvation of it." Let us catechise the apostle for a few minutes, and see if we cannot shake his confidence. Paul! Thou hast had many trials, and thou wilt have many more. What if thou shouldst be subject to the pangs of hunger, combined with those of thirst. If not a mouthful of bread should pass thy mouth to nourish thy body, or a drop of water should comfort thee, will not thy faith fail thee then? If provisions be offered thee, on condition of the denial of thy faith, dost thou not imagine that thou wilt be vane, quashed, and that the pangs of nature will overpower thee? "No," says Paul, "famine shall not quench my faith; for the keeping of my faith is in the hands of Christ." But what if, combined with this, the whole world should rise against thee, and scoff thee? What if hunger within should echo to the shout of scorn without? wouldst thou not then deny thy faith? If, like Demas, every other Christian should turn to the silver of this world, and deny the Master, wouldst not thou go with them? "No," saith the apostle, "my soul is not in my keeping, else might it soon apostatize; it is in the hand of Christ. though all men should leave me, yet will he keep me." But what, O apostle, if thou shouldst be chained to the stake, and the flames should kindle, and thy flesh should begin to burn; when thy beard is singed, and thy cheeks are black, wilt thou then hold him fast! "Yea," saith the apostle, "he will then hold me fast;" and I think I hear him, as he stops us in the midst of our catechising, and replies, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul, Paul, suppose the world should tempt you in another way. If a kingdom were offered you - if the pomps and pleasures of this world should be laid at your feet, provided you would deny your Master, would your faith maintain its hold then? "Yea," saith the apostle, "Jesus would even then uphold my faith for my soul is not in my keeping, but in his, and empires upon empires could not tempt him to renounce that soul of which he has become the guardian and the keeper. Temptation might soon overcome me, but it could not overcome him. The world's blandishments might soon move me to renounce my own soul; but they could not for one moment move Jesus to give me up."

And so the apostle continues his confidence. But Paul, when thou shalt come to die, will thou not then fear and tremble? "Nay," saith he, "he will be with me there, for my soul shall not die, that will be still in the hand of him who is immortality and life." But what will become of thee when thy soul is separated from thy body? Canst thou trust him in a separate state, in the unknown world which visions cannot paint? In the time of God's mighty thunder, when earth shall shake and heaven shall reel. Canst thou trust him then? "Yea," saith the apostle, "until that day when all these tempests shall die away into eternal calm, and when the moving earth shall settle into a stable land in which there shall be no more sea, even then can I trust him.

"I know that safe with him remains,
Protected by his power,
What I've committed to his hands
Till the decisive hour."

O poor sinner! come and put thy soul into the hands of Jesus. Attempt not to take care of it thyself; and then thy life shall be hidden in heaven, and kept there by the Almighty power of God, where none can destroy it and none can rob thee of it. "Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved."

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Faith In Perfection

The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands. - Psalm 138:8

I have selected this text, or, rather, it has been given to me to furnish a motto for the whole year to all the believing family of God now present. It

was brought under my notice from the fact that I have a very dear friend, a venerable minister of the Church of England, and an earnest lover of the truth as it is in Jesus, who always sends me, at the beginning of the year, or a day or two previously, a little envelope sealed up, that I am not to open till New Year's day, containing a printed text of Scripture, which he desires to be preserved during the remainder of the year, to act as a staff whereon we may rest through the pilgrimage of the next twelve months. When I opened my envelope I found this text, and it charmed me. It contains in itself the very essence of the grace of God. It reads like music to the soul, and is like a bottle of water in the desert to the thirsty lip. Let me read it again, and remember it, and dwell upon it, and digest it during all the year. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."

In the opening, I must remark that this is not the heritage of all mankind. The word, "me," in the text, cannot be appropriated by any man, unless he, in some respects, resembles the character of David, who penned this psalm. The text, however, itself, is its own guard. If you look at it, you will see that there is in its bowels a full description of a true Christian. I will ask you three questions suggested by the words themselves, and according to your answer to these three questions, shall be my reply, yes or no, as to whether this promise belongs to you.

To begin, let us read the first sentence - "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Now, have you a concern in and a concern about heavenly things? Have you ever felt that eternity concerns you more than time; that the mansions of heaven are more worthy your consideration than the dwelling-places of earth? Have you felt that you ought to have a greater concern about your immortal soul than about your perishing body? Remember, if you are living the life of the butterfly, the life of the present, a sportive and flowery life, without making any preparation or taking any thought for a future world, this promise is not yours. If the things of God do not concern you, then God will not perfect them for you. You must have in your own soul a concern about these things, and afterwards you must have a belief in your heart that you have an interest in heavenly things, or otherwise it would be a perversion of Holy

Scripture for you to appropriate these precious things to yourselves. Can we then, each of us put our hand upon our heart and say, without stammering, which suggests a hypocrite - can we say honestly, as in the sight of God; "I am concerned about the things of God, of Christ, of salvation, of eternity! I may not have assurance, but I have concern. If I cannot say, I know in whom I have believed, yet I can say I know in whom I desire to believe. If I cannot say, I know that my Redeemer liveth, yet I can say I desire that I may be found in him at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Well soul, if thou hast a concern about the things of God, this is thy promise, and let not Master Clip-promise take it away from thee; suffer him not to take any part of its preciousness; it is all thine, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth thee."

Another question is suggested by the second clause, "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever." Have we then tasted of God's mercy? Have you and I gone to the throne of grace conscious of our lost estate? Have we made confession of our sins? Have we looked to the blood of Jesus; and do we know that the mercy of God has been manifested to us? Have we breathed the dying thief's petition, and have we had the gracious answer of Jesus? Have we prayed as the publican did? and have we gone to our house justified by God's mercy? Remember, O man! if thou hast never received God's pardoning mercy and his forgiving grace, this text is a divine enclosure, into which thou hast no right to intrude; this is a banquet, of which thou hast no right to eat; this is a secret place, into which thou hast no right to enter. We must first taste God's mercy and, having tasted that, we may believe that he will perfect that which concerneth us.

A third question, and I beseech you put these questions to your heart, lest you should be misled, by any comfortable words that I shall hereafter speak, into the foul delusion, that this promise signifies yourself, when it does not. The last question is suggested by the prayer, "Forsake not the works of thine own hands." Have you then a religion which is the work of God's hands? Many men have a religion which is their own work, there is nothing supernatural about it; human nature began it, human nature has carried it on, and as far they have any hope they trust that human nature will complete it. Remember there is no spring on earth that has force

enough in it to spout a fountain into paradise, and there is no strength in human nature that shall ever suffice to raise a soul to heaven. You may practice morality, and I beseech you do so; you may attend to ceremonies and you have a right to do so, and must do so; you may endeavour to do all righteousness, but since you are a sinner condemned in the sight of God, you can never be pardoned apart from the blood of Christ; and you can never be purified apart from the purifying operations of the Holy Ghost. That man's religion which is born on earth, and born of the will of the flesh or of blood, is a vain religion. Oh! beloved, except a man be born again, or from above, as the original has it, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and cannot enter heaven; only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and is, therefore, capable of inheriting a spiritual inheritance, which God reserves for spiritual men. Have I then the work of God in my heart? am I sure it is not my own work? If I am, experimentally, an Arminian, and if I think I have proved the truth of Arminian religion, then I have no religion that will carry me to heaven. But if, experimentally, I am compelled to confess that grace begins, that grace carries on, and that grace must perfect my religion, then God having began the good work in me, I am the person for whom this verse is intended, and I may sit down at this celestial banquet and eat and drink to my very full.

Let each hearer, then, pause and put these three questions to himself, - Am I concerned about religion? Have I tasted the mercy of God? Is my religion God's work? They are solemn questions; answer them! and if ye can even humbly say "Yes," then come ye to this text, for the joy and comfort of it is yours.

We have three things here. First, the believer's confidence, - "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Secondly, the ground of that confidence, - "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever;" and thirdly, the result and outgrowth of his confidence expressed in the prayer, - "Forsake not the works of thine own hands."

I. First, then, THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE, - "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." I think, perhaps, the best way to preach upon a text, if we would have it remembered, is to take it word by word. Let us

spell it over then, as Uncle Tom did, when he was on board of the steamer, and could not read the long words, but sucked more sweetness out of the text by spelling it over, than he could have done in any other way.

"The Lord." Well then the Psalmist's confidence was a divine confidence. He did not say, "I have grace enough to perfect that which concerneth me;" "my faith is so strong that I shall not fail;" "my love is so warm that it will never grow cold;" "my resolution is so firmly set that nothing can move it;" - no, his dependance was on the Lord - "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." And O Christian, if thou hast any confidence which is not grounded on the Lord and rooted in the rock of ages, thy confidence is worse than a dream; it shall deceive thee, pierce thee, wound thee, and cast thee down to thine own future sorrow and grief. But here, our Psalmist himself builds upon nothing else than upon the Lord's works. Sure I am the Lord began the good work in our souls, he has carried it on, and if he does not finish it, it never will be complete. If there be one stitch in the celestial garment of my righteousness, which I am to insert myself, then I am lost. If there be one drachma in the price of my redemption which I am to make up, then must I perish. If there be one contingency - one "if," or "though," or "but," about my soul's salvation, then am I a lost man. But this is my confidence, the Lord that began will perfect. He has done it all, must do it all, he will do it all. My confidence must not be in what I can do, or in what I have resolved to do, but entirely in what the Lord will do. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." "Oh," says unbelief, "you will never be able to purify yourself from sin. Look at the evil of your heart, you can never sweep that away: look at the evil fashions and temptations of the world that beset you, you will surely be lured aside and led astray." Ah! yes, I should indeed perish if it depended upon myself. I am but as clay upon the wheel. If I had to fashion myself into a vessel of honour, fit for the Master's use, I might give up the work in despair. I am but as a little lamb; and if I had to travel through the wilderness by myself, I might indeed lie down and die. Yet if I be clay, he is my potter, and he will not suffer me to be marred upon the wheel; and if I be a lamb he is my shepherd, and he carrieth the lambs in his bosom - he wardeth off the wolf, he smiteth the destroyer, and he bringeth every sheep into the fold upon the hilltop of glory. The Lord,

then, is the Christian's divine confidence. We can never be too confident when we confide in the Lord. "Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me."

Take the next word, "will." So the Psalmist's confidence was a confidence for the future; it is not only what the Lord does, but what the Lord will do. I have heard people say that they could trust a man as far as they could see him; and I have often thought that is about as far as many professors trust God, so far as they can see him, and no farther. They believe God is good when the meat is on the table, and the drink is in the cup, but would they believe God if the table were bare, and the cup were empty? No; they have good faith when they see the ravens coming, that they shall have their bread and meat; but if the ravens did not come, would they believe that even then their bread should be given them and their water should be sure? They can believe the thing when they get it, but until they get it they are doubting. The Psalmist's faith, however, deals with the future, not merely with the present. The "Lord will," says he, the "Lord will." He looks on all through his life, and he feels sure that what God has done and is doing he will carry on even to the end. And now you that are afraid about the future, rest with us in this sweet promise. How often do you and I stand star-gazing into the future, and trembling, because we think we see divers portents, and strange sights, which portend some future trouble. O child of God! leave the future to thy God. O leave everything that is to come in the hand of him to whom the future is already present, and who knows beforehand everything that shalt befall thee. Draw from the present living water with which to moisten the arid desert of the future; snatch from the altar-fires of to-day a torch with which to light up the darkness of that which is to come. Depend on it, that He who is to-day thy sun, shall be thy sun for ever - even in the darkest hour he shall shine upon thee; and he who is to-day thy shield shall be thy shield for evermore; and even in the thickest part of the battle he shall catch the dart, and thou shalt stand unharmed.

Let us turn to this word "will" once again. There is a little more in it; it does not say the "Lord may," it does not say, "I hope he will; I trust he will," but it says he will; "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." A few months after I first sought and found salvation, I enjoyed the

sweet privilege of full assurance, and in talking with a godly Christian I expressed myself very confidently concerning the great truth that God would ne'er forsake his people, nor leave his work undone. I was at once child, I was told I had no right to speak so confidently, for it was presumptuous. The longer I live, the more I feel persuaded that confidence was proper, and the chiding was not deserved. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of Christians are those who never dare to doubt God, but who take his word simply as it stands, and believe it and ask no questions, just feeling assured that if God has said it it will be so. The Psalmist in our text had no more doubt about his own ultimate perfection, than he had about his existence. He says, "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know shall happen,

"He shall present my soul,
Unblemish'd and complete,
Before the glory of his face,
With joys divinely great."

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God. The promises of man may be broken, many of them are made to be broken, but the purposes of God shall stand, and his promises shall be fulfilled. He is a promise maker, but he never was a promise breaker: he is a promise-keeping God, and his people shall prove it so. Come then, ye that are always hoping amidst trembling, and fear, but are never confident, for once take that doubting note out of your mouth, and say assuredly "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." If I be really his child, though full of sin, I shall one day be perfect; if I have really set my heart towards him, I shall one day see his face with joy; and let whatever foes obstruct, I shall conquer through the Lamb's redeeming blood. He "will perfect that which concerneth me." I like to hear God's people speak diffidently of themselves, but confidently of their God. Doubts are the greatest of sins, and even though Christians have doubts, yet doubts are unchristian things. The spirit of Christ is not a spirit of doubting, but a spirit of believing. Doubts may exist in the hearts of spiritual men, but doubts are unspiritual, carnal, and sinful. Let us seek to get rid of them, and speak confidently where God's word is confident.

Now, take the next word, "The Lord will perfect." That is a large word. Our Wesleyan brethren have a notion that they are going to be perfect here on earth. I should be very glad to see any of them when they are perfect; and if any of them happen to be in the position of servants and want a situation, I would be happy to give them any amount of wages I could spare, for I should feel myself greatly honoured and greatly blessed in having a perfect servant; and what is more, if any of them are masters and want servants, I would undertake to come and serve them without wages at all if I could but find a perfect master. I have had a perfect master ever since I first knew the Lord, and if I could find that there is another perfect master, I should be greatly pleased in having him as an under-master, while the great Supreme must ever be chief of all. Did you ever see a perfect man? I did once. He called upon me, and wanted me to come and see him, for I should get great instruction from him if I did. I said, "I have no doubt of it, but I should not like to come into your house; I think I should be hardly able to get into your room." How is that? "Well, I suppose your house would be so full of angels that there would not be room for me." He did not like that; so I broke another joke or two upon his head; whereupon he went into a perfect furor. "Well friend," I said to him, "I think I am as perfect as you after all; for perfect men get angry?" He denied that he was angry, although there was a peculiar redness about his cheeks that is very common to persons when they are angry; at any rate I think I rather spoiled his perfection, for he evidently went home less satisfied with himself than when he went out. I met another man who considered himself perfect, but he was thoroughly mad; and I do not believe that any of your pretenders to perfection are better than good maniacs, superior bedlamites; that is all I believe they are. For while a man has got a spark of reason left in him, he cannot, unless he is the most impudent of imposters, talk about his being perfect. What would I not give to be perfect myself! And you can say also, what would you not give to be perfect. If I must be burnt in fire, or dragged through the sea by the hair of my head; if I must be buried in the bowels of the earth, or hung up to the stars for ever - if I might but be perfect, I would rejoice in any price I might have to pay for perfection. But I feel perfectly persuaded, that perfection is absolutely impossible to any man beneath the sky; and yet, I feel sure, that to every believer future perfection is an absolute certainty.

The day shall come, beloved, when the Lord shall not only make us better, but shall make us perfectly good; when he shall not merely subdue our lusts, but when he shall cast the demons out; when he shall make us not only tolerable, and bearable, and endurable, but make us holy and acceptable in his sight. That day however, I believe, shall not come until we enter into the joy of our Lord, and are glorified together with Christ in heaven.

Say, Christian, is not this a large confidence? "The Lord will make me perfect." He will most assuredly, beyond a doubt, bring to perfection my faith, my love, my hope, and every grace. He will perfect his purposes; he will perfect his promises; he will perfect my body, and perfect my soul. "He will perfect that which concerneth me."

And now there is the word "that" - "that which" - "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Very indefinite, it seems; but how broad it is. What a broad faith the Psalmist had! "Whatever concerns me," says he, "the Lord will perfect." Once pardon of sin concerned me; that he has perfected. Then imputed righteousness concerned me; that he perfected. Now, sanctification troubles me; that he will perfect. One day, deliverance was my fear; now it is support. But whatever is laid upon my heart to be concerned about, this comprehensive term, "that" embraces all, be it what it may, if I have a spiritual concern upon my soul about any heavenly thing, that will God perfect.

Go on a step further. Here is a trial of faith. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Alas, beloved, we cannot say we have any good thing without having concern for it. I suppose God never gave us a blessing, but we doubted whether we should have it before we obtained it. Somehow or other, our doubts always go before God's mercies; whereas we ought to believe, and not to feel any anxiety and distrustful concern. My faith is sometimes tried and concerned about heavenly things now. But though that faith be tried by an inward concern about the things of God, yet it surmounts even its own doubts, and cries, "The Lord will perfect even this." Have you learnt this lesson aright - being troubled about a thing and yet believing about it? A christian man will find his experience to be very much like the sea. Upon the surface there is a

storm, and the mountain-waves are rolling, but down in the depths there are caverns where quietude has reigned supreme ever since the foundations of the earth were digged; where peace, undisturbed, has had a solitary triumph. Beloved, it is so with the Christian's heart. Outwardly, he is concerned about these things. He doubts, he fears, he trembles; but in his inmost heart, down in the depths of his soul, he is without a fear, and he can say confidently, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

But I hasten to dwell upon the last word. The faith of our text is a personal faith. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Here is the loudest note of all; this is the handle whereby we must lay hold of this sword if we would use it aright - "that which concerneth me." Oh, it is a sweet truth to know and believe that God will perfect all his saints; 'tis sweeter still to know that "he will perfect me." It is blessed to believe that all God's people shall persevere; but the essence of delight is to feel that I shall persevere through him. Many persons are contented with a kind of general religion, an universal salvation. They belong to a Christian community; they have joined a Christian church, and they think they shall be saved in the lump - in the mass; but give me a personal religion. What is all the bread in the world, unless I myself feed upon it? I am starved, though Egypt be full of corn. What are all the rivers that run from the mountains to the sea, if I be thirsty? Unless I drink myself, what are all these? If I be poor and in rags, ye do but mock me if ye tell me that Potosi's mines are full of treasure? You do but laugh at me if you speak of Golconda's diamonds. What care I for these, unless I have some participation for myself? But if I can say even of my crust, "It is my own," then I can eat it with a grateful heart. That crust which is my own is more precious than all the granaries of Egypt if they are not my own, and this promise even if it were smaller would be more precious than the largest promise that stands in the Bible, if I could not see my right to it personally myself. But now, by bumble faith, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, resting in his merits, trusting in his death, I come to the text, and say throughout this year, and every year, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me" - unworthy me. Lost and ruined me. He will yet save me; and

"I, among the blood-wash'd throng,
Shall wave the palm, and wear the crown,
And shout loud victory."

This, then, is the believer's confidence. May God grant you the same!

II. The second thing is THE GROUND OF THIS CONFIDENCE. The ground of it is this - "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever." The believer is sure he shall be saved. Why? Because of his merits? No. Because of the strength of his own faith? No. Because he has something which will recommend him to God? No; he believes he shall be perfected because of God's mercy. Is it not a strange thing that the advanced believer, when he reaches to the very height of piety, just comes to the spot where he commenced? Do we not begin at the cross, and when we have climbed over so high, is it not at the cross that we end? I know my pilgrimage shall never end to my heart's content till at his cross again I cast my wreath and lay my honours down. My sins I laid there, and aught else that he has given me I would lay there too. Ye began there and your watchword is the cross. While yet the hosts are preparing for the battle, it is the cross. And ye have fought the fight and your sword is red with blood, and your head is crowned with triumph. And what is the watchword now? The cross. That which is our strength in battle is our boast in victory. Mercy must be the theme of our song here; and mercy enduring for ever must be the subject of the sonnets of paradise. None other can be fit sinners; nay, and none other can be fit, grateful saints.

Come then, beloved, let us just look at this ground of our confidence, and see whether it will bear our weight. It is said that elephants when they are going to cross a bridge are always very careful to sound it, to see whether it will bear them. If they see a horse going over safely that is not enough, for they say to themselves, "I am an elephant, and I must see whether it will bear me." Now, we should always do the same with a promise and with the groundwork of a promise. The promise may have been proved by others before you, but if you feel yourselves to be like huge elephantine sinners, you want to be quite certain whether the arches of the promise are quite strong enough to bear the weight of your sins. Now, I say, here is God's mercy. Ah! this is indeed all-sufficient. What was it that first led

the Lord to bring you and me into the covenant at all? It was mercy, pure mercy. We were dead in sin. We had not any merits to recommend us, for some of us used to curse and swear like infidels; some of us were drunkards, sinners of the deepest dye. And why did God save us? Simply because he has said, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy."

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?"

'Twas mercy. Well, then, if mercy made God choose me, if he chose me from no other motive than mercy, if that mercy always is the same, he always will choose me, and always will love me. Do you not know it is a rule which none can dispute, that the same cause must always produce the same effect. We are told that the volcano is caused by certain fires within the earth, which must find their vent. Now, as long as there are those inward fires, and they are in a condition to require the vent, the vent they must have. When the cause is the same, the effect must be the same.

The sole cause then, of the salvation of any man is the mercy of God, and not his merits. God does not look at you whether you are a good man or a bad man; he does not save you because of anything in yourself, but because he will do as he pleases, and because he loves to act mercifully: that is his only reason. Oh! my God, if thou lovedst me when I had not any faith, thou wilt not cast me away because my faith is weak now. If thou lovedst me when I had all my sin about me, thou wilt not leave off loving me now thou hast pardoned me. If thou lovedst me when I was in my rags, and beggary, and filth, when there was nothing to recommend me; at least, my God, I am not further fallen than I was then, or, if I am, the same boundless mercy that loved me when I was lost, will love me, lost though I be even now. Do you not see it is because the basis of eternal love is that on which we build we derive this inference, that if the base cannot move, the pyramid will not. "The mercy of God endureth for ever: the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

Note the very words of the text: "Thy mercy, O Lord." David brings his confidence into the court of Divine inspection, in order that it may there

be proved. He says, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." It is very well for you and I to speak thus here this morning, but dare we go up to the very temple of God, and there, feeling his presence, actually present our confidence before him, and ask him to try it. There are many hypocrites in the world that would tremble to play the hypocrite if they felt that they were in the presence of God. But here we have a man that dares to bring his faith to God's tribunal; he puts it in the scales of infinite justice, and waits the decision. "Thy mercy, O Lord." Can you do the same? Who among us can cry out with Toplady -

"The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do,
My Saviour's obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view."

Can you come into God's presence and say this, or, to quote Hart's words, can you say

"Great God I'm clean,
Through Jesu's blood I'm clean."

He that can say that is blessed indeed; the Lord shall perfect that which concerneth him.

Ah, what if God's mercy towards men should change? Blessed be his name it cannot; it endureth for ever. But what if he should remove his mercy from one man to another? That also he will never do; it endureth for ever. But suppose we should sin so much that God's mercy should give way? It cannot give way; it endureth all the weight of sin; it endureth for ever. But what if we should live in sin so long that at last God denied mercy to us even though we believed in him? That cannot be; we cannot sin longer than for ever - his mercy cannot be tried longer, and even if it could be tried for ever it would endure for ever. All the weight of my trouble, all the weight of my backsliding, all the weight of my evil heart of unbelief - all these the everlasting arches of divine mercy can and will sustain. Those arches never shall rock; the stone never shall be crumbled; it never shall be swept away by even the floods of eternity itself. Because

his mercy endureth for ever, God will most assuredly perfect the work of his hands.

And now I come to the third and last point, and here may the Holy Spirit help me to stir up your minds to prayer.

III. The third particular is - THE RESULT OF THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE - it leads him to prayer. Out upon those men who have a confidence that helps them to live without prayer. There are men that live in this world who say we do not need evidences, we do not need prayer, we do not need good works. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, and said unto me, Thou art one of God's elect, an thou mayest live in sin, and do whatever thou pleasest, I will save thee at last." Such characters I hope are getting rare. Alas! there are certain places of worship where such a religion as that is fostered, if it be not begotten. There are some ministers - I trust they hardly know what they are about - who by leaving out the doctrine of man's responsibility, naturally lead men into that guilty and abominable doctrine of Antinomianism which has done so much to injure the cause of Christ. Hear then, ye seed of the presumptuous, and ye that bear the whore's forehead, hear and tremble. The Lord hath not chosen you, neither has he cast your name into his lap. He has chosen no man who lives and dies presumptuously, trusting that he is chosen when he has no evidence of it. Do you live without prayer? Ah! soul; election hath nought to do with thee. What is intended by the doctrine of reprobation is far more likely to be thy lot than the glorious inheritance of election. Dost thou live in sin, that grace may abound! Every man's damnation is just, but thine shall be emphatically so. What! dost thou dare to palm thyself off as a child of God when thou art a brat of hell? Dost thou claim that thou art a heir of light, when the damning mark of Cain is on thy very forehead? What! when thou art like Balaam, presumptuous and abominable, dost thou dare still to claim a lot in the inheritance of the saints in light? Away with thy confidence; "Hail shall sweep away thy refuge of lies." The true-born child of God has a spot that is not like thy spot; he is of a different mould and make from thee. Thou art a deceiver - not the legitimate child of God.

Mark, my friends, in the text, that a genuine confidence in God does not

lead us to give up prayer, but leads us to prayer. "The Lord will perfect me." Am I, therefore to say, "He will do it, and I will not pray?" No, because he will do it, therefore will I pray. Many persons have such shallow minds that they cannot perceive how God's determination and our own free action can go together. I never find these people making the same mistake in common life they do on religious subjects. A man says to me, "Now, sir, if God intends to save me, I need do nothing." He knows he is a fool when he says it; or if he does not know it, I will soon make him see it. Suppose he says, again, "If the Lord intends to feed me, he will feed me, and I will go without my dinner. If the Lord intends to give me a harvest, he will give me a harvest, and I shall not sow any wheat, and I shall not plough." Suppose another were to say, "If the Lord intends to keep me warm to-day, he will do it; so I will not put on my coat." Suppose a man should say, again, "If the Lord intends me to go to bed to-night, I shall go to bed; and, therefore, I shall not walk towards home, but sit here as long as I like." You smile at once, because the folly is self-convicting. But is it not just the same in religion? Because "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," am I to say I shall not pray? Why, no, my dear friends, the fact is, that a knowledge that a thing is certain prompts a wise man to action. What made Oliver Cromwell fight so bravely, but because he felt convinced that he should conquer? He did not say, "I know that I shall conquer, therefore I will not fight;" no, he said, "I know that I shall conquer; therefore keep your powder dry, trust in God, and at 'em!" So with you; if you believe the Lord will perfect that which concerneth us, begin with prayer; trust the promise, and let us go on cheerfully through the world, rejoicing in the Lord our God. Confidence must not lead to idleness, but to diligent activity.

And now, note this prayer, - "Forsake not the works of thine own hands." The prayer is full of confession; it must be that, or else it is never true prayer. The Psalmist confesses, that if God did forsake him it would be all over with him, and this is a truth, brethren, that you and I ought ever to keep in mind. We sometimes pray that God will not forsake us in temptation; do you not know we should be as much lost if he were to forsake us in communion as if he were to forsake us in temptation. When God puts you on the pinnacle of the temple, you need say, "Lord, hold me up and I shall be safe; do not forsake me here." When you are down on

the ground, if the Lord were to forsake you, there you would perish just as easily as on the pinnacle of the temple. I have known the Christian on his knees in the den of leopards, cry, "Lord, save me now," but do you know that he has as great a need of help when he is on the top of Pisgah? for he still wants to be kept. Every moment of our life we are on the brink of hell, and if the Lord should forsake us, we should certainly perish. Let him but withdraw the salt of his grace, and the proudest believer must be cast into the depths of hell, and fall, like Lucifer, never to rise again. Oh! let this always make us cry aloud, "Forsake us not, O God."

There is yet another confession in the text - the Psalmist's confession that all he has he has from God. "Forsake not the works of thine own hands." I will not however dwell upon it, but urge you who are believers, to go home and cry aloud to God in prayer. Let this be a new year's-day prayer. "Forsake not the work of thine hands. Father, forsake not thy little child, lest he die by the hand of the enemy. Shepherd, forsake not thy lamb, lest the wolves devour him. Great husbandman, forsake not thy little plant, lest the frost should nip it, and it should be destroyed. Forsake me not, O Lord now, and when I am old and grey headed, O Lord, forsake me not. Forsake me not in my joys, lest I curse God. Forsake me not in my sorrows, lest I murmur against him. Forsake me not in the day of my repentance, lest I lose the hope of pardon, and fall into despair; and forsake me not in the day of my strongest faith, lest my faith degenerate into presumption, and so I perish by mine own hand." Cry out to God, that he would not forsake you in your business, in your family; that he would not forsake you either upon your bed by night, or in your business by day. And may God grant, when you and I shall come to the end of this year, we may have a good tale to tell concerning the faithfulness of God in having answered our prayers, and having fulfilled his promise.

I would now this day crave a part in your prayers. My dear friends, I am confident that God will perfect that which concerneth me. There has been a work done in this place, and God has blessed the congregation; but the work is not perfect yet. It is not enough to rouse other ministers to preach the word. I hope I shall never, while I live, cease to have another project always in hand. When one thing is done, we will do something else. If we have tried to make ministers more diligent in preaching, we must try to

make the churches more earnest in praying. When we have built our new chapel, we must build something else; we must always have something in hand. If I have preached the Gospel in England, it must be my privilege to preach it across the sea yet; and when I have preached it there, I must solicit longer leave of absence that I may preach it in other countries, and act as a missionary throughout the nations. I am confident that God will perfect that which concerneth me; I rely on that. Do I therefore say that you need not pray? Oh, no. Pray that he would not forsake the work of his own hands. This work is not of our own hands. This labour of love is not mine, but God's. I have done nothing, except as the instrument; he has done it all. Oh, my dear friends, you that love me, as a brother in Christ, and as your pastor in the church, go home and plead with God for me this day and henceforth, that he would not forsake his work; but that the fire which has been kindled here may run along the ground, till all England shall be in a blaze with a revival of grace and godliness. Be not content to warm your hands at the sparks of this fire. Ask that the breath of God's Spirit may blow the sparks across the sea, that other lands may catch the flames, till the whole earth burning as a holocaust to heaven, shall be accepted as whole burnt offering before the throne of God Most High.

"May the Lord bless you, and keep you, and cause his face to shine upon you and lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace," and unto the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, shall be glory for ever!

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